

RESOLUTION 58 (Rev. Dubai, 2014)

Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Dubai, 2014),

recognizing

- a) Resolution 175 (Guadalajara, 2010) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility for persons with disabilities, including age-related disabilities;
- b) Resolution 70 (Rev. Dubai, 2012) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSAs), on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- c) Article 12 of the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITR), adopted by the World Conference on International Telecommunications (Dubai, 2012) (WCIT), which states that Member States should promote access for persons with disabilities to international telecommunication services, taking into account the relevant ITU-T Recommendations;
- d) the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) digital inclusion programme, which promotes telecommunication/ICT accessibility and use for the economic and social development of persons with disabilities, and the progress and results of studies under ITU-D Question 20/1 on access to telecommunication services for persons with disabilities;
- e) that the Telecommunication Development Bureau, in partnership with G3ict (Global Initiative for Inclusive Information Communication Technologies)¹, has elaborated an e-Accessibility toolkit for policy-makers, regulators and service providers, which is freely available and accessible online, in order to (i) facilitate development of best policies and strategies for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; (ii) provide a platform for sharing best practices on ICT disability issues; and (iii) set forth action steps for an effective policy framework;
- f) the following actions in the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T):
 - i) studies under Question 4/2 on human factors-related issues for improvement of the quality of life through international telecommunications and Question 26/16 on accessibility to multimedia systems and services, including Recommendation ITU-T F.790 on telecommunication accessibility guidelines for older persons and persons with disabilities;
 - ii) publication by the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group of the guide for ITU study groups entitled "Considering end-user needs in developing Recommendations";

¹ An ITU-D Sector Member and flagship advocacy initiative of UN-GAID, the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- iii) creation of the Joint Coordination Activity on accessibility and human factors for the purposes of awareness-raising, advice, assistance, collaboration, coordination and networking;
 - iv) creation of the ITU-T Focus Group on Audiovisual Media Accessibility (FG-AVA), which is working on broadcasting and Internet television in order to include voice description for the visually impaired and captioning/subtitles for the deaf and hearing impaired, as well as accessible remote Internet participation;
- g)* the following actions in the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R):
- i) Recommendation ITU-R M.1076 entitled "Wireless communication systems for persons with impaired hearing";
 - ii) relevant parts of the ITU-R Handbook entitled "Digital terrestrial television broadcasting in the VHF/UHF bands", providing guidance on techniques to be used for delivering programmes for people with hearing difficulties;
 - iii) ongoing work in ITU-R to bridge the digital disability divide, including the work in ITU-R Study Group 6 on broadcasting and creation of the new Intersector Rapporteur Group on Audiovisual Media Accessibility (IRG-AVA) between ITU-R and ITU-T, as result of the work of ITU-T FG-AVA;
 - iv) the work in ITU-R Study Group 4 Working Parties 4A and 4B and Study Group 5 Working Party 5A with regard to improving access to digital hearing aids on a global basis;
- h)* the formation by the Internet Governance Forum of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD), in which ITU-D participates, sponsored by the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB), and the partnership between ITU-T and DCAD for the purposes of maximizing the benefits of electronic communications and online information over the Internet for all sectors of the global community;
- i)* Resolution 57 (Rev. Dubai, 2012) of WTSA, on strengthening coordination and cooperation among the three ITU Sectors on matters of mutual interest;
- j)* Resolution GSC-14/27 (revised), on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, agreed upon at the 14th Global Standards Collaboration (GSC) meeting (Geneva, 2009; Halifax, 2011), which advocates greater collaboration between world, regional and national standardization bodies as a basis for establishing and/or strengthening activities and initiatives concerning the use of telecommunications/ICTs for persons with disabilities;
- k)* Resolution GSC-13/26 (revised), on user needs, considerations and involvement, agreed upon at the 13th Global Standards Collaboration meeting (Boston, 2008; Halifax, 2011);
- l)* publications and ongoing work of the Special Working Group on Accessibility (ISO/IEC JTC 1 SWG – Accessibility) of the Joint Technical Committee on Information Technology (JTC 1) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), as well as the Mandate 376 project teams, in identifying user needs and in developing a comprehensive inventory of existing standards as part of the ongoing effort to identify areas where research or new standards work is needed;

