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Report by the Secretary-General

REPORT ON THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE CORRESPONDENCE GROUP ON THE ELABORATION OF A WORKING DEFINITION OF THE TERM "ICT"

Summary

This Report summarizes the work carried out by the Correspondence Group on the Elaboration of a Working Definition of the Term "ICT", which was set up by ITU-D SG 1 at its September 2012 meeting upon request by the 17th session of TDAG in 2012.

PP Resolution 140 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) requests the Council "to elaborate through the Sector study groups and submit a working definition of the term 'ICT' to the Council and working groups of the Council, for possible transmission to the next plenipotentiary conference". Council Resolution 1332 further instructs the Secretary-General and the Directors of the Bureaux to elaborate this working definition. In this regard, Council 2011 instructed the Director of BDT "to conduct consultations with the chairmen of ITU-D study groups and TDAG for the creation of a group for elaboration of a working definition of the term 'ICT' open for the participation of other Sector membership, and the Directors of BR and TSB to conduct consultations with the chairmen of ITU-R and ITU-T study groups, RAG and TSAG regarding the participation of representatives of their Sector study groups in that activity and report to the Council session 2012."

The Correspondence Group, chaired and convened by Ms Roxanne McElvane, Chair of ITU-D SG 1 and co-convened by Prof Vladimir Minkin, Chair of TDAG, concluded its work on 8 September 2013, agreeing on the following working definition of the term "ICT:" **Technologies and equipment that handle (e.g. access, create, collect, store, transmit, receive, disseminate) information and communication.**

The 18th session of TDAG in 2013 took note of the work of the group and the proposed working definition of the term "ICT". It also took note of comments received through liaison statements to TDAG from the TSB, ITU-T SG 12, and the Chairman of ITU-T SG2, voicing concerns about the proposed working definition and invited any further comments to be submitted directly to the Council.

Action required

The Council is invited **to discuss** the work and results described in the report.

References

Documents [TDAG13-18/18](#), [TDAG13-18/24](#), [TDAG13-18/48](#), [TDAG13-18/49](#), [TDAG13-18/52](#), [CG01/041](#), [1/301](#), [CG01/040](#), [CG01/035](#), [1/276](#), [Council Resolution 1332](#), [PP Resolution 140](#)

1. Summary and Context

1.1 Created in September 2012, the Correspondence Group set up to propose a working definition of the term “ICT” received 28 proposed working definitions from 35 entities in 26 countries. The Group concluded its work on 8 September 2013, agreeing on the following working definition of the term “ICT:”

Technologies and equipment that handle (e.g., access, create, collect, store, transmit, receive, disseminate) information and communication.

1.2 This working definition was developed to comport with parameters and guidelines identified by the contributors to the Correspondence Group and approved at the 8 September 2013 meeting. Thus, broadly speaking, the Correspondence Group intends for this working definition to be high-level and brief; technologically neutral; applicable to the ITU’s roles and responsibilities, and used in the context of the work, recommendations, and resolutions of the ITU’s three Sectors. The working definition is not intended to include content, services, software, or applications; interfere with the security or integrity of networks or personal data; appear in legally binding documents like the ITU Constitution or Convention; or expand the scope of ITU activities¹. This conclusion was reported to ITU-D Study Group 1 during its plenary meeting on 13 September 2013, and was presented to the 18th session of TDAG in 2013 for consideration and endorsement.

1.3 The final report of the Correspondence Group is available in document [CG01/041](#) in all six languages. **Annex 1** to the final report provides the list of definitions proposed upon which the Correspondence Group developed the working definition.

1.4 The comments received through liaison statements to the 18th session of TDAG from the TSB, ITU-T Study Group 12, and the Chairman of ITU-T Study Group 2, voicing concerns about the proposed working definition can be found in the following TDAG documents: [TDAG13-18/48](#) (Director, TSB), [TDAG13-18/49](#) (ITU-T Study Group 12) and [TDAG13-18/52](#) (Chairman, ITU-T Study Group 2).

