



# INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

**WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT  
CONFERENCE (WTDC-98)**

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**Agenda item: 2.3**

**PLENARY MEETING**

## **Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of)**

### **1 Introduction**

The Administration of Saudi Arabia has the pleasure and honour in congratulating the Administration of Malta for hosting this "Second World Telecommunication Development Conference" which is being held in this historical city of Valletta. Thanks and appreciation are also extended to the Administration of Argentina for the excellent arrangements and hospitality during the last Conference in Buenos Aires four years ago which was the first world conference of this nature convened by ITU in accordance with the provisions in its Constitution. The foundation laid at that Conference should lead to the natural consequence of appropriate action by the present Conference to achieve progress towards the bridging of the gap developed and developing countries in the field of telecommunications.

### **2 Importance of the Conference**

This international Conference being held in Valletta has special importance and significance, due to the following reasons:

2.1 This Conference is the second in the series of world development conferences and the last in the 20th century. This event provides an opportunity to the world community to prepare for facing the challenges in the 21st century after gaining four year's of experience since the first conference in 1994.

2.2 This Conference is expected to consider the impact of major changes in the field of telecommunications (technical/economical/political) on developmental activities. The most important changes could be summarized as follows:

2.2.1 New technologies and applications such as appropriate aspects of Global Information Infrastructure (GII), Global Multimedia and Mobility.

2.2.2 Introduction of new services like the Global Mobile Personal Communication by Satellite (GMPCS). Contribution made by telecommunications to education through interactive television, telemedicine, disaster telecommunication, telecommunication in environment protection, telecommunication in rural areas etc.

2.2.3 The explosive growth of number of users on the Internet, data information, cellular mobile and pager services.

2.2.4 Acceptance of the principle of privatization and reformation of the telecommunication sector by Member States. More than 70 countries now have already undertaken the executive procedures to liberalize the telecommunication sector, review their policies, establish regulatory bodies and open their markets to private investments.

2.2.5 The enormous increase in the budget allocation of the private sector in the field of telecommunication and informatics.

2.2.6 The rapid increase of the dependency of global economy on telecommunications. New definitions have been adopted for items like electronic trade, trade in telecommunication, telemarketing etc.

2.2.7 The increased degree of concurrence of the Member States with the idea of one global network for telecommunication and informatics, which had been introduced at the last development conference.

2.2.8 The creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and adoption of the Agreement on Basic Telecommunications in 1997.

2.3 In brief the world now recognizes that telecommunication has become a vital component in every aspect of human life, whether it is economical, political, educational, medical or environmental. The extent of development in telecommunications is such that an average person spends a considerable part of his time in using different categories of telecommunications and in some cases, even more than with his family. In other words, telecommunication became a new partner in our day-to-day life and so we should be able to address its developmental aspects in a constructive way.

2.4 The Members and Sector Members of ITU should focus on the evolution of the above-mentioned global changes and fulfil their responsibility by seizing this valuable opportunity to formulate specific and imaginative policies and strategies of the Development Sector for implementation during the next few years. The guidance provided to the Development Sector should highlight the effective use of its resources to assist developing countries in dealing with the accelerated development and the rapidly evolving changes in the telecommunication and informatics industry and services. The fundamental goal is to achieve "**One Global Network of Telecommunication and Informatics**". This achievement is not possible without covering the economic and financial barriers between developing and developed countries and this is the major problem faced by the developing and less developed countries. Basic services must reach the poor with reasonable prices within their income limits and without additional strain on the budget of their countries or pushing them further towards the debt trap, hardship and bankruptcy. Of course, bridging of technical barriers among the countries is also a matter for serious consideration.

### **3 Establishment of Development Sector and the challenges of the future**

3.1 During the 130 years since its inception on 17 May 1865, ITU has been making significant contributions in the field of telecommunications. Although it has been actively carrying out its tasks in the fields of radio and standardization for the past several decades, the thrust in the field of development came after the establishment of an independent sector for development by the decision of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Nice in 1989. In fact the real activity for the Development Sector started after the end of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Kyoto in 1994.

3.2 The Development Sector is an upcoming and young Sector of ITU. It has an uphill task of many responsibilities and future challenges, which could be summarized as follows:

3.2.1 Provide necessary advice and assistance in the efforts made to overcome the gap and the barriers between the developed and developing countries for bridging the missing link, taking into consideration the different conditions in and complex circumstances of each developing country.

