



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

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

Valletta, Malta, 23 March - 1 April 1998

**Document 198-E
27 March 1998
Original: English**

For action

Agenda item: 1.3, 2.0

PLENARY MEETING

**Barbados, Canada, United States of America, Ghana, India (Republic of),
Kenya (Republic of), Mali (Republic of), Norway, New Zealand,
Philippines (Republic of the), Syrian Arab Republic, Saint Vincent
and the Grenadines, Senegal (Republic of), Singapore (Republic of),
South Africa (Republic of), Suriname (Republic of),
Tanzania (United Republic of)**

**PROPOSAL FOR THE ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION ADDRESSING GENDER
AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

Introduction

Three meetings of the Special Session on Gender Issues were held during this World Telecommunications Development Conference (WTDC-98) in Valletta, Malta. At the opening session, the BDT Director, Mr. Ahmed Laouyane, invited the Special Session to consider ways of constructing an *Information Society* which would recognize the rapid pace of change in the sector and which would devise policies and programmes for infrastructure development, financing strategies and skills building which take account of differentials between men and women. He stressed that one of the major impacts of telecommunications development was in terms of far-reaching alteration in employment patterns. The Director urged the Session to undertake steps to achieve a gender balance in employment of professionals and support staff in telecommunication administrations, government and the private sector.

As a result of the discussions which took place during the Special Session, it is proposed that the following Resolution be adopted by WTDC-98, which includes the establishment of a task force on gender issues. This task force would carry out a range of activities aimed at ensuring that the benefits of telecommunications in developing countries and the emerging Information Society are made available to all women and men on a fair and equitable basis.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

**GENDER AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Valletta, 1998),

considering

- a) the purposes of the Union as stated in Article 1 of the Constitution (Geneva, 1992) include promoting "the extension of the benefits of the new telecommunication technologies to all the world's inhabitants";
- b) the responsibility of the ITU-D sector to facilitate and enhance telecommunications development by offering, organizing and coordinating technical cooperation and assistance activities;
- c) the Beijing Declaration - United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) - which seeks to ensure that women have equal access to information and communication as a means to furthering the advancement and empowerment of women and girls,

recognizing

- a) that telecommunications play a fundamental role in promoting social, political and economic development;
- b) that women in their multiple roles make a very important contribution to both social and economic life, particularly in the struggle against poverty in developing countries, and play a key role in shaping the attitudes, welfare and development of future generations;
- c) that full participation in policy and decision-making, and access to telecommunication services will enable women and other groups who have been traditionally disadvantaged, to derive benefits and make more effective contributions,

further recognizing

- a) that inadequate deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas makes it particularly difficult for women in such areas to gain access to information and telecommunication services;
- b) that while complex processes of convergence of technologies, liberalization and restructuring produce multiple impacts on employment in the telecommunications sector, viz. creating jobs, demand for new skills and training, they may also lead to job losses when insufficient attention is paid to those needs;
- c) that making better use of human resources and skills of women significantly adds to the pool of talent which will be needed in the new Information Society;
- d) that women constitute a substantial and often under-served consumer market for information and communication technologies,

conscious

- a) that because of lack of access to alternative communications facilities and high illiteracy levels, women in developing countries rely on broadcasting media as their key source of information;

b) that women and children are frequently most vulnerable during emergencies, and would benefit from improved access to emergency telecommunication services,

noting

a) that there has been insufficient attention to understanding the impacts of telecommunications systems and technologies on women;

b) that there have been few ITU telecommunications projects which have incorporated the perspectives and needs of women,

resolves

1 to establish a task force on gender issues to facilitate, develop and take forward a range of activities aimed at:

a) ensuring that the benefits of telecommunications and the emerging Information Society, are made available to all women and men in developing countries on a fair and equitable basis, (terms of reference for the task force is attached);

b) encouraging the recruitment, employment, training and advancement of women throughout the telecommunications field,

2 to incorporate the results of the Special Sessions on Gender Issues into the Valletta Action Plan and;

3 to integrate a gender perspective in the campaign for a Universal Right to Communicate,

requests that the Director of BDT

1 propose to the ITU Council inclusion of a gender perspective in the ITU Strategic Plan;

2 report back to the next World Telecommunication Development Conference on the results and progress made by the task force; and

3 transmit this Resolution to the 1998 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference,

further resolves that ITU-D

1 make a commitment to integrate a gender perspective in its policies and work programmes, including human resource development activities, study groups, seminars, conferences and workshops;

2 work closely with the task force to implement its programmes expeditiously;

3 extend its data collection activities, including the Telecommunications Indicator Series, to provide gender disaggregated statistics;

4 act as an enabling force for the development of an active network between various types of organizations of women involved in the information and telecommunications fields including non-governmental organizations (NGOs);

5 support efforts to identify technical and financial resources to carry out the programmes of the task force on gender issues,

also urges Member States, Sector Members, and intergovernmental organizations

- 1 to review and, as appropriate, revise their policies and practices to ensure that recruitment, employment, training and advancement of women and men are undertaken on a fair and equitable basis; and
- 2 to facilitate the employment of women in the telecommunications field including at senior levels of responsibility in the telecommunications administrations, government and regulatory bodies, intergovernmental organizations and in the private sector.

ANNEX

Terms of reference of the task force on gender issues

1 The Task Force on Gender Issues (TF/GI) will comprise BDT representatives, appointed by the Director of the BDT, as well as representatives of Member States, Sector Members, United Nations bodies, other regional/international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individual experts. The TF/GI will be an "open" group, welcoming all persons and organizations with relevant expertise to join and participate in its work.

2 The TF/GI shall be responsible to and report to the Director of the BDT.

3 Members of the TF/GI shall participate in all ITU-D activities to ensure that a gender perspective is included in its policies and work programmes, including human resource development activities, study groups, seminars, conferences and workshops.

4 The TF/GI will be responsible for:

- a) securing financial and other resources to carry out this work, including through partnerships with the private sector, multilateral development finance bodies and other donors; and
- b) defining its specific tasks, working methods and priorities.

5 The scope of work of the TF/GI will include, but not be limited to, priority programmes of ITU-D (i.e., sector reform, regulation and legislation, rural development and universal access, technologies and applications, finance and economics, partnerships with the private sector, human resource development and management) and other projects such as broadcasting, development of telecentres, telemedicine, tele-education, telecoms and trade, telecoms as a social service, telecoms and the environment, and telecoms and disaster preparedness and the Universal Right to Communicate campaign.

6 The TF/GI will serve as a source of expert advice, guidance and assistance to ITU-D on engendering its policies, work programmes and projects in telecommunications. It will also keep ITU-D abreast of progress made on gender issues by the United Nations system and Member States, and provide training for BDT staff on gender issues, as appropriate.

7 The TF/GI will undertake a comprehensive range of activities to increase participation of women in policy and decision-making, operations and regulation of the telecommunication sector.

8 The TF/GI shall assist ITU-D with awareness raising and information dissemination to sensitize all stakeholders in the telecommunications industry to the importance of these issues by working closely with existing women's communications networks, the Youth Network, the Platform for Communications and Democratization, and with specialist gender and development networks within the United Nations system, including those provided by UNIFEM and UNU-INTECH.