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| **Council 2020 Geneva, 9-19 June 2020** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 3.1** | **Document C20/62-E** |
| **29 April 2020** |
| **Original: English** |
| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| Report on NEW ITU index | |
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| Summary  This report provides an overview of recent progress, and challenges faced, in the development of an ITU index.  Action required  The Council is invited to **consider** the issues raised in this document and to **advise** on the way forward on the development of an ITU index.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  [PP Res 131 (Rev. Dubai)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-131-E.pdf), [WTDC Resolution 8 (Rev. Buenos Aires)](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/Documents/WTDC17_FinalReport_en.pdf), Council [Document C20/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0035/en) |

**Background**

Resolution 131 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau to publish annually the ICT Development Index (IDI). It also resolves that ITU should establish a four-year period of validity for the structure and methodology of the IDI, in case these need to be reviewed and revised as appropriate through an expert group meeting in Geneva representing all countries, developed and developing, on an equal footing. Resolution 131 also instructs the Council to make appropriate recommendations as necessary regarding the ongoing implementation of the resolution.

The ICT Development Index (IDI), a composite index that assesses the state of ICT development across countries and over time, was released annually between 2009 and 2017. During an Extraordinary Meeting of the Expert Group on Telecommunication/ICT Indicators (EGTI) and the Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH) held in 2017, a revised set of indicators was agreed to be included in the IDI as of 2018. In order to assist countries in the collection of data included in the revised set of indicators, capacity building efforts took place in 2018-19 across all regions.

In Circular Letter SG/BDT/010 of 5 December 2018, the Secretary General informed the membership that ITU had decided to postpone the publication of the revised IDI until 2019, because of the amount of estimations needed to calculate the index, and concerns about the quality of some of the underlying data. These problems only surfaced once the secretariat started to calculate the revised IDI. During TDAG 2019, a breakout session on ICT data and statistics was held on 4 April 2019, to – among other topics - inform Member States about the challenges faced with the publication of the IDI and brainstorm on the way forward. Participants suggested to revisit the conceptual framework, develop methodologies on emerging topics and new services, and work in partnership with other relevant organizations, Study Groups and other ITU sectors.

In Circular Letter [Circular/BDT/DKH/IDA/026](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/IDI2019consultation/BDT_Cir_026_DKH_IDA_E.pdf) of 3 October 2019, the Director of BDT announced that the IDI (based on the 2017-agreed indicators) could still not be published in 2019 due to several reasons: e.g., too many data points were missing and needed to be estimated; data quality issues with several indicators; and issues with the methodology used to compute several indicators. These problems prevented the index from reflecting the true state of ICT development. A [background document](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/IDI2019consultation/IDI_BackgroundDocument_E.pdf) that was part of that circular letter explained these problems in more detail.

Further, the Circular Letter recommended to exceptionally use the original IDI methodology only for publication in 2019 and announced an informal consultation on that subject. Circular [BDT/DKH/IDA/027](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/IDI2019consultation/BDT-cir_027E_DKH-IDA.pdf) of 16 October 2019 presented the results of that consultation, concluding that there was no consensus, and therefore no IDI would be published. The Circular Letter also announced that going forward, BDT, in collaboration with the membership and internationally-recognized experts, would continue to work on a more transparent, robust and reliable methodology with a view to publishing an index in 2020, taking into consideration PP Resolution 131 and WTDC Resolution 8.

**Towards a new ITU index**

Circular [BDT/DKH/IDA/028](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/events/egmITUindex2020/BDT-cir_028E_DKH-IDA.pdf) of 21 November 2019 invited Administrations of ITU Member States and Resolution 99 to attend the 1st Expert Group Meeting on a new ITU index on 10 February 2020 to present and discuss the draft concept and framework for an ITU index. The [Summary Report](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/events/egmITUindex2020/Summary_EGM_10_Feb_2020.pdf) of that meeting noted that participants welcomed the proposal of the ITU secretariat to develop and publish a new ITU index that is based on the SDG framework. This new index would allow governments to assess how digital technologies and digital transformations impact their ability to achieve the SDGs.

On 25 March 2020, a [TDAG Web Dialogue on the new ITU index](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/TDAG/Pages/TDAG25/default.aspx) was held. The revised draft concept and framework of the new index was presented and discussed. Participants supported the development of a new index linking digital technologies to the achievement of the SDGs. Concerns raised during the meeting included a request for further specification of the indicators and the elaboration of the framework and observed the tight timeline. Participants also provided suggestions for collaboration with international agencies and the private sector. The secretariat was asked to ensure full transparency of the process, regular communication with Member States and consultation with relevant other stakeholders.

[Circular BDT/DKH/IDA/038](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/events/2ndegmITUindex2020/BDT-CIR-0038PDF-E.pdf) of 17 March 2020 provided a summary of the 1st EGM and invited Administrations of ITU Member States and Resolution 99 to the 2nd Expert Group Meeting on a new ITU index, that took place on 17 April 2020.

At the [2nd EGM meeting](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/events/2ndegmITUindex2020/default.aspx), the ITU secretariat presented a background document including the further revised conceptual framework of the new index, as well as a preliminary list of indicators that could be considered.

**Main issues from the series of consultations**

The main issues from the series of open and transparent consultations and meetings include:

* Whether, and how, a formal decision was taken on the (dis-)continuation of the publication of the IDI (either in its original or revised version), in accordance with Resolution 131.
* Questions about the implementation of Resolution 131 with respect to the governance and the process underpinning the development of a new index.
* Whether to continue developing a new index or seek guidance and decision from the Plenipotentiary Conference in 2022.
* Several Member States requested more time to provide feedback and suggested extending the timeline for the development and eventual release of the index.

The points raised during the meetings and consultations revealed the diversity of views, positions and expectations among Member States regarding the process that should guide the development of a methodologically sound, world-class, impartial index. Resolution 131 does not provide for a mechanism to address the lack of consensus on the overall direction of the index and on various methodological aspects, including the selection of indicators to include.

**Guidance sought from the Council**

In view of the challenges faced in revising the index and/or developing a new index, the ITU secretariat seeks guidance from the Council regarding the ongoing implementation of Resolution 131 with respect to the ICT Development Index (IDI).

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