3.2.2 There are basic differences between the working methods, constitution, financial resources and target of the Development Sector in comparison to the other two Sectors of Radiocommunication and Standardization. As most of the work of both the Radiocommunication and Standardization Sectors is of vital interest and direct relevance to industry and technical studies, there is, in general, active participation by developed countries in these Sectors. The work of the Development Sector and its activities are of prime importance to the developing countries. It is well known that the progress made in developing countries in telecommunications results in significant benefits to developed countries also, both directly and indirectly. It is therefore necessary for developed countries to participate actively in the Development Sector and contribute to the universal development of telecommunications. Similarly, it is also the responsibility of telecommunication industry to make dedicated efforts in this direction. The financial and investment sector has to play a very significant and perhaps, a dominant role in the development of telecommunications in developing countries. The Development Sector of ITU is, therefore, required to actively interact with a wider cross-section of society.

3.3 The advanced countries consider both Radiocommunication and Standardization Sectors as important to them, in order to protect their interest in an environment of rapid scientific and technological advances. Similarly developing countries consider the Development Sector as an impartial guide to assist them in meeting the challenges due to the rapid obsolescence in technology and to reach safer shores in a turbulent situation. The broad spectrum of activities of the Development Sector and the extent of efforts required to discharge its duties effectively, would call for matching resources, both in quality and quantity.

3.4 In brief the Development Sector is a newly born entity which has come into existence in order to provide assistance in bridging the enormous gap between developed and developing countries. The support provided to the Development Sector by the developed countries is considered to be far below the expectations. It is needless to emphasize the necessity of providing increased and sustained resources to the Development Sector, in order to enable it to face the challenges in the universal development of telecommunications.

#### **4 Proposals for future promotion of the Development Sector**

The ITU and its Development Sector deserve all praise and appreciation for their tireless efforts in the area of assisting developing countries and LDCs to face the evolving global changes in technology, economy, investment and trade. In spite of severe financial limitations, the Development Sector has been working hard during the last few years to find a reasonable solution to the very complicated equation, and to satisfy all the concerned parties whether big or small, rich or poor. The Administration of Saudi Arabia has been closely associated with the activities of the Development Sector and has been regularly following its progress. The following proposals are made on the basis of the experience gained in the functioning of the Development Sector, with a view to helping this Sector to achieve its targets and goals.

#### **4.1 Strengthening the regional presence of the Union**

##### **ARS/114/1**

The regional presence should be strengthened through extending the role of regional offices and increasing their scope of responsibilities by providing more financial and human resources e.g. specialized experts and regional advisors.

#### **4.2 Strengthening the relations with relevant regional organizations**

##### **ARS/114/2**

4.2.1 The Union should offer the required support to the relevant regional organizations to enable them to function effectively. It should also provide necessary information on telecommunication status in these regions in order to avoid any duplication of work and to identify any gaps in work programmes. The possibility of formulating and implementing development projects jointly with regional organizations should be given serious consideration

4.2.2 The ITU should find out some ways and means to enable these regional organizations to attend the different meetings of study groups and main conferences being held by the Development Sector by arranging necessary fellowships to their representatives, as the presence of such organizations is helpful to the work of the Development Sector.

4.2.3 The ITU should develop formal arrangements and cooperative relationships with regional organizations (e.g. signing a memorandum of understanding or protocol of cooperation between ITU and regional organizations) to encourage them to cooperate and coordinate with the Union through this legal framework.

#### **4.3 Extending the base of membership for the Telecommunication Development Advisory Board (TDAB)**

##### **ARS/114/3**

The Development Sector should take necessary action to broaden the membership of the advisory board to enable the related entities to participate in this important forum. Experience with the functioning of the TDAB during the last five years indicated the vital need for keeping its membership open to all Members of the Development Sector. This could be achieved by a two pronged approach. WTDC-98 may direct the Director of BDT to take immediate steps to broaden and increase the membership of TDAB. It may also recommend the Plenipotentiary Conference to consider amending No. 227 of the Convention to designate TDAB as Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG), in line with such groups in other sectors and to keep the membership of TDAG open to all Members of this Sector.

