

Agenda item: PL 3.3

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## Report by the Secretary-General

### STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL PRESENCE:

#### Summary

The purpose of this document is to report on the implementation of Resolution 25 (Rev. Antalya, 2006) on Strengthening the Regional presence.

#### Action required

Council is requested to **note** this report.

#### References

Documents [C07/23](#), [C08/28/\(Rev.1\)](#), [C09/58\(Rev.1\)](#)  
[Resolution 25 \(Rev. Antalya, 2006\)](#)

## Background

1 Resolution 25 (Rev. Antalya, 2006) calls for further strengthening of the Regional Presence to allow ITU to work as closely as possible with its Membership, improve the dissemination of information about its activities and develop close ties with regional and sub-regional organizations.

2 In keeping with Resolution 25 (Rev. Antalya, 2006) and further to the assessment carried out by the UN Joint Inspection Unit in 2009, actions have already been implemented: At the organizational level, consolidation of staffing in the regional/area offices, documentation of working methods and other mechanisms for the empowerment of the regional/area offices have been put in place within existing budgetary and regulatory parameters. Work continues in updating the regional presence architecture to provide a solid base from which to embrace development mandates and most effectively implement activities of the Union.

## Staffing

3 Succession planning is now institutionalized. The practice of delaying recruitment for posts where the incumbent retired from the ITU is abolished with the adoption of the 2010-2011 Budget at Council 09. BDT has increased the number of regional staff, with the number of professional posts rising from 20 to 23 over the 2007 to 2010 period, further enabling the regional/area offices to provide Member States an improved quality of service. The capacity of regional/area offices in specific areas of expertise has also been strengthened through recruitment of associate technical experts and support staff under Regional Initiatives and projects. [JIU Recommendation 6]

• <http://www.itu.int/council> •

4 While the ITU is currently considering a policy to increase mobility between regional/area offices and between HQ and regional/area offices, BDT has been promoting staff mobility on a voluntary basis with transfers from Headquarters to the regional/area offices and from regional/area offices to Headquarters. [JIU Recommendation 8]

## **Training**

5 The ITU Human Resources Strategic Plan highlights the fundamental correlation between strategic goals and relevant training. Training of staff of regional/area offices and their headquarters interlocutors in BDT is one of the key factors for empowering regional/area offices, and in the past three years, BDT has encouraged training and staff development in various forms [JIU Recommendation 7]:

- a) Professional staff of the regional/area offices are regularly invited to attend global ITU events;
- b) Professional staff of the regional/area offices are systematically invited to attend and, where appropriate, contribute to the work of ITU-D Study Groups;
- c) Specific project-oriented training continues to be provided to field and Headquarters staff;
- d) In liaison with regional/area offices, inputs have been sought and are being consolidated into a more comprehensive and meaningful Training Plan, linked to personal objectives and sectoral strategy.

## **Working Methods and Procedures**

6 The BDT continually strives in its activity planning to achieve a pragmatic balance between regional and global activities, while addressing the most pressing needs of countries. The Rolling Operational Plan is regularly reviewed and refined, through quarterly assessments carried out jointly between the regional/area offices and Headquarters. [JIU Recommendation 4]

7 Regional/area offices are encouraged to take the lead and responsibility for all planned activities in the field. As part of the planning process, each proposed activity is assessed in terms of priority, expected results and cost. [JIU Recommendation 13]

8 As global financial management of activities and projects is carried out at Headquarters, a budget control link is still maintained between the regional/area offices and Headquarters. A second phase of the IPSAS-ERP project, envisages integration of financial and project management modules in the SAP system, further enhancing the collaborative capacity of Headquarters and the regional/area offices.

9 The introduction of the new SAP-ERP platform and the adoption of IPSAS Standards in 2010 have also presented an opportunity for ITU to further review and simplify administrative and financial procedures, and speed up response time within ITU and with its working partners.

10 Access to the Working Methods has been improved for all BDT, via a dedicated web portal, alongside other important working tools such as Project Guidelines, the Operational Plan System User Guide, and the Document Management System (for creation and publication of documents).

