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Report by the Secretary-General

ITU'S ACTIVITIES IN PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY TO ICTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Summary

This document summarizes ITU's objectives and achievements in the implementation of Resolution 175 "*Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities, including age-related disabilities*" during the period 2013-2014.

Action required

The Council is invited to **note** the report.

References

[*Resolution 175 \(Guadalajara, 2010\)*](#), [*WTDC Resolutions 56, 58 and 70 \(Hyderabad, 2010\)*](#) and [*WTSA Resolution 70 \(Johannesburg, 2008\)*](#).

1. Moving towards an accessible ITU

1.1. During the period covered by this report, ITU has continued making progress towards removing the barriers that limit the participation of persons with disabilities in ITU activities. The most relevant outcome of this work was the drafting of the new ITU Accessibility Policy, developed by the ITU Accessibility Task Force and endorsed during the 2013 Session of the ITU Council.

1.2. The adoption of the policy is gradually allowing the ITU secretariat to incorporate universal design principles in the services provided by the secretariat to ITU staff, delegates, as well as to the general public. Drawing on the policy, ITU has advanced in making ITU facilities more accessible, improving the accessibility of ITU documents, and providing captioning services in several ITU meetings held throughout 2013. Looking into the future, the ITU Accessibility Task Force has produced an ITU Accessibility Plan for 2014 (see [Document C14/INF/2](#)). Also during 2013 the ITU Accessibility Fund for the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities was increased by a voluntary contribution of USD 15,000 from the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority which was highly appreciated.

2. ITU's activities to promote accessibility to ICTs for persons with disabilities

Study groups and other entities

2.1. ITU has continued working in relevant study groups to advance the accessibility of ICT networks, services and applications. While the ITU-T Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors ([JCA-AHF](#)) continues to be active, by increasing awareness and keeping accessibility to ICTs, the ITU-T Focus Group on Audio-visual Media Accessibility ([FG-AVA](#)) concluded its work on 24 October 2013. The 18 deliverables published as FG-AVA Technical Reports¹ are a valuable resource around the theme of audio-visual media accessibility. Also, all the new items and deliverables produced by FG-AVA feeds in the work carried out by ITU-T [Study Group 16 "Multimedia"](#), and ITU-R [Study Group 5 "Terrestrial Services"](#) and [Study Group 6 "Broadcasting Service"](#).

2.2. Building on the recommendations from FG-AVA, ITU-T and ITU-R jointly established the ITU Intersector Rapporteur Group on Audio-visual Media Accessibility ([IRG-AVA](#)) in December 2013. IRG-AVA studies topics related to audio-visual media accessibility, "Access Systems" which can be used for all media delivery systems, including broadcast, cable, Internet, and IPTV, aiming at the development of Recommendations and other materials, within the current mandate of ITU-R Study Group 6 and of ITU-T [Study Groups 9 "Broadband cable and TV"](#) and 16. The IRG-AVA also addresses matters contributing to the coordination of standardization work involving ITU-T and ITU-R groups and collaborates with other organizations.

2.3. [ITU-D Study Group 1](#) also concluded the work under Question 20-1/1 (Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and with special needs), including a report with information on accessible ICT features required by persons with disabilities, costs and best practice guidelines. The outcome of this work, presented in September 2013, is available at the following link: <http://www.itu.int/publ/D-STG-SG01.20.1-2014/>

2.4. Further progress achieved by ITU-R Study Groups include the work carried out by ITU-R [Working Party 5A's](#) on wireless hearing aids. Working document towards a preliminary draft revision Recommendation of ITU-R M.1076 "*Wireless communication systems for persons with impaired hearing*" is being produced by ITU-R Working Party 5A, in collaboration with the JCA-AHF and other relevant ITU-R Working Parties.

Capacity-building and awareness-raising activities

2.5. ITU-D has raised awareness on the use of Universal Service Funds (USFs) to promote the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities. A Report on *Universal Service Funds and Digital Inclusion for All* was developed and published on the occasion of the [2013 Global Symposium for Regulators](#), attended by 664 regulators from 131 countries. This [Report](#) identifies ways in which USFs can promote the digital inclusion of people with specific needs, including persons with disabilities, and identifies a range of projects for persons with disabilities that USFs could fund.

2.6. ITU has continued promoting the relevance of ICT accessibility in several events around the world, such as the High-Level Forum "[Women with the Wave](#)", organized by ITU-D with the Asia-

¹ The FG-AVA Technical Reports cover a large range of themes including, to name few, clean audio, guidelines for production of sign language services, requirements for closed signing, and a tool for decision-makers on audiovisual media accessibility.

Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) on 23-24 October 2013. This event addressed issues related to gender and persons with disabilities and adopted a [statement](#) endorsing accessible TV.

2.7. Another relevant event organized in 2013 was the ITU-T workshop "[Making Audio-visual Media Accessible to All: The options and the economics](#)", which took place in ITU headquarters on 24-25 October 2013. During the two-day event, demonstrations² and showcases on state-of-the-art accessibility services currently on the market and under development, took place, seeing the very active participation from private sector players and research institutes.

