INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION
TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE (WTDC-98)

Valletta, Malta, 23 March - 1 April 1998

Document 189(Rev.1)-E
28 March 1998
Original: English

For action

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE PLENARY ON LDCS

The Working Group met on 25 March 1998 at 1900-2130 hours to discuss matters on the following agenda:

1)   special actions for LDCs (Document 12, Corrigendum 1 to Document 12);

2)   proposed actions for 1999-2003;

3)   other business.

The Working Group held its second meeting on 28 March 1998 from 1400 to 1715 hours to discuss the draft report of its first meeting.

The Working Group decided:

1   to take note of the implementation of the programme for LDCs as contained in Chapter III of the BAAP and as reported in Document 12 and Corrigendum 1 to Document 12 of WTDC-98, and expressed satisfaction with the activities executed;

2   to adopt the four areas of priority for the new programme for LDCs for the period 1999-2003 as contained in paragraph 4.3 of Document 12 of WTDC-98;

3   to add a new priority area to specifically cover financing of telecommunication development and tariff issues, and to detail activities in this field, for inclusion in the action plan for LDCs;

4   to adopt a new programme of action for LDCs on the five priority areas cited in 2 and 3 above, and the activities associated therewith as shown in Annex 1 to this report;

5   to adopt the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 respectively of Document 12 of WTDC-98 and to translate these into a draft resolution as proposed by Tanzania and Mali and as contained in Annex 2 to this report;

6   to establish an open-ended working party to refine decisions 4 and 5 above for presentation to the Plenary for further consideration and possible adoption. The resolution seeks, *inter alia*, to request a specific budget for implementation of the programme of action for LDCs;

7   to urge BDT to encourage the LDCs to participate more actively in its work, particularly in the work of the study groups and, subsequently, to determine, by means of a questionnaire, the changing interests and priorities of the LDCs and the reasons for their limited participation in BDT activities.

8   In the Special Programme for LDCs, as cited in 4 above and as set forth in Annex 1 to Document 189, funding shall come initially from the enforcement of the commitment of the BAAP to dedicate at least 70% of BDT funds to these priorities for LDCs and additionally from untied voluntary contributions as well as any surplus income from world and regional telecommunication exhibitions.

9   The second meeting of the Working Group of the Plenary approved the report of the first meeting and annexes thereto, with some modifications.

The meeting further took note of the very valuable consultative process which had taken place prior to this Conference in the form of a questionnaire (as analysed in Annex 2 to Document 12) and two preparatory meetings for WTDC that brought about the initial choice of the priority areas which will constitute Chapter 3 of the new successor action plan as suggested in Section G.5 of the annex to the draft Strategic Plan for the Union (Document 75 of WTDC-98).

The participants regretted the poor attendance at the meeting of the Working Party on LDCs, that might be attributed to limited resources of the LDCs at conferences which restricts their participation in concurrently scheduled meetings.

                                                            Adama KONATE
                                                        Chairman, Working Group
                                                         of the Plenary on LDCs

ANNEX 1

Special programme for LDCs

A programme to make a difference

Introduction

Ever since ITU started giving assistance to LDCs under Resolution 19 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Malaga-Torremolinos, 1973), the assistance has been provided on an *ad hoc* basis, to meet certain gaps at administrations' request. From 1992, the situation was partially corrected with the introduction of a programme approach to assistance, such that certain selected priority areas were addressed. The small amount of funds available meant, however, that ITU assistance had to remain catalytic and was spread rather thinly for the increasing number of LDCs.

Past actions have produced mixed results. For a few LDCs there have been noteworthy successes, but for many the situation has not improved. On the contrary, it has worsened in some cases and is likely to continue to do so for various reasons like lack of political will, shortage of competent staff to organize the restructuring of the sector so as to engender competition of staff, to operate and manage networks efficiently, etc. In others, civil strife has compounded the scenario. Moreover, the current telecommunication environment, characterized by, *inter alia*, the shift from voice to multimedia networks, globalization and deregulation, has to be considered a strategic issue which calls for innovative action.

New strategy

It is proposed to introduce a new strategy which seeks to concentrate the Union's efforts on a number of selected LDCs each year, with the support of the recipient country itself and other development partners that the Union will mobilize to help. Such assistance could be initiated through a preliminary visit by a BDT official to an LDC which had expressed an interest. This initial assessment should, in particular, take into account the existence and availability of national or subregional expertise that could be of service in subsequent stages and, where appropriate, propose initiatives, in the contest of BDT's training activities, conducive to the prior emergence of such expertise.

