

To increase the benefits of C&I, many countries have adopted harmonized C&I regimes both at national and bi- or multi-lateral level. However, some developing countries have not yet done so because of a number of major challenges, such as the lack of appropriate/adequate infrastructure and technology development to be in a position to test or to recognize tested ICT equipment (e.g. accredited laboratories).

Availability of high quality performing products will accelerate widespread deployment of the infrastructure, technologies and associated services allowing people to access to the Information Society regardless of their location or chosen device and contributing to implement outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

In this respect, other outcomes of Plenipotentiary, ITU-D, ITU-T and ITU-R Resolutions and Recommendations and in particular PP-10 Resolution 177, WTDC-10 Resolution 47, WTSA-12 Resolution 76, and RA-12 Resolution 62 should serve as a basis for the study of this Question. Such as the framework of ITU's business plan developed upon request of ITU's Member States, which establish the following four Pillars:

- Pillar 1 : Conformance assessment;
- Pillar 2 : Interoperability;
- Pillar 3 : Capacity building;
- Pillar 4 : Establishment of C&I Regimes including building laboratories.

The Report presented by the Secretary-General to the ITU Council 2013, "Conformance and Interoperability Programme Status Report and Action Plan" (Document C13/24 (Rev.1)) was positively commented by the councillors that unanimously referred to the importance of activities relating to conformance and interoperability, supported the work done by ITU in that area, and urged the Union to continue that work.

2. Question for study

The question will address the following conformance and interoperability issues:

- a) In close collaboration with the relevant Programme(s) of the BDT the regional needs for such applications by developing countries shall be identified;
- b) To elaborate a methodology for the implementation of this Question, in particular gather evidence and information regarding current best practices being taken to build an overall framework on Conformance and Interoperability regimes taking into consideration progress achieved by the all ITU sectors in this regard shall be adopted;
- c) Promotion of Harmonized C&I Regimes with high potential to improve regional integration and to foster the availability of highly qualified institutions (e.g. Laboratories and Accreditation Bodies) that will contribute to bridge the Standardization Gap, reduce the Digital Divide and consequently, as is inherent to ICT technologies development, strengthen business environment for global players;
- d) Knowledge gathering on how developing countries can properly address harmonized C&I Regime challenges; consisting of legal, regulatory, qualified institutions and infrastructure;

- e) Information regarding establishment of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) between countries. Guidance on concepts and procedures to establish and manage Mutual Recognition Agreements;
- f) Methods and approaches to define ideal set of technical requirements for products and services aligned with the best international practices which will improve their value to users in terms of interoperability, quality and safety aspects;
- g) Techniques on market surveillance and maintenance of C&I regimes in order to guarantee the credibility and sustainability of the conformance assessment scheme put in place.

3. Expected output

In the next ITU-D study period 2014-2018, studies of various issues related to conformance and interoperability are to be reported, and among others the description of the technical, legislative and regulatory framework that would be needed to implement appropriate C&I programmes by developing countries. Economic impact to implement these C&I arrangements are also to be reported.

Specifically, the following outputs are envisaged:

- a) Set of harmonized Guidelines on technical, legal and regulatory aspects of C&I Regime;
- b) Feasibility studies set of guidelines regarding establishment of laboratories in different C&I Domains;
- c) Guidance on the framework and procedures to establish MRA;
- d) Customized C&I Regimes case of studies established at national, regional and global levels;
- e) Development of a methodology for assessing the situation of C&I regimes in place in the regions (or sub regions);
- f) Best practice regarding combat against counterfeit equipment;
- g) Experience sharing and case studies reports on C&I programmes implementation.

The question will ultimately contribute to international community's effort in adopting eco-friendly set of harmonized standards as well as in battling against counterfeit goods, since the countries can, through C&I Regime instruments, better control and authenticate products crossing their borders.

4 Timing

- Mid-term report is expected by 2015.
- Final report is expected by 2017.

5 Proposers

The issue of conformance and interoperability for ICT products and service is of extreme importance to all countries, particularly developing countries, and this new question will produce relevant outputs in reply to the relevant Questions for study in the next study period 2014-2018.

6 Sources of input

The major source of input will be the experiences of those countries that are facing conformance and interoperability issues. Contributions from Member States and Sector Members will be essential to the successful study of the question. Interviews, existing reports and surveys should also be used to gather data and information for finalization of a comprehensive set of best practice guidelines for administering conformance and interoperability information. Material from regional telecommunication organizations, telecommunication research centres and manufacturers and working groups should also be utilized in order to avoid duplication of work. Close cooperation with ITU T study groups, in particular SG 11 and the Joint Coordination Activity on Conformance and Interoperability Testing (JCA-CIT) and other organizations (e.g. ILAC, IAF, ISO, IEC) involved in conformance and interoperability activities and other actions within ITU D is required and extremely important.

7 Target audience

	Developed countries	Developing countries
Telecommunication policy makers	Interested	Highly interested
Some countries have immediate need for information		
Telecom regulators	Interested and experienced with different models	Highly interested
Some countries have immediate need for information		
Service providers/operators	Interested	Interested
Manufacturers	Highly interested.	
The question will promote the worldwide adoption of international standards adopted by the top industry	Highly interested	
The question will promote the employment of ICT products and services according to international standards		

a) Target audience

Based on the foregoing evaluation matrix, a broad range of telecommunication policy-makers, regulators and service providers from least developed countries and developing countries will all be highly interested in the results of the Question. Policy-makers and regulators from developed countries will also be interested in many of the issues addressed. Manufacturers will also have a high interest in the Question since best practices of

conformance assessment, establishment of testing laboratories and MRA will be openly discussed by the participants.

b) Proposed methods for the implementation of the results

The output of the study (report and guidelines) would be distributed as the output results of the ITU D study groups. Given the importance of the issue, however, BDT could also conduct regional seminars and meetings, perhaps in conjunction with regional telecommunication organizations, to disseminate the results of the study on the Question, taking the advantage of the C&I Programme implementation in course. The results should be transmitted to the ITU D Global Symposium for Regulators held annually, when the theme relates to conformance and interoperability. The results should be published by ITU for wider distribution.

8 Proposed methods of handling the Question

Within Study Group 2.

9 Coordination

- Because the issue of conformance and interoperability is related to other issues being studied by ITU, coordination will be required not only within the ITU D study groups and programmes but also with the study groups of the other ITU Sectors and the C&I Task Force.
- Regional organizations (such as CITEC, ATU and APT) would also require to be involved so that issues related to conformance and interoperability are coordinated and duplication of efforts minimized.

10 Other relevant information

As may become apparent within the life of this Question.
