

PRESS PRESS

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AFRICA ENHANCES ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS FORMULATION

The World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly (WTSA -2000) was held in Montreal, between 27 September – 6 October 2000.

The Assembly attracted a total of 20 African countries and ATU Secretariat who formed part of the 86 delegations and 620 participants. It took place within a rapidly changing technological environment and the need for a harmonized approach to setting of standards. The Assembly had the following roles:-

- (a) Adopt recommendations based on study groups reports.
- (b) Consider and approved the Director's report on the activities of the sector since the last conference; and
- (c) Consider these reports to the Telecommunications Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG).

At the ATU WTSA preparatory meeting held at Sun City, South Africa, 31 August, 2000 Africa identified key priority areas on which common positions were to be established namely:-

- Tariff Issues (Accounting Rate Reform)
- Internet Protocol Issues
- IMT 2000 and Beyond issues

ACHIEVEMENTS

With the above targets in view, the ATU Delegates maintained cohesiveness and consensus on these issues, which proved extremely contentious. In order to garner support for the African view points, regular consultations were maintained with other sub-regional organisations namely:- The Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL) and the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) as well as individual delegations from developing and developed regions. The ATU group itself met frequently to identify strategies as the debate on the issues proceeded.

In the end, the conference adopted decisions that were in consonance with Africa's expectations.

TARIFF ISSUES (ACCOUNTING RATE REFORM)

The Assembly adopted indicative target rates transitioned to cost oriented tariffs. In this regard the Assembly recognized the need for a transitional period in order to avoid possibilities of negative impact on telecommunications network expansion particularly in developing world. In order to enhance expertise in the area of the Accounting Rate Reform and Tariffs in general, the Assembly directed the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB) to cooperate with the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in assisting regional tariff groups to evolve methodologies for rate standard setting, adoption of computerized models for cost and tariff methodologies and facilitating meetings especially of the Tariff Group for Africa (TAF).

INTERNET PROTOCOL ISSUES

Discussions on Internet Protocol Issues, which proved to be controversial, revolved around how cost-sharing arrangements could apply on Internet connections between service providers and operational expenditure as well as traffic volumes. However, there was a general recognition that a mechanism for fair compensation based on terminal costs could be agreed upon between operating entities. The Assembly resolved that "Administrations involved in the provision of International Internet connections should negotiate and agree on bilateral commercial arrangements enabling direct international connections that take into account the need for compensation between them for the value traffic flow, number of routes, geographical coverage and cost of international transmission."



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IMT 2000 AND BEYOND ISSUES

The International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT 2000) was viewed as crucial in the setting of standards. Some participants proposed a task force to deal with this while others suggested the setting up a dedicated group under the Telecommunications Standardization Bureau (TSB) provisions. After considering a number of factors, chief of which was on whether developing countries could be assisted in the application of IMT 2000 and related wireless technologies, the Assembly agreed to establish a special study group to develop suitable recommendations for "IMT - 2000 and beyond" which should work closely with Radiocommunications Bureau and the Telecommunications Development Bureau and cooperate with external Standards Development Organisations (SDO's) and Third Generation Partnership Project (3GPP).

REPRESENTATION IN ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AND 2000 – 2004 STUDY GROUPS

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the ATU delegations at the conference was the election, for the first time in the history of TSB, of many African experts to key positions in the management of the Assembly and the 2000-2004 Study Programme.

Through effective consultation and lobbying strategies, election results to the various organs of the Assembly met with Africa's expectations. The following Team, which for functional strategy, will be known as "ATU FOCUS GROUP ON ITU-T ACTIVITIES (AFG – ITU/T) emerged:-

1.	Chairman – also Vice Chairman (WTSA 2000)	Mr. Gilbert Adanusa (Ghana)	Gdanusa@ghana.com
2.	Vice Chairman – also Chairman (Committee 2 WTSA 2000)	Mrs. P. Abenkou Eba'a (Cameroon)	Paulette.abenkou@camnet.cm
3.	Member – also Vice Chairman (TSAG)	Mr. A. Zourmba Cameroon	Haman_aboubakar@usa.net
4.	Member – Vice Chairman (Study Group 3)	Mr. H. K. Hamani (Niger)	Sabdou@intnet.ne
5.	Member – also Vice Chairman (Study Group IMT 2000)	Mr. P. Masambu (Uganda)	Patmas@ucc.co.ug
6.	Member – also Chairman (Tariff Group for Africa)	Mr. M. Ndaro (Kenya)	Mndaro@hotmail.com
7.	Member – also Chairman (Tariff Group for Africa)	Mr. E. Elop (Cameroon)	
8.	Member – also Chairman (Tariff Group for Africa)	Mr. M. Traoré (Mali)	Moditra@sotelma.ml
9.	Member – also Chairman (Tariff Group for Africa)	Mr. A. Akue-Kpakpo (Togo)	Aabosse@hotmail.com

Both Mr. G. Adanusa and Mrs. P. Eba'a were members of the overall 'Steering Committee' of the Assembly that successfully managed the affairs of the Conference.

In future strategy to enhance ATU's participation in ITU-T activities, the Secretariat proposes to coordinate the following tasks through the above Focus Group:-

- Promote Standardization Activities in ICT Industries in Africa.
- Solicit, coordinate and prepare inputs to ITU-T Meetings and Activities from ATU, ITU, Sector Members and Associate Members.
- In liaison with ATU Secretariat establish and nurture effective networking/discussion Groups on subjects in the respective Study Groups.
- Promote the Development of Standardization Professionals including development of career paths for African Experts within the ITU-T Study Group management structures.
- Promote the formation of 3rd Generation Multi-media Telecentre Partnership (3GMTP) to develop Africa specific open standards for telecentres that are needed for meeting Universal Access Obligations.

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