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| Title: | Summary of the special meeting of ITU Accessibility Focal Points with invited Accessibility Experts (Geneva, 17 July 2015) | |

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| **itu-with-no-name**  *ITU Accessibility Task Force* | **ITU Accessibility Task Force**  **Summary of the special meeting of  ITU Accessibility Focal Points with invited Accessibility Experts**  *17 July 2015 / 14h00–15h00*  *Meeting room 14th floor ITU Tower, Geneva*  *Document for internal use – version 5 August, 2015* |

*The special meeting of ITU accessibility focal points with invited experts took place on 17 of July 2015 from 14:00 to 15:00, in the SG/DSG meeting room (14th floor of the Tower). The meeting was chaired by ITU Deputy-Secretary General M. Johnson and was attended by representatives from BR: J. Koizumi, TSB: R. Scholl, Xiaoya Yang, BDT: S. Schorr, Roxana Widmer and from the GS: SPM –JM. Diaz Batanero, Ilaha Rzayeva, S. Anderes, BUD –T. Perewostchikow, HRMD: E. Dahlen and IS: F. Faugier. The following experts were invited to the meeting:*

* *Axel Leblois, President and Executive Director, G3ICT*
* *Andrea Saks, Chair, ITU-T Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors (JCA-AHF)*

# Background and opening remarks

The meeting began with opening remarks from the DSG, who presented the background of Resolution 175 (Rev. Busan 2014)[[1]](#footnote-1), which defines ITU’s mandate in the area of ICT accessibility, and Resolution 200 (Busan 2014), which introduced the Connect 2020 Agenda for all ITU Membership[[2]](#footnote-2).

On his opening intervention, the DSG highlighted some of the provisions of Res 175, such as:

* to involve persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the work of ITU so that they may collaborate in the adoption of a comprehensive action plan in order to extend access to telecommunications/ICTs, in collaboration with external entities and bodies concerned with this topic;
* the importance of gathering statistics on use of ICTs by persons with disabilities, which is relevant to the Connect 2020 accessibility target:

*Target 2.5.B: Enabling environments ensuring accessible telecommunication/ICT for persons with disabilities should be established in all countries by 2020;*

* the need to boost cooperation with other organizations to promote the inclusion of accessibility in their agendas;
* the importance of reaching the ITU-wide coordination on accessibility;
* the need to consider financial implications of making ITU a fully accessible organization and
* the importance of promoting increased participation of persons with disabilities in ITU’s activities (including offering fellowships when appropriate);
* the importance of disseminating best practices to promote international accessibility standards;

The DSG reminded that the objective of this meeting is to gather ideas on how to move ahead with the implementation of these provisions, as well as to exchange views on how to mobilize additional resources for this area of activity and encourage additional contributions to the voluntary accessibility fund. After these remarks, the DSG gave the floor to the invited experts to share their views on the following agenda items.

# ITU’s Work to Promote ICT Accessibility

Experts view

Axel Leblois, speaking as G3ICT Executive Director (but also as an ITU member) opened up the debate on ITU’s work to promote ICT accessibility, highlighting the following elements for the consideration of all participants:

* There is a unique opportunity for ITU to reinforce its leadership in the area of accessibility. As of today, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, agreed in 2006) has become an almost universal instrument, with adoption from 159 countries (most ITU members) and 87 countries who have ratified the optional protocol. With this level of adoption, the CRPD has become the global framework to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs).
* As part of their new obligations, parties of the CRPD have defined a designated government agency that will have to implement and monitor the implementation of the Convention. In most cases this agency is the ministry of social affairs or an agency that reports to social affairs or events to the prime minister. Ensuring the accessibility of public services will be one of the new obligations undertaken by these agencies (including ensuring accessibility of public websites, etc.). These agencies will have a strong pressure to show progress in the implementation of the CRPD.
* The ICT sector will be key in this process. In many cases the ministries of telecommunications and ICTs will be the reference for issues such as accessible websites. In addition, in many countries the number of actors working on the telecommunications sector is relatively small: this means that by having the right policies and programmes it would be relatively easy to implement the articles of the convention relevant to ICTs.
* ITU can leverage its influence with these ministries to further advance implementation of the CRPD and promote policies to promote accessible services.
* ITU can do this by highlighting the good work that has already been conducted in this domain, such as the development of accessible ICT standards through ITU-T and ITU-R, the promotion of ICT accessibility policies through ITU-D or the publication of several reports with specific recommendations on accessible TV, mobile, etc.
* By further promoting the implementation of these policies in all countries ITU would transform the lives of millions of persons with disabilities. We have never had such strong interest from countries in implementing accessible policies. ITU should not be shy about it. We have a lot to offer.
* ITU has to involve groups of persons with disabilities in this work.
* As ITU member we are keen to continue support ITU in moving this forward and reinforce ITU’s role as a thought leader in the UN system about it.

Open discussion

After the experts’ intervention, the DSG opened the floor for the debate, inviting all participants to reflect on the main actions needed to support the implementation of the Connect 2020 accessibility target:

* *About the Connect 2020 target. The* target was established to ensure that an enabling environment exists. The first step is to establish effective policies and regulations. ITU members took a practical approach, since measuring use of ICTs by PWDs is very challenging and would be very difficult to measure.
* *The importance of setting up the right process.* It is important to highlight that policies alone don’t create results. It is important to set up milestones, introduce verification processes and assess progress. Only when policies are in place and the right mechanisms are implemented then this would set up the right roadmap.
* *Measuring the Connect 2020 target.* Measuring the Connect 2020 target will be done through the ITU regulatory survey which from this year has already introduced the right question, so that focal points can measure implementation of the Connect 2020 goal, with language in line with the model policy. Responses to the survey are currently being collected.
* *The role of public procurement.* Public procurement will be an important element which has been already included in the survey. This year ITU is doing training for procurement agencies on how they can procure accessible equipment and will do this through the ITU academy. In addition, the ITU procurement department could also take the training to lead by example.

