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**World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014**

**GSMA Information Paper**

**Introduction**

The International Telecommunications Union’s Development Sector (ITU-D) hosts the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) every four years. The purpose of the event is to identify the ITU’s priorities for the development of information and communication technologies *in developing countries* for the next four years with input from member states and sector members.

The GSMA is a sector member of the ITU Development sector as well as the Telecommunication Standards and Radiocommunication Sectors. The GSMA has regional offices in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the United States and represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide. Spanning more than 220 countries, the GSMA unites nearly 800 of the world’s mobile operators with more than 230 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset makers, software companies, equipment providers and Internet companies, as well as organisations in industry sectors such as financial services, healthcare, media, transport and utilities.

The GSMA is delighted to be working closely with the ITU-D sector already. The Director General of the GSMA, Anne Bouverot, sits on the m-Powering Development Advisory Board and currently holds the position of vice-chair of that board. Also, **the GSMA has held a number of practical workshops for CEOs and regulators in developing countries and has been a regular sponsor of the ITU-D’s Global Symposium for Regulators since 2007.** This ongoing relationship with the ITU-D underpins the GSMA’s commitment to the fact that the ITU-D should focus on capacity building through partnerships to train and educate through best practices and experience. The GSMA is well placed to contribute actively to the ITU’s capacity building work on development issues as these are core to the GSMA’s Mobile for Development and Connected Living programs, amongst others. With this in mind, this submission focuses on strengthening capacity building and its importance in all areas of ITU-D activity.

**Vision, Mission and Goals**

The WTDC reviews the mission, goals, objectives, priority areas and subsequent topics within each of those areas. The core mission of the mission of the ITU-D is:

*“…to foster international cooperation and solidarity in the delivery of technical assistance and in the creation, development and improvement of telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and networks in developing countries.”*

Within the context of this mission, the ITU-D has three goals it hopes to achieve within its next work program:

1. To promote the availability of infrastructure and foster an enabling environment for telecommunication/ICT infrastructure development and its use in a safe and secure manner.
2. To provide assistance to developing countries in bridging the digital divide by achieving broader telecommunication/ICT-enabled socio-economic development.
3. To expand the benefits of the information society to the membership in cooperation with public and private stakeholders, and to promote the integration of the use of telecommunications/ICTs into the broader economy and society as drivers of development, innovation, well-being, growth and productivity globally.

The goals are met through activities that reflect the objectives and regional initiatives. Each region defines its own initiatives through formal and information inputs in the regional preparatory meetings (RPM) for the WTDC, and each region reported back on the delivery of the Hyderabad Action plan which was the agreed upon plan following the last WTDC in 2010. Broadly, the current themes for the regional initiatives that have emerged out of the RPMs to date include broadband access, spectrum management, child online protection, security, and capacity building. Regional initiatives vary depending on the geographical location and needs of that region. The GSMA is supportive of additional capacity building work in relation to a number of specific topics discussed at the RPMs to date and what follows is an in-depth approach to those topic areas.

**Regional Development, the GSMA and the ITU**

The mobile phone industry plays a vital role in developing countries. For example, a recent GSMA report on Sub-Saharan Africa shows that mobile contributes over 6% to the GDP in the region and directly supports 3.3 million jobs.[[1]](#footnote-1) The GSMA is working in partnership withregional telecommunications and financial institutions as well as regulators on the development of capacity building programs in Africa and Latin America. It has been our experience that partnering with both public and private entities enables further opportunities for outreach, skills building and policy work.

GSMA’s Mobile for Development is a wide reaching program that works with the mobile industry and beyond to bring commercial services to underserved people in new and emerging markets. Mobile is the predominant communications infrastructure in these markets and many will access the Internet and other services via their mobile phone first. The GSMA has over one hundred initiatives across 49 countries. These programs include Mobile Money for the Unbanked which focuses on providing mobile financial services, Green Power for Mobile which provides green energy alternatives for base station powering and mWomen which enables and empowers to use mobile phones and services. The GSMA also works in other key areas including health, agriculture, learning and community development. Mobile for Development plays an important and key role in the work that the GSMA does across the world.

In light of these experiences, the following is a list of areas for work and suggestions from the GSMA on the approach that ITU-D should take to enable rapid and widespread growth in developing countries. In all of these areas the focus should be on capacity building and knowledge exchange.

