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CEPT VISION FOR ITU

**IMPROVING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**

Telecommunications/ICTs have expanded and developed at a tremendous pace over recent years.

The ubiquity of telecommunications/ICTs unlocks great opportunities for humanity and the world, yet can also generate new challenges to governments and societies. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated technological development and the uptake of ICT solutions. New issues have emerged and familiar ones have become even more salient in the international community. They affect not only technical aspects, but influence the economic and social sphere, too. One such issue is the access to broadband internet, which poses the important challenge of overcoming the existing digital divides including between, regions, gender and age.

CEPT’s vision is for a strong, impactful, and efficient Union; one that is optimally positioned on the map of international telecommunications/ICT bodies to contribute to a future in which innovative telecommunications/ICTs drive economic and social development in every part of the world to improve the lives of people and communities.

The development and deployment of telecommunications/ICTs is an important instrument in achieving sustainable development. Thus, our joint effort to realize this vision of the UN Family is guided by the broader framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, the UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, as well as by the UN Secretary General’s report on "Our Common Agenda”. and last but not least by the conditions, circumstances and developments of industry, which has to implement these important goals.

With the rapid development of telecommunications/ICTs comes a growing complexity of the regulatory and standardisation landscape. Rapidly evolving telecommunication networks – both terrestrial and space-based – need ever-greater access to scarce resources such as harmonised spectrum. It can be difficult for countries to navigate this landscape, to address the new challenges we face, and to harness the full benefits of innovation.

ITU, with its role implementing projects under the United Nations development system, should act as a champion for the contribution that telecommunications/ICTs can make to sustainable development, and should be preparing for the review of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2030.

Finally, in order to keep pace with rapid technological change, the ITU should foster innovation and new applications, in particular for radiocommunications and satellites where ITU-R’s unique competence and role to ensure equitable access and rational use of natural resources of the spectrum and orbits, can contribute to improved access to telecommunications/ICTs services.

**BUILDING ON CORE EXPERTISE**

We need ITU to play a strategic role in the international landscape of telecommunications/ICTs, and we believe that the ITU can have a role to play in telecommunications/ICT aspects of familiar and emerging technologies. However, the ITU’s resources are limited, and to have a meaningful impact, it must focus and prioritise. By focussing on where it is in a position to efficiently deliver necessary work of high quality based on its core expertise, it can add value for all its members, and in turn for governmental, residential and corporate consumers of products and services. This globally unique expertise is not a matter of course; it must be preserved.

The ITU should work on expanding connectivity, taking into account all digital technologies for telecommunications/ICTs, and through ambitious capacity building actions for developing countries.

Since its creation, the ITU has developed a strong reputation as the UN specialized agency for telecommunications/ICTs, building upon the expertise of its three sectors and relying on the inputs of all its members, including industry, SMEs and academia.

Being a specialized UN agency, ITU should represent the interests of its membership and provide an appropriate platform the discussions of the most urgent and topical issues within its mandate.

With the acceleration of technological change, many topics such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies or the Internet of Things have become ever more relevant and tangible. The ITU sits in a landscape of international organizations and fora that seek to be active in these new fields. To ensure the optimal use of resources within these organisations and their membership, coordination and cooperation between these organisations is necessary. In this context, while new technological developments raise important challenges and opportunities that require adequate policy responses, the ITU is best positioned, given its core expertise and responsibilities within its three sectors, to focus on telecommunications standards, radiocommunication, and support for developing countries.

CEPT understands ITU’s work as essential for telecommunications/ICTs development based upon a human-centric approach and international human rights and is committed to supporting the ITU in this regard.

**IMPROVED COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION**

There are less than ten years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Within this short timeframe global and broad collaboration within and beyond the UN system will be necessary to realise this vision: a collaboration not just between all countries, but between all stakeholders and organisations. Such cooperation offers opportunities for synergies and efficiencies, leading to increased impact and effectiveness. The ITU should continually look to increase its collaboration with other organisations in order to increase its impact and leverage its resources.

ITU has a crucial role to play in increasing worldwide connectivity, facilitating the development of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, and bridging the digital divides. In this role the Union can play an essential enabling function for other development actors as well.

Within the field of standardisation, ITU should also continually increase its collaboration with other organisations (which should be seen as partners, not competitors) in order to better leverage its resources. These partner organisations include Standards Development Organisations and other international bodies and organisations. These organisations can mutually gain from establishing a shared understanding on how best to coordinate their activities. As such, it is important that decisions on the focus of the Union’s work take into account not only the ITU’s own contributions, but also areas where the ITU itself can benefit from partners’ expertise.

**LEVERAGING THE UNION’S OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS, BASED ON GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Being one of the oldest global organizations with over 155 years of existence and a large community of members, the ITU has a powerful voice and a great potential to be a role model to other organizations.

The ITU is open to and dependent on various stakeholders, including industry SMEs, and academia who can directly contribute to the work of the Union. Such stakeholders value their participation in all three sectors of the Union even more when the ITU focuses its resources on high added-value activities where its expertise is widely recognized. In this context ITU has to continue addressing with the highest degree of priority how to retain its current sector members, associates and academia and strengthen their long-term engagement as well as attract new ones. The expertise of these contributors is indispensable to the quality of ITU’s work, and incentivising their continued participation is a crucial task.

Over the years, the ITU has put in place numerous rules, procedures and working methods which have contributed to effective rules-based and consensus-driven decision-making processes that are widely acknowledged and commonly used by members today. Forging consensus, making sure that all stakeholders are heard and developing an evidence base for all decisions are also an important aspect of the ITU’s capacity to build up its reputation as a multi-stakeholder organization.

All efforts aiming at making these procedures more accessible, transparent and user-friendly could only reinforce the ITU’s appeal to members and partners, and help to reach essential input from industry and technical experts.

CEPT believes the ITU should be facilitating the sharing of expertise across organisations and supporting developing countries to navigate the diverse telecommunications/ICTs landscape. It can support its members by building capacity, encouraging public/private partnerships and promoting an enabling environment for investment; by fostering understanding of the broader telecommunications/ICTs environment and providing information and guidance to members.

The ITU can play a valuable role not only by developing its own standards but also by promoting understanding of the broader technical standards environment to provide information and guidance to members; by raising awareness of internationally-recognised standards developed by other bodies, alongside its own standards; and sign-posting members to other relevant organisations as appropriate.

Gender remains a cross-cutting priority issue for ITU. We encourage reform of the ITU’s ways of working to improve gender balance, and also a focus on gender issues in the ITU’s work, including its work to bridge digital divides and achieve the SDGs.

More openness and transparency should also be encouraged – including by sharing information, encouraging all stakeholders to participate, and transparency on the roles and responsibilities within the Union and how resources are used. This will make it easier for the ITU to build partnerships and to attract new members and essential input from industry and technical experts.

Such openness and transparency also stem from good governance that favours impact, efficiency and innovation. For that purpose CEPT strongly encourages the adoption of approaches such as results-based management at the Union level, and a focus on a strong evidence base, after a successful implementation in the Telecommunications Development Bureau.

CEPT also believes the ‘One ITU’ concept should keep guiding ongoing and future reforms of the Union, as the ITU could do more to increase efficient cooperation and closer working between its three sectors to avoid any possible duplication of work, and to ensure that work is appropriately allocated to sectors.

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