m) the activities of the ITU-T study groups in charge of ICT accessibility: ITU-T Study Group 16 (Multimedia coding, systems and applications), which is the lead study group on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, and ITU-T Study Group 2 (Operational aspects of service provision and telecommunication management) for the part relating to human factors;

n) activities relating to the development of new standards (e.g. ISO TC 159, JTC 1 SC35, IEC TC100, ETSI TC HF and W3C WAI), and the implementation and maintenance of existing standards (e.g. ISO 9241-171);

o) the formation of G3ict, an ITU-D Sector Member and flagship partnership initiative of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UN-GAID);

p) the joint ITU and G3ict release of the Report "Making TV accessible", on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December 2011), and the report on "Making mobile phones and services accessible to persons with disabilities";

q) various regional and national efforts to develop or revise guidelines and standards for telecommunication/ICT accessibility, compatibility and usability by persons with disabilities,

considering

a) that the World Health Organization estimates that over one billion of the world's inhabitants live with some form of disability, and that there are different types of disabilities (e.g. physical, motor, cognitive, neurological and sensorial disabilities), each requiring special considerations when designing ICT public policy;

b) that a role of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to provide an opportunity to strengthen the policies related to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, thereby contributing to the realization of a "society for all" in the twenty-first century, also affirming that the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons² and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities³ improve policies related to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;

c) that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into force on 3 May 2008, requires States Parties to take appropriate measures:

- 1) ensure ICT and emergency service access to persons with disabilities on an equal basis (Article 9, § 1(b));
- 2) promote ICT access for persons with disabilities to new ICT services, including Internet (Article 9, § 2);
- 3) promote the design, production and distribution of accessible ICT at an early stage (Article 9, § 2(h));
- 4) ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion (Article 21);

² Resolution 37/351/Add.1 and Corr.1, Annex, Sect. VIII, Recommendation 1 (IV), recalled in Resolution 52/82 of the United Nations General Assembly on implementation of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century.

³ Resolution 48/96, (Annex) approved by the United Nations General Assembly, on the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

- 5) provide information in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost (Article 21, § (a));
- 6) urge private entities that render services to the public to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities (Article 21, § (c));
- 7) encourage mass media (including information providers through Internet) to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities (Article 21, § (d));

d) that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities further states that there is discrimination on the basis of disability if there is denial of reasonable accommodation, considering "reasonable accommodation" to mean necessary and appropriate modification or adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (i.e. freedom of speech, access to information) (Article 2);

e) that States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities undertake to collect adequate information for formulating and implementing policies to give effect to the Convention, and that this information must be disaggregated, and should help identify and address barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights (Article 31);

f) that maximizing access to ICT services, products, content and terminals for persons with disabilities will support autonomy of persons with disabilities, access to digital literacy, with particular educational focus on aspects that cannot be offered through everyday education, incorporation in worthy ICT employment and, more generally, access to all the benefits that lead to social inclusion, including healthcare;

g) that United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 61/106 adopting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requests the Secretary-General (in § 5) "... to implement progressively standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services of the United Nations system, taking into account relevant provisions of the Convention, in particular when undertaking renovations";

h) that persons with disabilities, both acting as individuals and through relevant organizations, should be involved in and participate in the process of elaborating legal/regulatory provisions, public policy and standards, pursuant to the rationale of "Nothing about us without us";

i) that Article 14 of UNGA Resolution 65/186 and the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Disability and Development (HLMDD) sent a message concerning the important role telecommunications and ICTs can play to enable a post-2015 disability-inclusive development framework, and HLMDD proposes to work together within the framework of the UN system towards the achievement of the United Nations common goal: "Inclusive development and a society in which persons with disabilities are both agents and beneficiaries";

j) that UNGA Resolution 66/288 endorses the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled "The future we want", which states as follows: "... 9. We reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. We emphasize the responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter, to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability age or other status",