* **Online Protection** – children and young adults are enthusiastic users of mobile technology and it enhances their lives. The opportunities of being connected to communications and online to the Internet are unlimited and should be embraced. There are risks, but partnerships in this area and with the ITU are proving effective in mitigating those risks and providing solutions. International initiatives like the ITU’s Child Online Protection program and the GSMA’s mYouth and Mobile Alliance programs work to promote the safe use of mobile phones through education and empowerment. In the case of illegal activities, partnerships between the mobile phone industry and law enforcement as well as the enforcement of national and international law enables a trusted and safer environment for parents and children alike. Child safety should be promoted in developing countries through public-private partnerships, ITU-D and other industry- and civil society-led initiatives that work through capacity building. Child Online Protection should not be confused or conflated with cyber security initiatives or technical standards.
* **Cyber security** – Cyber security and defence against cyber-attacks are critical issues and should be addressed globally within appropriate forums. The Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD), and the World Bank work with law enforcement, the industry and governments, among others to address issues through the Budapest Convention and legal frameworks. Additionally, ITU-T Study Group 17, the GSMA Security Forum, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the W3C are just a few examples of international, multi-stakeholder groups tackling security issues and there are many other examples of partnerships with industry, law enforcement and related organisations including regional and local Computer Incident Response Teams (CIRTS). We encourage WTDC-14 to endorse continued capacity building activities within the ITU’s core competencies in support of developing national and regional cyber security frameworks and best practices, including through the continuation of ITU-D Study Group 1 Question 22/1 and in partnership with relevant stakeholders and expert organisations.
* **Spectrum management** – Spectrum management continues to be an issue for some developing and emerging countries especially with the ongoing transition from analogue to digital for broadcasting. The mobile industry will continue to need more harmonised spectrum to deliver the economic and social benefits of broadband rollout. Governments in developing countries should align their national use of spectrum with internationally harmonised bands. **Training, capacity building and public-private partnerships will enable the skills and best practice required to efficiently manage spectrum and to ensure smooth transition during digital switchovers. This work is essential for spectrum management in developing markets and its success should continue.**
* **Taxation** – While ITU-T Study Group 3 continues to examine taxation issues, there is an on-going opportunity in ITU-D for training in best practices and case studies. Pricing for mobile should be based on a competitive market in a normally functioning environment that is not over regulated. Studies show that specific taxes on roaming and for electromagnetic field (EMF) on handsets are not effective ways to seek additional income and that such burdensome regulation can raise costs, limit investment and harm consumers. In particular, overly prescriptive regulation can harm the efficient allocation of spectrum and, ultimately, its harmonisation on a regional and international scale. Taxes may help to see a rise in short term income, but in the long term they hurt investments as well as consumer uptake and cost. Capacity building on the effect of different levels and kinds of taxation in emerging markets is an effective way to work on this issue in ITU-D.
* **Enabling Environment for Deployment of Mobile Infrastructure and Services** – Local and regional governments should ensure a regulatory framework that encourages competition in the mobile sector, ensures innovation, and spurs the growth and development of the mobile industry and accessibility of services to consumers. As stated previously, burdensome regulation, instead of competition, can raise costs, limit investments and ultimately harm consumers through the inefficient allocation of resources. Sustainable market structures should be allowed to evolve naturally through competition and consolidation in the mobile sector, which will facilitate the development of infrastructure through increased investment. In developing markets, over burdensome regulation will produce unintended consequences that could stifle competition, innovation and diversity of market players. Any regulatory proposals should seek to promote the benefits of competition in new and emerging markets. We encourage ITU-D to engage in capacity building efforts through partnerships with industry, in particular, to facilitate the sharing of experiences in developing regulatory best practices that have been successful in emerging markets. Infrastructure sharing – Commercial agreements for the sharing of infrastructure should be enabled by a liberalised regulatory policy in all markets. Industry should be allowed to voluntarily enter into agreements with other mobile providers if it is in the commercial best interest of both parties to do so. Infrastructure sharing helps promote a competitive environment and the ITU-D can play a role in supporting the exchange of information and best practices to support capacity building in this area.
* **Internet Governance** –the ITU-D sector activities play an important role in the global telecommunications ecosystem. It undertakes number of development activities including capacity building and regional projects in partnerships with government, industry and local institutions. The role of ITU-D is well defined and should continue its work in this remit, but should not take on additional work in the area of standards or Internet governance. Many other multi-stakeholder organisations such as the Internet Society, the Regional Internet Registries, the OEDC and the IETF have a history of successful work in these areas. ITU-D partnerships with such organisations, among others, in this area and continued support for the multistakeholder approach are essential for the successful work of the ITU-D in the next four years.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the GSMA continues to take an active role in the preparatory phase leading up to WTDC-14. The GSMA sees first hand through its Mobile for Development initiatives the direct, positive impact that the growth of ICTs and technology has on emerging markets. The effect can be transformative especially in the areas of banking, education, health and agriculture. In approaching WTDC-14, proposals should encourage the further expansion of access to mobile technology and services throughout the developing world and in emerging markets.

Capacity building is key to developing an enabling environment for delivering technology and access to developing countries and emerging markets. As a committed member of the ITU-D the GSMA would welcome further opportunities to discuss with the ITU the possibility of sharing knowledge, information, experience and best practices for capacity building in the Development Sector.

1. http://www.gsma.com/spectrum/sub-saharan-africa-leads-world [↑](#footnote-ref-1)