#### **4.4 Increasing the cooperation/coordination between the Development Sector on one hand and Radiocommunication and Standardization Sectors on the other**

##### **ARS/114/4**

It is evident that there is good internal cooperation among the three Sectors i.e. Development, Radiocommunication and Standardization (D, R and S). The recently held joint meetings of the three Advisory Bodies (TSAG, RAG and TDAB) is one of the steps for improving this coordination. Similar steps for continuing this cooperation is desirable and necessary. The extensive

use of modern telecommunication facilities including electronic mail and electronic document handling techniques (EDH) will also lead to facilitating such a coordination process.

#### **4.5 Increasing the cooperation between the Development Sector and developing countries and the LDCs**

##### **ARS/114/5**

4.5.1 There is considerable scope for improving the working methodology in regional telecommunication development conferences organized by the "D" Sector in order to increase the interaction between the countries belonging to these regions. Further, the resolutions and recommendations of these conferences should express specific views and concerns of countries of the regions concerned rather than the repetition of similar texts of other conferences or texts routinely prepared by the ITU. The aim should be to achieve something logical and applicable to the region rather than proposing non-pragmatic and non-productive suggestions that cannot be implemented.

4.5.2 The delivery of technical assistance may be improved by increasing the visits by ITU experts to the said countries, as they will be less expensive and effective instrument to work with. These short-term missions by experts will also provide an opportunity to ITU to obtain first hand information about the difficulties and requirements of the said countries in addition to ensuring that the expertise and information would reach the grass root levels.

4.5.3 Interaction between "D" Sector and developing countries could be improved by informing these countries on a regular basis about the latest/updated developmental news either in the form of publications/brochures or through electronic media and also by seeking similar information from these countries. In any case the barrier of language of these countries should be overcome by ensuring that this information reaches them in the appropriate official language of the Union, in order to derive the maximum benefit.

#### **4.6 Increasing the cooperation between the Development Sector and developed countries**

##### **ARS/114/6**

Cooperation between the "D" Sector and developed countries could be improved by informing these countries on a regular basis about the latest news of development process on developing countries, actual requirements, available opportunities, future planning etc., in addition to their evaluation of the impact of new technologies and new services in these countries. On the other hand developed countries should inform the Development Sector regularly about development projects, technical assistance projects, training opportunities, etc., which they could provide for developing countries.

#### **4.7 Increasing the number of Sector Members**

##### **ARS/114/7**

Dedicated efforts are required to ensure increased participation and involvement of all concerned entities in the development process, including in appropriate decision-making.

## **4.8 Mobilization of financial resources of the Sector**

### **ARS/114/8**

This could be achieved by following a variety of methods. The following are some examples for consideration:

- 4.8.1 Increasing the share of the Development Sector in the general biennial budget of the Union.
- 4.8.2 Getting the maximum use of the surplus funds of Telecom Exhibitions and Forums
- 4.8.3 Using the surplus funds from sale of Union publication's after reviewing and marginally increasing the sale prices.
- 4.8.4 Urging telecommunication industry and operators from advanced countries to increase their contributory share to the Sector.
- 4.8.5 Collecting annual voluntary contributions from companies, manufacturers etc. which are associated with telecommunications and information systems.
- 4.8.6 Action may be taken to designate the year 2000 as the year of "Telecommunication Development" and make efforts towards collecting additional funds by organizing profitable events.

## **4.9 Improvement in the formation of development projects**

### **ARS/114/9**

The Conference may consider the importance of reviewing the current methods of implementing the development projects through UNDP. Many of the developing countries feel that a large percentage of the budget of these projects are consumed in different forms like administration cost, training, studies etc. thus significantly reducing the amount allocated to buy the requested equipment in the budget. The formation and implementation of the projects could be improved in order to provide satisfaction to the recipients of the assistance.

## **5 Support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Development Sector**

The Administration of Saudi Arabia attaches great importance to all the activities of ITU and has been making significant contributions to its various activities since it joined the Union more than fifty years back. In financial terms also its contribution (10 unit class) is highest among the developing countries and comparable to a majority of developed countries. This reflects the degree of importance given by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the leading role played by the Union in the development of telecommunications, in promotion of cooperation and in supporting the developing countries. Saudi Arabia supports the Union also through its partnership in the regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, GCC and ARABSAT in which it plays a very constructive, important and leading role.

The commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the developmental activities of the Union is evident from its participation in all of the activities of the Development Sector. At present it is the Chairman of TDAB (Telecommunication Development Advisory Board) and it will continue to play this active role in the Development Sector in the future also.