recalling

a) that the World Summit on the Information Society acknowledged that special attention should be given to the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities: (i) when elaborating national cyberstrategies, including educational, administrative and legislative measures; (ii) for using ICT in education and human resources development; (iii) in order that equipment and services offer easy and affordable access, under the principles of universal design and assistive technology; (iv) to promote telework and to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities; (v) for creation of content that is pertinent to persons with disabilities; and (vii) to create the required abilities for the use of ICT by persons with disabilities⁴;

b) the Cairo Declaration (November, 2007) and the Lusaka Declaration (July, 2008) on supporting access to ICT services for persons with disabilities, as well as the Phuket Declaration on tsunami preparedness for persons with disabilities (March, 2007) and the Hyderabad Declaration of the Internet Governance Forum on accessibility for persons with disabilities (December 2008),

taking into account

a) the principles that should govern ICT services, equipment and software in order to be accessible, namely: universal design, equal access, functional equivalence, affordability and accessibility, which means designing ICTs with parameters and capabilities adapted to the needs, preferences and special abilities of each user;

b) that telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities should be achieved through the formulation of policy options and cooperation between governments, specialized bodies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society;

c) that mainstreaming disability, accessibility and inclusive planning in the strategic framework for reinforcing the disability perspective in the global development agenda⁵ highlights the importance of coordination and exchange of information by and between United Nations bodies concerned;

d) the prevailing difference in ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities in the regions, in countries, and within each country, emphasizing that 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);

e) that women and girls with disabilities suffer multiple disadvantages, being excluded on account of their gender and their disability,

⁴ Geneva Declaration of Principles, §§ 13 and 30; Geneva Plan of Action, §§ 9 e) and f), 19 and 23; Tunis Commitment, §§ 18 and 20; Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, § 90 c) and e).

⁵ Report 66/128, on strengthening efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in and have access to all aspects of development, in accordance with UNGA Resolution 65/186.

resolves to invite Member States

- 1 to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to take the relevant measures to ensure that ICT services, equipment and software contribute to the development of telecommunication/ICT accessibility and are effectively accessible to persons with disabilities, with the aim of promoting the inclusion of all members of society, in favour of those who are at risk of marginalization and socially vulnerable;
- 2 to develop national legal frameworks, including laws, regulations, policies, guidelines or other national and local mechanisms for telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with the principles of equal access, functional equivalence, affordability and universal design, taking full advantage of available tools, guidelines and standards;
- 3 to continue strengthening the collection and analysis of disaggregated data and statistics on disability related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, with the aim of creating e-accessibility statistics and similarly relevant indicators that will contribute to the public policy design, planning and implementation process;
- 4 to consider introducing telecommunication/ICT relay services⁶ for persons with disabilities, to encourage the development of applications for telecommunication terminals and products to increase the accessibility and usability of telecommunications/ICTs for persons with visual, auditory, verbal and other physical and cognitive disabilities, such as telecommunication/relay services for any combinations of hearing, visual, verbal and motor disabilities, accessible websites, public phones with accessibility features (e.g. volume control, information in Braille), public schools, institutions and community centres with a range of accessible equipment including screen readers, Braille printers, hearing aids, among others, and to facilitate access to digital TV content, etc., in order to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities to information and knowledge;
- 5 to encourage and enable active participation by persons with disabilities, both as individuals and as organizations, in the policy-making process for ICTs and related areas where ICTs have an impact, by ensuring that the consultation process, meetings and/or surveys are accessible to participation by persons with disabilities;
- 6 to promote and undertake research and development of ICT-accessible equipment, services and software, with emphasis on free and open-source software and affordable equipment and services;
- 7 to envisage establishing a programme that considers ICT-accessibility priorities, to be periodically reviewed in order to ensure its relevance to the specific local conditions of a country/region, with a view to progressive implementation;
- 8 to mainstream telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, which involves taking into consideration accessibility principles in a cross-cutting manner;
- 9 to consider exemption from taxes and customs duties on ICT devices and assistive equipment for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the national regulations on this matter;

⁶ Telecommunication relay services enable users of different modes of communication (e.g. text, sign, speech) to interact by providing convergence between the modes of communication, usually through human operators.

