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OF ITU

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Resolution 70 – Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities

ITU-T



FOREWORD

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency in the field of telecommunications, information and communication technologies (ICTs). The ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) is a permanent organ of ITU. ITU-T is responsible for studying technical, operating and tariff questions and issuing Recommendations on them with a view to standardizing telecommunications on a worldwide basis.

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which meets every four years, establishes the topics for study by the ITU-T study groups which, in turn, produce Recommendations on these topics.

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RESOLUTION 70

Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities

(Johannesburg, 2008)

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (Johannesburg, 2008),

recognizing,

- a) studies under Question 4/2 of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) on human factors-related issues for improvement of the quality of life through international telecommunications;
- b) studies under ITU-T Question 26/16 on accessibility to multimedia systems and services, including the recent Recommendation ITU-T F.790 on telecommunication accessibility guidelines for older persons and persons with disabilities;
- c) studies under Question 20/1 of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) on access to telecommunication services for people with disabilities;
- d) ongoing work in the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) to bridge the digital disability divide;
- e) publication by the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) of the Guide for ITU study groups – Considering end-user needs in developing Recommendations;
- f) the creation by ITU-T Study Group 2 of the Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors for purposes of awareness, advice, assistance, collaboration, coordination and networking;
- g) the formation by the Internet Governance Forum of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability proposed by the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB);
- h) the partnership between ITU-T and the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability for the purpose of maximizing the benefits to all sectors of the global community of electronic communications and online information through the Internet,

considering

- a) that the World Health Organization estimates that ten per cent of the world's population (more than 650 million people) are persons with disabilities, and that this percentage may increase due to factors such as the greater availability of medical treatment and longer life expectancy, and also because people may acquire disability through accident, wars and circumstances of poverty which are mostly prevalent in developing countries¹;
- b) that over the past 60 years, the approach to disability adopted by United Nations agencies, and by many Member States (through a changed emphasis in their laws, regulations, policies and programmes), has moved from a health and welfare perspective to a human-rights based approach, which recognizes that people with disabilities are people first, and that society places barriers upon them as opposed to their disabilities, and which includes the goal of full participation in society by persons with disabilities;

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states and countries with economies in transition.

c) that the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which came into force on 3 May 2008, requires States Parties (under §§ 2(g) and 2(h) of Article 9 on accessibility) to take appropriate measures:

- i) 9(2)(g) "to promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet";
- ii) 9(2)(h) "to promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost";

d) that maximizing the accessibility and usability of telecommunication/information and communication technologies (ICT) services, products and terminals through universal design will increase their uptake by persons with disabilities and older persons, and thereby increase revenues;

e) that United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/106 adopting the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities requests the Secretary-General (as § 5) "... to implement progressively standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services of the United Nations system, taking into account relevant provisions of the Convention, in particular when undertaking renovations",

recalling

a) § 18 of the Tunis Commitment, made at the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, 2005): "We shall strive unremittingly, therefore, to promote universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICTs, including universal design and assistive technologies, for all people, especially those with disabilities, everywhere, to ensure that the benefits are more evenly distributed between and within societies, ...";

b) the Phuket Declaration on Tsunami Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities (Phuket, 2007), which emphasizes the need for inclusive emergency warning and disaster management systems using telecommunication/ICT facilities based on open, non-proprietary, global standards,

taking into account

a) Resolution GSC-13/26 (UWG) on user needs, considerations and involvement (revised) of the twelfth Global Standards Collaboration meeting (Boston, 2008);

b) publications and ongoing work of the Special Working Group on Accessibility of the Joint Technical Committee on Information Technology (JTC 1) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Committee (IEC), as well as the Mandate 376 project teams, in identifying user needs and in developing a comprehensive inventory of existing standards as part of the ongoing effort to identify areas where research or new standards work is needed;

c) activities relating to the development of new standards (e.g., ISO TC 159, JTC1 SC35, IEC TC100, ETSI TC HF, and W3C WAI), and the implementation and maintenance of existing standards (e.g. ISO 9241-171);

d) formation of the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT), a flagship partnership initiative of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UN-GAID);

e) various regional and national efforts to develop or revise guidelines and standards for telecommunication/ICT accessibility, compatibility and usability by persons with disabilities,

resolves

1 that Study Group 2, Study Group 16 and the Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors shall give high priority to work on the relevant Questions, in accordance with the accessibility guidelines, as shown in the Guide for ITU-T study groups – Considering end-user needs in developing Recommendations and in the Telecommunication Accessibility Checklist for standards writers and accessibility guidelines, as shown in Recommendation ITU-T F.790;

2 to emphasize to all study groups the importance of universal design of accessible telecommunication/ICT services, products and terminals and to request their chairmen, at the start of each study group meeting, to remind meeting participants to take appropriate account of the guide and checklist,

invites Member States and Sector Members

1 to consider developing, within their national legal frameworks, guidelines or other mechanisms to enhance the accessibility, compatibility and usability of telecommunication/ICT services, products and terminals;

2 to consider introducing telecommunication relay services² to enable persons with hearing and speech disabilities to utilize telecommunication services that are functionally equivalent to telecommunication services for persons without disabilities;

3 to participate actively in accessibility-related studies in ITU-T, ITU-R and ITU-D, and to encourage and promote self-representation by persons with disabilities in the standardization process so as to ensure their experiences, views and opinions are taken into account in all the work of study groups,

invites the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

1 to identify and document examples of best practice for accessibility in the field of telecommunication/ICT for dissemination among ITU Member States and Sector Members;

2 to review the accessibility of ITU-T services and facilities and to consider making changes, where appropriate, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/106, and to report to the ITU Council on these matters;

3 to work collaboratively on accessibility-related activities with the Directors of the Radiocommunication Bureau (BR) and the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), in particular concerning awareness and mainstreaming of telecommunication/ICT accessibility standards, reporting findings to the Council as appropriate;

4 to work collaboratively on accessibility-related activities with ITU-D, in particular developing programmes that enable developing countries to introduce services that allow persons with disabilities to utilize telecommunication services effectively;

5 to work collaboratively and cooperatively with other standardization organizations and entities, in particular, in the interest of ensuring that ongoing work in the field of accessibility is taken into account, in order to avoid duplication;

6 to work collaboratively and cooperatively with disability organizations in all regions to ensure that the needs of the disabled community are taken into account in all standardization matters;

² Telecommunication relay services enable users of different modes of communication (e.g., text, sign, speech) to interact by providing convergence between the modes of communication, usually by human operators.

7 to consider the development of an internship programme for people with disabilities who have expertise in the field of ICTs, to build capacity amongst people with disabilities in the standards-making process and to raise awareness within ITU-T of the needs of persons with disabilities;

8 to create a disability coordination point within ITU-T to assist the Director of TSB in reporting the findings of the review of ITU-T services and facilities,

instructs the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group

to revise the Guide for ITU study groups – Considering end-user needs in developing Recommendations, and relevant guidelines for end-user needs, in order to specifically include the needs of persons with disabilities, and to update this guide on a regular basis, based on contributions from Member States and Sector Members as well as the ITU-T study groups, as appropriate.