

RESOLUTION 139 (REV. DUBAI, 2018)

Use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society

The Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (Dubai, 2018),

recalling

a) the Preamble (No. 1) of the ITU Constitution, "fully recognizing the sovereign right of each State to regulate its telecommunication and having regard to the growing importance of telecommunication for the preservation of peace and the economic and social development of all States";

b) Resolution 16 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), on special actions and measures for least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and countries with economies in transition;

c) Resolution 30 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC, on the role of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

d) Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC, on bridging the digital divide;

e) Resolution 44 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on reducing the disparity among developing¹ and developed countries in terms of standardization;

f) Recommendation ITU-T D.53 of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector, on International aspects of universal service;

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

g) Resolution 23 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC, on Internet access and its availability in developing countries and rate-setting principles for international connection to the Internet,

recognizing

a) that the social and economic underdevelopment of a large part of the world is one of the most serious problems affecting not only the countries concerned but also the international community as a whole;

b) that the benefits of the advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs) can create opportunities for digital services in developing countries, and enables digitization of the infrastructure which underpins the economy, including the digital economy;

c) that the new technologies of telecommunication networks show potential for offering more efficient and economic telecommunication and ICT services and applications, particularly for unserved and/or underserved areas;

d) that WSIS highlighted that the ICT infrastructure is an essential foundation for an inclusive information society, and called for the commitment of all States to placing ICTs and ICT applications at the service of development;

e) that the WSIS+10 High-Level Event, an expanded version of the WSIS Forum, held by ITU in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), recognizes in its statement on the implementation of WSIS outcomes that, since the Tunis Phase of WSIS was held in 2005, the uses of ICTs have developed considerably and become a part of everyday life, accelerating social and economic growth, sustainable development, increasing transparency and accountability, where applicable, and offering new opportunities for both developed and developing countries to leverage the benefits of new technologies;

f) that, in turn, the WSIS+10 vision for WSIS beyond 2015 reaffirms that the objective of the Summit is to bridge the digital, technology and knowledge divides and create a people-centric, inclusive, open and development-oriented information society where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge;

g) that the declarations of previous WTDCs (Istanbul, 2002; Doha, 2006; Hyderabad, 2010; Dubai, 2014; and Buenos Aires, 2017) have continued to affirm that ICTs and ICT applications are essential for political, economic, social and cultural development, that they play an important role in poverty alleviation, job creation, environmental protection and the prevention and mitigation of natural and other disasters (in addition to the importance of disaster prediction), and that they must be placed at the service of development in other sectors; and that, therefore, opportunities offered by new ICTs should be fully exploited in order to foster sustainable development;

h) that, even prior to WSIS, in addition to ITU activities, various activities were being executed by many organizations and entities to bridge the digital divide;

i) that the use of ICTs enhances social, economic, cultural and environmental growth, contributes to sustainable development and offers new opportunities for developed and developing countries to take advantage of the benefits offered by new technologies;

j) that there is a need for affordable digital services in developing countries, which are enabled by the ICT revolution;

k) that Resolution 70/125 of the United Nations General Assembly, on the overall review of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, recognizes that speed, stability, affordability, language, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities are now basic aspects of quality, and that a high-speed broadband connection is now a factor in facilitating sustainable development,

considering

- a) that, even with all the developments described above and the improvement observed in some respects, in numerous developing countries ICTs and ICT applications are still not affordable to the majority of people, particularly those living in rural or remote areas;
- b) that each region, country and area must tackle its own specific issues regarding the digital divide, with emphasis on cooperation with others in order to benefit from experience gained;
- c) that many countries may not have the necessary basic infrastructure, long-term plans, laws, regulations and such like in place for the development of ICT and ICT applications;
- d) that LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and countries with economies in transition still face particular problems in bridging the digital divide and would benefit from special measures for the development of telecommunications/ICTs and to improve their connectivity;
- e) that it is necessary to study and analyse the social, demographic, economic and technological context of the communities in which it is necessary to deploy telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and implement plans for capacity building;
- f) that implementing policies that promote access to telecommunication/ICT services in rural, isolated and underserved areas has proven to be a crucial tool for bridging the digital divide;
- g) that it is important to identify sustainable best practices to deploy high-speed broadband networks to help developing countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- h) that quality of broadband access will promote inclusion and support the vision of an information society,