Selection of the countries could be on the basis of their interest in these activities and their willingness to help finance the projects.

On the basis of negotiations, the countries concerned, BDT, ITU-D Sector Members, the private sector, financial institutions such as the World Bank, regional banks, etc. will participate in financing these projects. The projects will cover different areas, e.g. the preparation/implementation of a master plan, or restructuring of the telecommunication sector, introduction of new technologies/services and implementation of a pilot activity, etc., or a combination of areas as selected by the host country in consultation with the BDT experts. In this way the group of actors (experts/consultants) would be available to the country over a given period (say one year or more), and reasonably large funds would be spent to make an impact and a difference.

It is important that the countries selected show their interest by their participation in pilot projects or other selected activities. During the period between plenipotentiary conferences, well over half of the LDCs (the neediest) will have received this type of concentrated assistance, which is designed to produce concrete results and to make a difference.

The establishment of partnerships will be an important factor in the success of the programmes. Such partnerships may be realized through formal agreements or informal arrangements, as may be determined by the partners concerned.

Objectives, targets and follow-up

Objectives

a)   to reform the telecommunication sector so as to introduce new structures which are more amenable to faster and sustained telecommunication development, with well managed and modern networks;

b)   to increase the penetration of telecommunication services so as to achieve universal access to those services.

Targets

a)   fully meeting the demand for telecommunication services in urban areas. This means virtually eliminating the waiting list for services by the year 2005, which translates into an average urban main line (ML) density of 10 per 100 population;

b)   achieving a rural ML density of 2 ML per 10 000 inhabitants. This density would not yet amount to easy access to telecommunication services as suggested in the Missing Link report, but would be a bold move in that direction.

Follow-up

The BDT shall develop a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the Special Programme for LDCs.

Priority areas

The regular assistance to LDCs (workshops/seminars/fellowships) would continue, but would also be limited to priority areas identified in Section 4.3 a)-d) of Document WTDC98/12, and with the addition of a fifth area as decided by the Working Group of the Plenary on LDCs, namely:

1)   Introduction of new technologies

2)   Sector restructuring

3)   Rural telecommunication development

4)   Human resources development/management

5)   Financing and tariffs.

The suggested action under each of the above priority areas follows below.

ANNEX

Special Programme for LDCs, 1999-2003

NB This is not a programme as such. It is a listing of actions on the new priority areas for the next cycle as contained in Section 4 of WTDC Document 12 and as modified by the Working Group of the Plenary. The activities are generic in nature, and the focal points concerned will derive an annual programme of action each year from them, covering national, regional and global activities/projects.

Introduction of new technologies

a)   New technologies and new services

•   Seminars/workshops on:

– **GMPCS:** in accordance with Opinion 5 of the 1st World Policy Forum.

– Assistance on IMT-2000.

– **Internet:** to cover various aspects of a potentially complex service.

– **Wireless loop access**: for extending services easily to areas not yet covered by the local cable network. Assistance will compare TDMA and CDMA advantages while cost benefit studies will include spectrum pricing.

– Technological convergence.

– **Broadband transmission over existing copper wire loops:** to increase the capacity of existing local copper cables in order to connect more subscribers to the network.

– **Digital audio and video broadcasting:** as covered in Study Questions 1/2 and 8/2.

– **Planning:** as covered under PLANITU and other general planning issues.

– **Spectrum management:** as widely acclaimed in the questionnaire.

– Telemedicine, tele-education and other services.

•   Dissemination of outputs of Study Question 1/2.

•   Dissemination of outputs of SQ 3/1, 5/1, 6/2, 7/2 and 8/2.

•   Dissemination of outputs of SQ 2/2.

b)   Planning

•   Continuing implementation of PLANITU at country level.

•   Updating the guidelines for the preparation of business-oriented development plans.

•   Dissemination of outputs of SQ 2/2.

c)   Spectrum management

•   Seminars/workshops on BASMS.

•   Updating/upgrading software on BASMS and translation to various languages.

Sector restructuring

•   Assistance in sector restructuring (general)

•   Assistance in legislation on telecommunication entities and regulations

•   Assistance in setting up regulatory bodies and monitoring the regulatory framework.

- Assistance to newly-created telecommunication private companies
- Policy choices in a new telecommunication environment
- Dissemination of outputs of SQ 2/1
- Fostering partnerships

Rural telecommunication development

- Undertake pilot projects and community telecentre studies
- Implement pilot projects and community telecentres
- Seminars/workshops on new technologies for rural communications
- Disseminate outputs of SQ 4/2
- Application of GMPCS in rural/remote areas
- Establish policy to promote universal access.