1.5 The 18th session of TDAG in 2013 took note of the work of the Group and the proposed working definition of the term “ICT”, and invited any further comments to be submitted directly to Council.

2. Background

2.1 Noting that the term “information and communication technology” (ICT) is widely used in ITU, United Nations, and other organizations documents but is not specifically defined, Plenipotentiary Resolution 140 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) *ITU’s role in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society*, among other things, requests the ITU Council to produce and submit, through the Sector study groups, a working definition of the term “ICT” ... for possible transmission to the ...[2014] plenipotentiary conference.² Accordingly, ITU Council 2011 instructed the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) to consult with the Chairmen of the ITU-D Study Groups and the Development Sector Advisory Group, TDAG, to create a correspondence group for this purpose. The Council also instructed the Directors of the Radio and Standardization Bureaux to consult with their respective Study Group Chairmen and Advisory Groups to obtain representatives to participate on their behalf. The BDT Director was instructed to report back to Council 2012 on the progress of the group.

2.2 At the request of TDAG 2012, a Correspondence Group to produce a working definition of the term “ICT” was formed at the September 2012 meetings of the ITU-D Study Groups. The Group was open to all members of the three sectors, was chaired and convened by Ms Roxanne McElvane, Chair, ITU-D Study Group 1 (United States) and co-convened by Dr Vladimir Minkin, Chair of TDAG, (Russian Federation). A Circular Letter [[BDT/IP/CSTG/14](#)] was sent to the full ITU membership announcing the Group and inviting interested members to participate.

¹ Section 3 of the final report in document [CG01/041](#) has the full complement of approved parameters.

² Further details on the context or criteria for possible transmission to the plenipotentiary are not discussed in the Resolution.

2.3 On 22 October 2012 an invitation was also sent to the ITU-R and ITU-T Study Groups, the Chairmen of the Radio, Standardization, and Development Advisory Groups (RAG, TSAG, and TDAG), the Chairmen of the ITU-R Coordination Committee for Vocabulary (CCV) and the ITU-T Standardization Committee for Vocabulary (SCV) (1/213). To support the Correspondence Group and facilitate discussion between members, the BDT established a dedicated [website](#), an e-mail reflector/mailling list, (cg-def-ict@itu.int) and a place in the [ITU-D Study Groups e-Forum](#). A list of the Correspondence Group Members can be found [here](#) (TIES access is required).

2.4 A total of 35 written contributions containing 28 proposed definitions were received from 35 entities in 26 countries. Included in this group are contributions or liaison statements from ITU-T Study Groups 16, 5, 2, 11, 17, and 3, the Chairman of the ITU-T SCV, and the Chairman of ITU-T Study Group 2³.

2.5 The Chairman produced a report summarizing the contributions received through 6 March 2013. The report was sent to the Correspondence Group participants on 8 March 2013, and invited further comment on which proposed working definition would be the most advantageous and, if supported, how it would advance or impact the work of the three sectors. Following additional contributions and responses, in July 2013, the Chairman released a second report (CG01/035) that, based on the contributions received, suggested guidelines for selecting a working definition and presented illustrative definitions. This report was sent to the Group members and posted on the dedicated website. The July 2013 report also presented all proposed working definitions received (Annex 1) and announced a physical meeting in Geneva to be held on 8 September 2013 to conclude its work.

3. Summary of Contributions and Context/Guidelines for the Working Definition

3.1 Several contributors noted the virtues of ICTs as a tool to accelerate economic growth and development including for those with disabilities, while others supported the process underway to produce a working definition of the term within ITU. They expressed views on the context and parameters of the overall exercise.

