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| **Abstract:** | In order to enhance the image and reputation of ITU-T in global standardization, it is suggested that TSAG identify the means by which its statutory role in the area of operational and strategic planning can be strengthened and the benefits in engaging in ITU-T – its “value proposition” – be more clearly explained. |

**Background and Discussion:**

As the preparations for WTSA-24 begin to intensify, it is becoming increasingly apparent that in response to rapid changes in the global standardization ecosystem there is a need for ITU-T to articulate its mission and strategic priorities more clearly in order for decision-makers interested in standardization work to better recognize opportunities for investment and engagement. Efforts underway in the Industry Engagement Workshop Steering Committee – indeed the Workshop itself – should, at least in part, elicit important insights into the factors that contribute to making ITU-T an attractive venue for standards development (see TD433, Industry Engagement Workshop, Session 3: Focus on Value Proposition).

The ITU-T value proposition has been outlined in terms of membership benefits on the ITU-T webpage, but only in high-level, non-specific ways, e.g., by producing impartial, open standards agreed through consensus, and by respecting clear intellectual property policies. Furthermore, the TSB Director Seizo Onoe, in a recent article appearing on the ITU webpage (Let’s ensure we realize the true value of standards), has stressed the importance of inclusive global standards, of fostering a collaborative spirit both among standards developers and with a growing range of standardization stakeholders, and of consensus-based decisions. What is lacking are indications of what makes ITU-T unique in an increasingly complex standardization ecosystem.

The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the CS and CV, while providing an overview of the structure and governance arrangements in ITU-T, do not clearly indicate the strategic priorities which underline the Sector’s unique status and contribution to global standardization.

While the CS and CV provide an overview of the structure and governance arrangements in ITU-T, there is no clear indication of the strategic priorities which underlines the Sector’s unique contribution to the global standardization ecosystem, or how the work of ITU-T is complementary to similar activities being carried out by other standards development organizations and entities.

Part of the problem can be linked to the apparent unwillingness or interest by TSAG participants to provide comments on its statutory responsibility to “review” the annual operational plans as an extension of strategic planning in ITU as a whole, as indicated in Article 14A and Article 15 of the Convention.

Moreover, RESOLUTION 22 (Rev. Geneva, 2022) (Authorization for the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group to act between world telecommunication standardization assemblies), in its *resolves* 2, states “that TSAG examine implementation of the actions and achievement of the goals as reflected in the annual ITU-T operational plan and in the WTSA-20 Action Plan, which includes the WTSA resolutions, for the purpose of identifying possible difficulties and strategies for implementing key elements, and recommending solutions to the Director of TSB regarding them”.

A second opportunity for TSAG to comment on the strategic direction and priorities of the Sector is in the development and formulation of the draft strategic plans to be approved by a plenipotentiary conference. With the establishment of Council working groups to elaborate the draft strategic plan prior to any given PP, it is expected that information of a strategic nature be input to the Council WG from the Sectors, specifically from the Sector advisory groups. While TSAG has responded to this challenge by establishing a Rapporteur Group (RG) in recent years on operational and strategic planning, these groups have been noticeably inactive in recent years. In the absence of such comment, the current Strategic Plan for the Union, 2024-2027 lacks specificity in articulating its strategic priorities/thematic priorities with the exception of international numbering and a general reference to environmental issues. There is a clear need, therefore, for the Strategic Plan to reflect the full breadth of priority activities which can provide the outside reader with a good indication of ITU-T’s “value proposition”.

The concept of “Lead Study Group” (see RESOLUTION 1 (Rev. Geneva, 2022), paragraph 2.1.5; RESOLUTION 2 (Rev. Geneva, 2022, PART 2 – LEAD ITU-T STUDY GROUPS IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF STUDY) has served in part to highlight areas of work of strategic importance; however, it has not been entirely successful in identifying those studies which are unique to ITU-T in the standardization ecosystem or activities which are complementary to those being undertaken by other SDOs.

While a section of the ITU-T webpage is devoted to attempting to articulate the value proposition, there is a clear lack of specificity on what distinguishes ITU-T from other SDOs, or what the advantages of membership really are in a cost/benefit sense, i.e., what the “value-added” of membership engagement in ITU-T work actually entails.

This value proposition could be developed with the help of well-known methods, e.g., Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) and could consider key elements for a future narrative such as:

* General thematises such as consensus-driven, inclusivity, etc.,
* Recognition of the unique role of ITU-T as a bridge between all other stakeholders offering them a unique opportunity to enhance understanding for the benefit of better outcomes,
* The long-term sustained effort to ensure interoperability for open systems,
* The heritage through its rich portfolio, a very diverse global community, its experience and working methods,
* Topics that ITU-T uniquely addresses that are beneficial in the context of international standardization work associated with optical transport networks, video codecs and public key infrastructure in cybersecurity.

In a highly competitive standards environment, ITU-T would benefit considerably if its strengths were more explicit and well defined.

**Proposal and Next Steps**

The following is proposed:

1. In the near term, the development of the ITU-T value proposition would benefit from further discussion in TSAG at its January 2024 meeting and beyond at its meeting in July 2024, as well as meetings of selected Rapporteur Groups such as RG-IEM.
2. The Industry Engagement Workshop, particularly in the context of Section 3 and its focus on the value proposition, should produce valuable insights on how the definition process can be enhanced.
3. The Rapporteur Group on strategic and operational planning could be activated to fulfil TSAG’s mandate to review the annual ITU-T operational plans and to provide an input to the TSB Director for the consideration of the Council Working Group to elaborate the draft strategic plan for PP-26. RG-SOP, which is not a decision-making body, can be well suited as a stable body to undertake the longer-term analysis of the value proposition of ITU-T.
4. The RG should also be tasked with identifying the range of key strategic priorities in ITU-T which reflect those activities in global standardization that are unique to the Sector or at least are complementary to those undertaken by other SDOs.
5. The RG as well should consider a range of appropriate mechanisms, including the ITU-T homepage, where a narrative can be developed which clearly illustrates the advantages of participating actively in the work of the Sector.

Proposed Terms of Reference are attached for the consideration by TSAG.

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Attachment

**Terms of Reference for the Rapporteur Group on Strategic and Operational Planning (R-SOP)**

* Function as the TSAG focal point to collect and provide appropriate input from TSAG for consideration of the Council Working Group for the elaboration of the draft strategic plan.
* Identify the key strategic priorities in ITU-T that are unique to the Sector or at least complementary to those undertaken by other SDOs.
* Consider a range of appropriate mechanisms, including the ITU-T homepage, where a narrative can be developed which illustrate the advantages of participating actively in the work of the Sector.
* Review of the annual ITU-T operational plans for approval by Council.