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TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE (WTDC-98)

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PLENARY MEETING

Contribution of Indonesia

ITU'S REGIONAL PRESENCE

1   Introduction

Experience confirms that the telecommunication sector in the Asia Pacific Region as well as other regions is ripe with potential and opportunity. The expansion of privatization and commercialization throughout the region has quickened the pace of development and increased the number of players. The ITU could play a crucial role in telecommunication sector development activities if the proper approach and targets are pursued.

In their wisdom, the ITU's Members created the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) to reach out and meet the challenges of telecommunication development. Further, the Members structured the BDT with a potent asset to deliver it's objectives, the regional presence. The regional presence gives the ITU a front-line interface with both its Members of State and Sector Members, and first-hand knowledge and contact with the needs and actions required to bring about change. The ITU's development efforts through the BDT and it's regional presence can not only enhance regulatory mechanisms and national capabilities of developing countries, but also can create more business opportunities, and improve the rationality and security of doing business in developing countries.

Unfortunately, the full implementation of the BDT's regional presence particularly in the Asia and Pacific Region, has not been as expected which is resulting in its lack of competitiveness, scope, timelessness, efficiency and ultimately the success of the BDT with the region.

Considering the above, it is necessary that this World Telecommunication Development Conference, 1998, should once again emphasize the crucial role of the ITU in the development of telecommunications in coping with the changing environment, particularly in increasing the effectiveness of the role of its regional presence in assisting its member's activities.

2   The importance of the ITU regional presence

The topic of the ITU regional presence has been discussed and studied continuously since the Nairobi Plenipotentiary Conference (1982) until and including the ITU Council 1997.

Reviewing the plethora of documents, studies and other information on the regional presence, it can be concluded that the ITU Members of State, particularly those in the Asia and Pacific Region, hold the following principles as the foundation for their ITU regional presence:

- The ITU presence in the regions should be strengthened to improve efficiency and assistance to ITU Members especially the developing ones (Resolution 20, Nairobi, 1982; Resolution 17, Nice, 1989, Kyoto, 1994).

- The regional set-ups should be delegated with as large a degree of responsibility and commensurate authority as practicable, for the required direct involvement with the needs and particularities of each region (the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), functions and structures, Document CA45/6967, ITU Council 1990, paragraph 141).

- The staff of the BDT, in composite groupings and in its totality, must respond as a multi-disciplinary team, fully conscious of the demanding complexities of the work. In addition to a core staff which should be assured of long-term assignments with possibilities for career advancements to provide the needed degree of continuity, there should be provision for recruitment of complements of specialist support staff for limited periods for specific activities. In general, there should always be the possibility for transfer of staff among the headquarters and field offices (the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) functions and structures, Document CA45/6967, ITU Council 1990, paragraph 143).

- The make-up of the regional presence should include one senior regional representative, area representatives, regional experts and project coordinators/experts for intercountry projects, project managers/experts for country projects. The personnel, as a group, are intended *inter alia* to be on a continuous basis, their numbers and individual locations being determined by needs, availability of funds and host facilities, coordination requirements with other regional/subregional institutions, and proximity to the targeted beneficiary countries. This group may be construed as a standing regional presence (the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), functions and structures, Document CA45/6967, ITU Council 1990, paragraphs 124-129).

3 A note for reconsideration

Having reaffirmed the basic principles for a strong and viable regional presence, the following item should be noted for reconsideration since it adversely affects the ITU's regional presence. A continuing shortage of critical specialist expertise exists in the Asia and Pacific Region. In 1992, the human resource post for the Region was frozen due to a staffing change. Since that time, the post has been left unfilled. Existing staff have been required to cover these specialist requirements. The Region has been in need of legislative, regulatory and financial expertise for several years. Only through a regional project and short-term assistance have these continuing needs been met.

4 Principles for ITU regional presence

In order for the regional presence to play its role effectively, it must be given the respect, authority, and means to become fully integrated into the organizational and functional structures of the ITU and BDT. Unfortunately, to date, evidence indicates that only incomplete efforts have been made to accomplish this. Numerous reasons have been given for delays in effecting full implementation. Stronger and more concerted efforts should be made to assure that the regional presence is more fully integrated into the organizational and functional structures of ITU and BDT.

The direction of strengthening should be toward the field not toward recentralization.

- The make-up of the regional presence should include one officer at the policy level (D1), and others at the representational and specialist levels (P5). It is essential to have policy-level representation in headquarters (global policy level) and in the field (regional and operational policy level). Both levels of policy needs should be catered for in the appropriate locations,

- An MIS is available at headquarters, however, inadequate on-line access from most countries where ITU has its field offices reduces its value for them significantly. Effective regional presence must be based upon access to adequate information. The field offices need information on-line - concerning budgets, programmes, projects etc. An information system of this type should be fully implemented in the field offices without delay.

6   Recommendations

a)   An organizational and functional structure for the regional presence with levels of authority and responsibility as defined above be agreed upon without further delay;

b)   proposals on the regional presence should lead to practical actions to fully establish the BDT's presence in each Region consistent with the needs and particular features of each Region, and

c)   reflect a clearly defined role and objectives for the regional presence consistent with R.27, items 2, ITU-2000 Recommendations.

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