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| **Recommendation 1.** We should probably encourage our own procurement department to follow the training, so they can purchase accessible equipment. |

* *Continuing advocacy work.* ITUis conducting several activities on ICT accessibility at the regional level (e.g. capacity building in Arab countries, Americas, etc.). However, there is still a need to engage in further advocacy to ensure that ITU Members will take this work and take action. An element to encourage members would be to introduce some types of competition on being the first country to implement ICT Accessibility policies, similar to the process followed for the transition to digital TV.

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| **Recommendation 2.** Explore possibility of introducing a competition to encourage all ITU Members to introduce ICT accessibility policies by 2020. |

* *On the Action Plan requested by Res 175:* The main concern of ITU is how to implement the comprehensive action plan instructed by PP14. To move ahead, ITU benefits from existing platforms and opportunities, such as being an active partner and participant of the UN venues such as the COSP of the CPRD. This conference provides a good platform to hold joint sessions and side events. ITU has done this in the past, and can continue doing it in the future.
* *On promoting the Connect 2020 target:* In line with the previous, ITU could reach out to UNDESA secretariat to have a space in COSP to promote the Connect 2020 agenda, the new model ICT accessibility policy and to mobilize country support..

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| **Recommendation 3.** ITU accessibility focal points to produce first draft of the action plan mandated by Res 175. ITU to explore involvement of other organizations. |

# Making ITU a fully accessible organization: lessons learned and recommendations for the future

Experts view

Andrea Saks, speaking as Chair, ITU-T Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors (JCA-AHF), opened up the debate on the progress achieved in making ITU a fully accessible organization, highlighting the following elements for the consideration of all participants:

* ITU had made great progress in the last 25 years working on accessibility, in particular with regards to the use of captioning in meetings, producing accessible documents and making ITU facilities more accessible. However, ITU still has ongoing challenges and processes that require further improvements. Examples of this are mobilizing additional staff and resources to be dedicated to the issue of accessibility, continuing to raise awareness of staff and delegates, as well as improving coordination mechanisms to ensure accessibility throughout ITU, in particular considering the amount of the work of ITU.
* ITU should introduce a new coordinating body on accessibility, and allocate to this body enough resources to cover the increasing needs of accessibility. Such resources could be dedicated to mobilizing experts to join ITU meetings, introduce new programmes to help persons with disabilities attend ITU, increasing outreach, developing additional accessibility trainings, etc.

Open discussion

After the experts’ intervention, the DSG opened the floor for the debate, which is summarized below:

* *Training resources and using resources from ITU Members.* Several ITU members (e.g. AT&T) have developed training modules on accessibility for its staff. ITU could explore with these organizations if they would be willing to donate these resources to ITU. This type of resources could be integrated with the training plan produced by HR. Such training programme should include not only ITU staff, but also consultants, contractors, rapporteurs, etc. ITU can introduce the obligation of having a certificate to perform certain tasks.

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| **Recommendation 4.**ITU to produce a training plan on accessibility for staff, consultants, rapporteurs, etc. Plan to explore repurposing material from ITU Members. G3ICT to support in this recommendation. |

* *Developing a midterm road map.* To continue making progress in making ITU more accessible, ITU should introduce an accessibility roadmap, which should include actions and targets. Roadmap should take into consideration financial feasibility and should use the experiences learned in the implementation of the 2014 Accessibility Plan.

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| **Recommendation 5**. Produce an ITU accessibility road map for 2015-2017. Process for the preparation of the roadmap to be facilitated by GS/SPM, with involvement of all sectors and relevant divisions. |

* *Mobilizing additional resources for the Accessibility Fund.* Current approach has not worked. In 3 years only 2 ITU Members (Rwanda and Cyprus Telecommunications Authority –CYTA-) gave contributions for an overall amount of CHF 39,419 CHF. Such contributions were the result of a general invitation for voluntary contributions. A new approach could be instead to present concrete ITU initiatives that need funding and invite contributions for these initiatives. This kind of request would be more targeted, and could be more interesting for the office of Corporate Social Responsibility from the private sector.

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| **Recommendation 6.** ITU Resource Mobilization team to work with accessibility focal points to identify concrete initiatives that could be presented for funding. |

# Conclusions and final remarks

The DSG closed the discussion thanking all participants for their involvement in the meeting and especially Andrea Saks and Axel Leblois. As a next step, SPM will produce a summary of the meeting with a set of recommendations to move forward. These recommendations will be discussed by the new ITU Inter-Sectoral Task force.

After these items, the meeting was brought to an end.

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1. *Further information about Res 175 (Rev. Busan 2014) is available at* [*http://www.itu.int/en/action/accessibility/Pages/ITUmandate.aspx*](http://www.itu.int/en/action/accessibility/Pages/ITUmandate.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Further information about the Connect 2020 agenda is available at* [*http://www.itu.int/en/connect2020/Pages/default.aspx*](http://www.itu.int/en/connect2030/Pages/default.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)