considering further

- a) that telecommunication/ICT facilities, services and applications are not only the consequence of economic growth, but a prerequisite for social, cultural and environmental development, including economic growth;
- b) that telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications are an integral part of the national, regional and international development process;
- c) that a favourable environment, which includes the necessary policies, skills and technical capacities to use and develop technologies, is considered to be as important as infrastructure investments in telecommunications/ICTs;
- d) that recent progress, and particularly the convergence of telecommunication, information, broadcasting and computer technologies and services, in some countries, are agents of change for the information and knowledge societies;
- e) that there is a continuing need in most developing countries for investment in various development sectors, while giving priority to investment in the telecommunication/ICT sector, in view of the pressing need for telecommunications/ICTs as a basis for growth and development in other sectors;
- f) that, in this situation, national digital e-strategies should be linked to overall development goals;
- g) that it continues to be necessary to provide those responsible for developing standards with relevant and timely information on the role and general contribution of ICTs and ICT applications to overall development plans;
- h) that past studies undertaken at the initiative of the Union for assessing the benefits of telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications in the sector have had a salutary effect in other sectors and are a necessary condition for their development;
- i) that the use of terrestrial and satellite systems to give access to local communities located in rural or remote areas without increasing connection costs due to distance and other geographic characteristics must be considered an extremely useful tool for bridging the digital divide;

j) that satellite broadband services make it possible to provide cost-effective communications solutions with great connectivity, speed and reliability in metropolitan, rural and even remote areas, becoming an essential engine for the economic and social development of countries and regions;

k) that the development of low-cost equipment is important for network deployment in unserved and/or underserved areas;

l) that the use of telecommunications/ICTs creates opportunities and benefits for the economy, including the digital economy;

m) that the sharing of telecommunication infrastructure could be an effective means of deploying telecommunication networks, in particular in unserved and/or underserved areas,

stressing

a) the important role played by telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications in the development of e-government, labour, agriculture, health, education, transport, industry, human rights, environmental protection, trade and transfer of information for social welfare, among others, and in the general economic and social progress of developing countries, especially for people living in rural or remote areas;

b) that telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and applications are central to achieving the goal of ensuring digital inclusion for all, enabling sustainable, ubiquitous and affordable access to information,

mindful

a) that some Member States have applied their national strategies and regulatory frameworks to help bridge the digital divide at the national level;

b) that various ITU Member States have developed national strategies and programmes to encourage investment in implementing projects to deploy telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and networks,

appreciating

- a) the various studies that have been carried out as part of the programme of technical cooperation and assistance activities of the Union;
- b) that ITU, in keeping with its duties and mandate, is helping to bridge the digital divide at the national, regional and international levels by facilitating the connectivity of telecommunication/ICT networks and services, in order to follow up on and meet the key goals and objectives of WSIS,

resolves

- 1 that implementation of Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) should continue;
- 2 that the Union should continue to organize, sponsor and conduct necessary studies in order to highlight, in a different and changing context, the contribution of ICTs and ICT applications to overall development;
- 3 that the Union should continue to act as a clearing-house mechanism for the exchange of information and expertise in this regard, within the implementation of the 2017 Buenos Aires Action Plan and in partnership with other appropriate organizations, and implement initiatives, programmes and projects aimed at promoting access to telecommunications/ICTs and ICT applications;
- 4 that ITU, in cooperation with the relevant organizations, continue its task of preparing adequate ICT reference indicators for measuring the digital divide, collecting statistical data, measuring the impact of ICTs and facilitating a comparative analysis of digital integration, which will continue to be a fundamental need in support of economic growth;
- 5 that ITU continue its work and activities to support Member States, upon request, in strengthening their regulatory and policy frameworks through sharing information on national programmes for unserved and/or underserved areas within their territories;
- 6 that ITU facilitate and promote the development of high-speed broadband infrastructure, including relevant programmes to extend access,