10 to establish ongoing and permanent collaboration between developed and developing countries in order to exchange information, technology and best practices related to telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities;

11 to participate actively in accessibility-related studies in ITU-D, ITU-T and ITU-R, and to encourage and promote self-representation by persons with disabilities in the development and standardization process, so as to ensure that their experiences, views and opinions are taken into account in all the work of the study groups;

12 to promote the development of learning opportunities in order to train persons with disabilities to use ICTs for their social and economic development, including through train-the-trainer courses and distance learning,

invites Sector Members

1 to adopt a self-regulation approach for rendering accessibility-related ICT equipment, software and services accessible for persons with disabilities, it being expressly understood that self-regulation does not override legal and regulatory provisions;

2 to adopt a universal design principle from an early stage when designing, producing and creating ICT equipment, services and software, so as to avoid costly retrofitting measures;

3 to promote, if applicable, research and development on ICT-accessible equipment, services and software, having due regard to affordability for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities;

4 to take due account of the situations and needs of persons with disabilities, encouraging their active participation so as to receive first-hand information on their requirements for telecommunication/ICT accessibility;

5 to collaborate with Member States in order to make telecommunication/ICT accessibility a reality for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities,

instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to ensure that each ITU-D programme, project or activity takes into account telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues and is adapted to the situations and/or needs of all persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities;

2 to develop and/or update tools and guidelines for use/reference by Member States in mainstreaming telecommunication/ICT accessibility issues in their national/regional policies and regulations, and provide the necessary capacity building;

3 to identify and document examples of best practice for accessibility in the field of telecommunications/ICT for dissemination, publication and sharing of experiences and information among ITU Member States and Sector Members;

4 to consider holding seminars, symposia or forums for policy-makers, telecommunication regulators and Sector Members at which telecommunication/ICT accessibility policies are presented and discussed, and also to promote the elaboration of books, reports or literature that address telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities;

5 to collaborate with the Radiocommunication Bureau and the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau on accessibility-related activities, particularly in creating awareness and mainstreaming telecommunication/ICT accessibility policies, as well as creating programmes that enable countries to introduce services which allow persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities; to utilize ICT services effectively, reporting the findings to the Council, as appropriate, in both cases;

6 to collaborate and cooperate with relevant United Nations entities and disability organizations in all regions in order to generate awareness of the need for the design and implementation of policies or self-regulatory approaches that will make ICTs accessible for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities;

7 to ensure that the needs of the communities of persons with disabilities are taken into account in the provision of telecommunication/ICT accessibility equipment, services and software;

8 to consider the development of an internship programme for persons with disabilities who have expertise in the field of telecommunication/ICTs, so as to build capacity among persons with disabilities in the public policy-making process;

9 to designate a focal point for telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities, and to strengthen the Digital Inclusion programme,

further instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to review, in consultation with the Secretary-General, the accessibility of ITU services and facilities, including meetings and events, to consider taking actions, where appropriate, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/106, and to inform Member States and Sector Members about the implementation of such actions, as appropriate;

2 to contribute, within the scope of BDT, to uniting efforts for the implementation of the provisions of Resolution 70 (Rev. Dubai, 2012) and Resolution 175 (Guadalajara, 2010);

3 to provide advice to, evaluate and supervise initiatives, projects and programmes, so as to determine their impact in terms of telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, under Resolution 17 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of this conference on regional initiatives, where appropriate;

4 to identify, within the study groups, taking into account the financial implications, new accessible software, services and solutions to enable all persons with disabilities, including persons with age-related disabilities, to effectively use telecommunication/ICT services, on the basis of contributions from the Member States and Sector Members, as well as the ITU-T and ITU-R study groups, as appropriate,

invites the Plenipotentiary Conference

1 to build on and consolidate past accomplishments, by providing the necessary financial and human resources for the effective and sustained integration of telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities in the development activities of ITU;

2 to instruct the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in an effort to promote increased coordination and cooperation for development policies, programmes and projects for achieving ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, in line with the principles of equitable access, functional equivalence, affordability and universal design, and fully harnessing the available tools, guidelines and standards, to eliminate obstacles and discrimination.