Human resources development/management

a)   Training

- Support for and/or strengthening of regional or subregional training centres
- Support for national training centres
- Training in CSMS, TMN techniques
- Training managers of training Centres in training
- Management techniques
- Computer-based training
- Training in the convergence of cellular and WLL technologies with existing technologies

b)   Management

- Seminars/workshops for senior/middle level telecommunication managers
- Seminars/workshops on financial management and resource mobilization
- Seminars/workshops in network management
- Seminars on legal and regulatory aspects
- Mandevtel
- Dissemination of outputs of SQ 5/2.

c)   Maintenance

- Seminars/workshops on CSMS and TMN techniques
- Development of CSMS
- Preparation of TMN based guidelines
- Dissemination of outputs of SQ 3/2.

Financing and tariffs

- Fostering partnerships on investment in telecommunications and assisting LDCs in obtaining soft loans on concessional terms
- Assistance in trade in services as per relevant WTO agreements and the second World Telecommunication Policy Forum Opinion B
- Dissemination of outputs of SG Question 4/1

- Assistance in tariff studies and their implementation
- Assistance to LDCs to develop a cost-based tariff policy and to modulate the effects of the reduction of the accounting rate.

Other actions

Fellowships

Fellowships will be provided to promote the participation of LDC representatives in BDT activities, particularly study groups. These fellowships will cover mainly individual training and group training (workshops/seminars) and participation in certain meetings/conferences.

Equipment

Equipment (computer software and hardware) may be donated to LDCs as it becomes available. Network equipment and test gear may be provided for pilot activities. Partners are encouraged to inform the BDT of availability of equipment that could be donated to LDCs.

Projects

Technical cooperation projects and other activities executed by BDT under UNDP and other funding arrangements.

Regional activities

LDCs may benefit from any regional or subregional initiatives such as the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa: African Information Society.

Chapter 4

Execution of technical cooperation projects and other direct assistance under UNDP and other funding arrangements for the regions:

Africa

Americas

Arab States

Asia and the Pacific

ANNEX 2

DRAFT RESOLUTION

SPECIAL ACTIONS FOR THE LDCS

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Valletta, 1998),

recalling

Resolution 1 of WTDC-94 and Resolution 30 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994), Resolutions 2 and 5 of AF-RTDC-96 and AR-RTDC-96, respectively, and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) statement on universal access and the right to communicate,

concerned

a)   that, for a variety of reasons, the telecommunication networks in a number of LDCs remain in a very poor state of development in both urban and rural areas;

b)   that multilateral and bilateral flows of technical assistance and investment finance to LDCs is constantly declining,

cognizant

of the fact that improved telecommunication networks in these countries will be the major force behind their socio-economic recovery and development,

resolves

to endorse the new priority areas for the next four years and the associated programme of action for LDCs,

instructs the Director of BDT

1   to implement fully a programme of assistance for the LDCs as contained in Annex 1 to Document 189(Rev?), funding coming initially from the commitment, as in Buenos Aires, to dedicate at least 70% of the BDT funds to these priorities for LDCs;

2   to give priority to LDCs in implementing other BDT programmes of assistance to developing countries;

3   to pay special attention to suburban and rural telecommunication development with a view to achieving universal access to telecommunication services;

4   to strengthen the unit for LDCs, within existing resources, by grouping together the officials concerned with implementing actions in the priority areas selected in order to enhance coordination of assistance to LDCs,

requests the Secretary-General

1   to request the Plenipotentiary Conference (Minneapolis, 1998) to allocate a specific budget for LDCs with a view to enabling BDT to undertake increased and programmed activities for the LDCs;

2   to continue enhancing the assistance provided to LDCs through other resources and in particular through untied voluntary contributions as well as any surplus income from world and regional telecommunication exhibitions and forums;

3   to seek and propose new and innovative measures capable of generating additional funds to be used for telecommunication development in the LDCs,

calls upon governments of the LDCs

1   to accord higher priority to telecommunication development and to adopt measures and policies that are conducive to bringing about faster development of telecommunications in their countries;

2   in selecting technical cooperation activities financed by UNDP, to accord high priority to telecommunication activities/projects,

calls upon other Member States and Sector Members

to establish partnerships with LDCs, either directly or with the assistance of BDT, in order to bring increased investment to the telecommunication sector and to stimulate the modernization and expansion of networks in those countries.