11 The Expert Recruitment Platform has seen the expert recruitment process automated and regional/area offices are now able to hire experts in direct coordination with focal points at Headquarters, via the web. Additionally, new Expert Roster software is under development, to provide a central platform for expert information management, evaluation, as well as database access. [JIU Recommendations 11, 15]

## **Enhancing connectivity**

12 Connectivity is the cornerstone of productive relations between Headquarters and the regional/area offices. The IT capacity of regional/area offices has seen many recent improvements:

- a) The bandwidth capacity of many of the regional/area offices has been doubled; and more resources have been allocated for web/teleconferencing equipment, and for the upgrade of facilities for interactive and collaborative web-based meetings.
- b) New ICT developments were elaborated to enhance communication between Headquarters and the regional/area offices in order to facilitate communications and information sharing.
- c) Field access to information and other integrated systems has been improved. A new ITU-D Internal Web Portal was launched to provide Internet access to all regional/area Offices and BDT Headquarters staff to BDT working tools and information. [JIU Recommendations 11, 15]
- d) Under the aegis of the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB), the UN Secretariat, in collaboration with UN agencies including ITU, has begun a study of ICT connectivity in the major UN Field Offices worldwide. An initial outcome will be an evaluation of areas in need of improvement, as well as a study of the most cost-effective ways of improving access and connectivity: including bandwidth for field locations where ITU is also present.

## **Empowering the regional/area offices**

13 Over the 2008-10 period, the regional/area offices have received strong support from BDT Headquarters, and have subsequently invested significant energy at the field level to:

- a) Identify the most pressing issues facing the Membership in their respective regions;
- b) Place focus on the organization of regional meetings and working groups, and on tasks related to projects;
- c) Take the lead in organizing the regional preparatory meetings for the WTDC-10, interacting closely with local and regional organizations;
- d) Act as the focal points for raising awareness of ITU at the regional and local levels, through enhanced information dissemination, promotion of ITU within local academic networks, and acting as primary stimulators to attract private sector membership.

14 In addition, significant improvements have been made as regards collaboration between Headquarters and staff members of regional/area offices through more regular, cyclical consultations and assessments of activities.

15 The proximity of the regional/area offices to Member States is a vital element in the identification, assessment and addressing of regional and national needs. Locally-collated inputs from the regional/area offices to the work of the BDT include:

- a) Collection/updating of regional ICT data;
- b) Local-level assessment of country situations,
- c) Monitoring and reporting on other local ICT activities and projects, better defining ITU's project and activity focus;
- d) Conception of projects tailored to specific local, and/or regional needs;
- e) Identifying partners at the regional and national levels and spearheading fundraising.

16 Regional/area offices are directly responsible for the implementation of projects in their respective regions. In particular, the Regional Initiatives component of the Doha Action Plan agreed at WTDC-06 provides a direct mechanism for the kick-starting of projects and activities designed to target specific regional needs.

17 Furthermore, reinforcement of ITU's mandate and capacity as an executing agency continues at the regional level. The regional/area offices are empowered with the identification, formulation, fundraising, implementation, evaluation and completion of small and large-scale projects in collaboration with strong support from the Projects and Initiatives Department, which since its creation in 2007, works energetically to secure a shared vision of project development with the regional/area offices.

18 In addition to core field office staff, project coordinators and support staff are recruited on a number of large-scale projects and maintain an active presence directly in the beneficiary regions/countries concerned.[JIU Recommendations 10, 13, 19]

### **Information Sharing and Participation in ITU meetings**

19 Heads of regional offices regularly participate in major ITU meetings and global events including the ITU annual senior management retreat, Council meetings, the Plenipotentiary Conference and main ITU-D global and regional events. Designated professional staff from each region also participate in ITU-D Study Group meetings.