2.8. The Dynamic Coalition on Disability and Accessibility (DCAD) marked its presence at the 8th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2013 in Bali, Indonesia. The DCAD was invited to join the opening session. The DCAD held its 6th face-to-face meeting, participated in the Focus Session (Access/Diversity), and organized a joint workshop, "[Accessible Inclusion For All Abilities and All Ages , Access for Persons who fall between the cracks](#)" which featured presentations on remote participation from the perspective of persons with disabilities, haptic communication and the deaf-blind, and mobile accessibility to name few.

2.9. ITU-D also organized the "[Meeting for Central and Eastern Europe on e-Accessibility in Television Broadcasting](#)" in collaboration with the European Broadcasting Union. This meeting, held in Zagreb (Croatia) on 3-4 December 2013, provided a platform for the exchange of best practices in field of accessibility services for digital TV. It also sought to identify barriers to accessible broadcasting in the region. Finally on 28 February 2014, ITU jointly organized with G3ICT two workshops at the 2014 session of the Zero Project Conference with a focus on "[Accessibility: Innovative Policies and Innovative Practices for Persons with Disabilities](#)".

Partnerships to advance accessibility

2.10. In July 2013, ITU signed a letter of intent with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) outlining collaboration for a global campaign that will include access services to broadcasting for people with visual and hearing impairments by 2016.

2.11. ITU-T also continued its collaboration with the World Standards Consortium (WSC) through the mobilization of experts for the development of ISO/IEC guide 71 "[Guidelines for addressing accessibility in standards](#)". In 2014, ITU will publish jointly with ISO and IEC the second edition of ISO/IEC Guide 71 "[Guide for addressing accessibility in standards](#)". The purpose of this Guide is to assist standards developers (e.g. study groups, technical committees or working groups) to address accessibility in standards focusing whether directly or indirectly, on any type of system used.

² Pictures of the event available on the [workshop's website](#). List of demos:

- Demo on the development of a keyboard and the dictionary for sign language: ShuR (Japan)
- Demos: NHK (Japan)
- Demos on "[Accessible technologies for speech management: Mediamonitor](#)", Cedat 85, (Italy)
- Demos on "[Assess the accuracy for live subtitles in a quick and effective way](#)", Swiss TXT, (Switzerland)
- Demo on "Different Approaches for Different Qualities in Media Accessibility", Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)
- Demos: "HbbTV - An Integrated Broadcast-Broadband (IBB) system for Access Services": IRT Institut für Rundfunktechnik (Germany)

3. ITU contribution to the United Nations agenda

The High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development (HLMDD)

3.1. Acknowledging that it is impossible to achieve internationally agreed development goals without the inclusion and integration of the rights and perspective of persons with disabilities in development efforts at the national, regional and international levels, the UNGA convened a high-level meeting with heads of states and governments on 23 September 2013. The [HLMDD](#) provided a historic opportunity to bring global attention to the situation of persons with disabilities and to decide on the way forward to achieve the goal of the United Nations in that regard: inclusive development and a society in which persons with disabilities are both agents and beneficiaries.

3.2. To contribute to this historic event, ITU, together with the Broadband Commission, G3ICT, the International Disability Alliance, Telecenter.org, Microsoft, and UNESCO carried out a Global ICT Sectorial Consultation in support of the HLMDD. The consultation gathered over 150 expert inputs from relevant organizations and individuals representing governments, academic institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations, the private sector and regional and international organizations. These inputs, stemming from over 55 countries, are presented in the report "[The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework](#)".

3.3. Other activities organized in the context of the consultation included the mobilization of experts at the regional preparatory meetings for the HLMDD for the Asia Pacific region (held on 15-16 May 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand) and the Americas (held on 17-18 May 2013 in Salvador de Bahía, Brazil), as well as the organization of side events during [WSIS Forum 2013](#) (held on 13-17 May 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland), the [M-Enabling Summit 2013](#) (held on 6-7 June 2013 in Washington D.C., USA), and a side-event at the sixth session of the [Conference of State Parties of the CRPD](#) (held on 17-19 July 2013 in New York, USA).

3.4. In addition, the representatives from the 48 Member States of the ITU Council unanimously agreed in June 2013 to issue a [Statement](#) supporting the goals of the upcoming HLMDD. The statement invited the HLMDD to recognize in its outcome document the enormous potential that ICTs hold to enable a disability-inclusive development agenda.

3.5. ITU's inputs to this process contributed to the inclusion of relevant references to ICTs in the [Outcome Document](#) of the HLMDD.

Other contributions to the UN agenda

3.6. ITU provided inputs to the [Committee's Draft General Comment on Article 9 of the CRPD](#), which deals with, *inter alia*, ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities.

3.7. ITU share its experience on developing an internal Accessibility Policy for Persons with Disabilities with the [HCR Task Force on Accessibility](#), which is working on the progressive removal of existing accessibility barriers in United Nations Office in Geneva.

3.8. To celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, on 3 December 2013 ITU organized jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights a special event "[Break barriers, Open doors: For an Inclusive Society For All](#)". All Geneva-based members of the UN Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities were invited to present the progress made within each agency over the past year, to advance the removal of barriers preventing persons with disabilities from exercising their rights.