3.2 Based on the contributions received, the **Correspondence Group Chairman** proposed specific guidelines for determining a working definition of "ICT" in the July 2013 report. At the 8 September 2013 meeting, the Correspondence Group agreed that the guidelines for selecting a working definition set forth in the report were acceptable. Accordingly, the Group intended that the working definition selected **should be**:

High level; clear, concise, brief; applicable to/defined in the context of the roles, responsibilities, and work of the ITU's three Sectors; broad enough to take into account a converged environment; technologically neutral; consistent with United Nations' human rights declarations; and confined to use in the recommendations and resolutions of each ITU sector;

3.3 and **should not**:

Include content or software-related references or applications; interfere with the security or integrity of networks; interfere with the protection of personal data; include services per se; appear in legally binding documents like the ITU Constitution or Convention; signal a willingness to extend the scope of ITU activities.

4. Overview of Proposed Definitions

4.1 Several definitions received included the elements/concepts of processing, transmission/delivery and storage of data or information. Fewer contained the idea of accessing, receiving or creating data and some definitions included devices, services, and applications.

4.2 In preparing its contribution to the Correspondence Group, **Nepal** conducted a consultation with concerned stakeholders, and reviewed various historical definitions of ICT prepared for the government of the United Kingdom, the revised national curriculum for England, the OECD, and Industry Canada. **Italy**

³ ITU-T Study Groups 11, 12, 17, and 3 indicated that they had selected representatives to participate in the Group.

highlighted Provisions 1011 and 1012 of the ITU Constitution in its contribution – the definitions of international telecommunication service and telecommunication, respectively.

4.3 **Tanzania** submitted the definition endorsed by the East African Community Partner States (**Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania** and **Uganda**) in its Protocol for ICT networks (October 2012). **Belarus** submitted its preliminary State standard titled “Public information services based on ICT - General Requirements.”

4.4 **The Russian Federation** provided a total of three options, the **Czech Technical University, Mobinil (Egypt)** and the **Odessa National Academy of Telecommunications (Ukraine)** each provided two options.

5. Specific Definitions Proposed

5.1 The working definition proposed by **Brazil** received direct written support from **Egypt** and qualified support from **Mali**.⁴ The proposed definition submitted by the **Chairman of ITU-T SCV** received written support from the **Odessa National Academy of Telecommunications (Ukraine)** with several modifications. Noting these views, during the 8 September 2013 meeting, all proposed definitions were reviewed, as each one served to advance the work.⁵ The Group further examined the options that, based on the discussions, appeared to incorporate the majority of the views expressed.⁶ Using a methodology proposed by **Switzerland** and the **Co-Convenor of the Correspondence Group**, participants further narrowed these options by selecting those which best fit the agreed guidelines and parameters, specifically the following:⁷

- *The use of electronic equipment and systems to collect, store and send telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals) data electronically.*
- *The use of communications infrastructures and services to send, broadcast, receive, store and process information.*
- *Devices, applications and services used to create, collect, store, process, transmit, receive and disseminate information.*
- *The convergence of telecommunications, broadcasting, computers, storage and audio-visual systems to enable users to create, access, store, transmit and manipulate information.*
- *Any use of electronic system, subsystem, equipment, device, application or method of any nature to design, set up and manage telecommunications.*
- *A set of processes, equipment and methods for information processing through telecommunications and computer technologies.*
- *Communication mechanisms and technologies that allow information to be electronically created, collected, stored, processed, transmitted, received, and disseminated.*

6. Conclusion: Working Definition of the Term “ICT” for the ITU

6.1 Following extensive discussion, the Group agreed and selected a working definition of the term “ICT:”

Technologies and equipment that handle (e.g., access, create, collect, store, transmit, receive, disseminate) information and communication.

⁴ **Mali** stated that it supported **Brazil**'s definition if the term "devices" could be understood to mean device, terminal, equipment, and system.

⁵ Links to all contributions and definitions are provided in **Annex 1** to the final report at: <http://www.itu.int/md/D10-CG01-C-0041>

⁶ A more detailed description of the discussion of the working definitions can be found in Sections 4-5 of the Report of the 8 September 2013 meeting available at: <http://www.itu.int/md/D10-CG01-C-0040>

⁷ Proposals from **Brazil, Canada, Italy, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom** were considered during this exercise.