20 Teleconference and Share Point technology are increasingly being used to complement physical travel to the field and from the field to Headquarters to provide faster and more efficient communication whilst also addressing the issue of accessibility. This has greatly contributed to improved information exchange between Headquarters and regional/area offices, as well as enhancing internal coordination in relation to project execution.[JIU Recommendations 10, 13]

### **Strengthening the collaboration with the General Secretariat and other Bureaux**

21 Over the past three years, there has been a continuous strengthening of the collaboration with the General Secretariat, as well as with BR and TSB. Continuous efforts are being made at the field level to:

- a) support events in the regions (Study Groups, Working Parties meetings, seminars, workshops),
- b) support staff from all Bureaux whilst on mission,
- c) promote the events of all Sectors in the region,
- d) disseminate information on standardization activities of the Union, and respond to queries on the work of the Union,
- e) assist in identifying experts within the Sectors who could eventually address needs arising within the regions,
- f) provide and periodically update information on regional events from industry, governments, regional organizations, universities and R&D entities.

22 ITU publications are now regularly distributed to the regional/area offices, consolidating the Union's goal to reach a wider public.[JIU Recommendation 4]

### **International cooperation**

23 Relations with regional organizations and UN specialized agencies are an integral part of the work of the regional/area offices. BDT continuously seeks to strengthen cooperation with all dealing with development entities to open communication channels and related benefits to all membership. [JIU Recommendation 18]

24 In close collaboration with the regional/area offices, Headquarters is working with potential donors and other partners to address gaps in access to ICT infrastructure and services in each region, including through recent initiatives such as the Connect the World events.

25 The regional/area offices, in cooperation with the Partnership, Promotion and Membership Division (PPM) and the Strategic Planning and Membership Department (SPM) are working together through Connect the World initiative to mobilize human, financial and technical resources for the implementation of the connectivity targets of WSIS and the Regional Initiatives adopted by Member States at WTDC-06. The Connect Events serve as the underlying mechanisms to strengthen partnerships with the private sector. Two have taken place in the Africa and CIS regions. In both regions, the ITU has solicited and obtained the support of the Member States to initiate projects with partners including those from the telecommunication/ICT sector, development banks and financial institutions, international and regional organizations and civil society.

26 On this basis, several Flagship Initiatives were developed: Connect a School – Connect a Community; ITU Wireless Broadband Initiative; Connecting Villages; ITU ACADEMY Partnership; ITU Mobile Health Initiative and ITU-IMPACT Collaboration on Cybersecurity. These initiatives were developed in partnership with the private sector.[JIU Recommendation 19]

Annex: 1 (Regional/area offices' Staff Tables 2007-2010)

ANNEX

Regional/area office	Staff Members 2007				Staff Members 2010				
	GRADE	D	P	G	TOTAL	D	P	G	TOTAL
<b>AFRICA</b>									
RO Addis Ababa *	1	2	3	6	1	3	3	7	
AO Dakar		3	2	5		3	2	5	
AO Harare		2	1	3		1	1	2	
AO Yaoundé		1	1	2		1	1	2	
<b>TOTAL AFRICA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	
<b>AMERICAS</b>									
RO Brasilia	1	2	2	5	1	3	1	5	
AO Bridgetown		1	1	2		1	1	2	
AO Santiago#			1	1		1	1	2	
AO Tegucigalpa		1	1	2		1	1	2	
<b>TOTAL AMERICAS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	
<b>ARAB STATES</b>									
RO Cairo	1	3	4	8	1	2	6	9	
<b>TOTAL ARAB STATES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	
<b>ASIA &amp; PACIFIC</b>									
RO Bangkok *	1	2	3	6	1	3	3	7	
AO Jakarta		1	1	2		1	1	2	
<b>TOTAL ASIA &amp; PACIFIC</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	
<b>CIS</b>									
AO Moscow		2	1	3		2	1	3	
<b>TOTAL CIS</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>EUR</b>									
Coordination Unit, HQ						1	1	2	
<b>TOTAL EUR</b>						<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>50</b>	

\* Table reflects only regular budget staff.

The following offices also host intermediate-term personnel funded from FIT:

- Addis Ababa (1 P, 1 G - 2010)
- Bangkok (1 P - 2007, 2010)

# 1P retirement mid-2007