continues to invite

the administrations and governments of Member States, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, regional telecommunication organizations, financial institutions and providers of telecommunication equipment and services and ICTs to extend their support for the satisfactory implementation of this resolution,

continues to encourage

all agencies responsible for development aid and assistance, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), UNDP and regional and national development funds, as well as donor and recipient Member States of the Union, to continue to attach importance to ICTs in the development process and to accord high priority for resource allocation to this sector,

instructs the Secretary-General

- 1 to bring this resolution to the attention of all interested parties including, in particular, UNDP, IBRD, regional funds and national development funds for cooperation in implementing this resolution;
- 2 to report annually to the ITU Council on the progress made in the implementation of this resolution;
- 3 to arrange for the wide dissemination of the findings resulting from the activities carried out in accordance with this resolution,

instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, in coordination with the Directors of the other Bureaux, within their respective mandates

- 1 to continue to assist the Member States and Sector Members in developing a policy and regulatory framework for ICTs and ICT applications that serves development;
- 2 to continue to assist Member States and Sector Members with strategies that expand access to telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, particularly for rural or remote areas;

- 3 to evaluate models for affordable and sustainable systems for access to information in rural or remote areas, communications and ICT applications on the global network, based on studies of these models;
- 4 to compile and disseminate best practices and regulatory experiences on national and regional strategies employed to promote investment in telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and services in unserved and/or underserved areas, utilizing possible means within countries and/or regions, which may include universal service funds in certain countries, where appropriate;
- 5 to continue to conduct, within available resources, case studies concerning the development of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and services, in particular within unserved and/or underserved areas such as rural and remote areas, as far as possible;
- 6 to compile and disseminate guiding principles that bring together best practices for the sharing of telecommunication network infrastructure, as appropriate;
- 7 to promote and facilitate collaborative actions between the different Sectors of the Union to carry out studies, projects and inter-related activities identified in action plans of the Sectors, aiming to complement the development of national telecommunication networks;
- 8 to continue to support Member States by providing a database of experts in the required field, and to fund the necessary actions for bridging the digital divide for developing countries within the resources allocated under the financial plan;
- 9 to strengthen cooperation and coordination with the relevant international and regional organizations, in particular those of the developing countries, in activities related to bridging the digital divide;

10 to provide assistance on capacity building, creating a culture of learning and collaboration, on how to navigate and extract benefit from the new industrial revolution, by building programmes or joint programmes in fields relevant to bridging the digital divide, in accordance with the SDGs, within the mandate of ITU,

instructs the Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau

to implement actions, in coordination with the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, in order to support studies and projects and, at the same time, promote joint activities aiming to build capacities for increasingly efficient use of the orbit/spectrum resource, with the purpose of expanding affordable access to satellite broadband and facilitating connectivity between networks, and between different zones, countries and regions, especially in developing countries,

instructs the ITU Council

- 1 to allocate adequate funds, within approved budgetary resources, for the implementation of this resolution;
- 2 to review the Secretary-General's reports and take appropriate measures to ensure the implementation of this resolution;
- 3 to submit a progress report on this resolution to the next plenipotentiary conference,

invites Member States

- 1 to continue to undertake concerted action in order to achieve the objectives of Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017);
- 2 to conduct consultations with the beneficiaries of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure plans, programmes and investment, considering current differences stemming from the social conditions and dynamics of the population, so as to ensure suitable appropriation of ICTs;

3 to promote the implementation of policies to foster public and private investments for the development and construction of radiocommunication systems, including satellite systems, in their own countries and regions, and to contemplate the inclusion of their use in the national and/or regional broadband plans as an additional tool that will help bridge the digital divide and meet telecommunication needs, especially in developing countries.

(Antalya, 2006) – (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) – (Rev. Busan, 2014) – (Rev. Dubai, 2018)
