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INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION   
Regional Preparatory Meeting for WTDC-21 for Africa (RPM-AFR)  
29 MARCH 2021

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>> CHAIR: We are going to continue with our work.

The next item on the agenda is item, the item relating to the report on the implementation of outcomes of other ITU conferences, Assemblies and meetings related to ITU‑D work, item 6 of the agenda in fact. And these other events are the Plenipotentiary Conference 2018 that was held in Dubai, of course. We are also talking about the World Radiocommunication Conference 19, WRC. This took place in Sharm El‑Sheikh. And the RA19 world telecommunications standardization Assembly 2016 which took place in ham Ma met as you all know. I'm going to invite Marco o BIS o to take the floor.

>> MARCO OBISO: Yes, hello Mr. Chairman. Can you hear me? I'm pleased to present Document 5 summarizing the outcomes of the ITU conferences, Assemblies and meetings, including the status of their implementation of the ITU‑D work. The Document highlights the main outcomes of the Plenipotentiary Conference 2018, the WRC, the World Radio Conference and Radio Communication Assembly 2019 and the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly which is the WTSA 2016 including the relevance of such outcomes of ITU and BDT work is.

In that sense, for each of the Conference and Assembly as is structured in the Document, an Annex was elaborated and provided as link to the Document 5 giving additional details on the proceedings on this concerned specific event as well as this specific set of resolutions, recommendations, decisions that might be considered for the work of BDT, a more synergistic intersectional approach aligned with the one ITU spirit.

Finally at the end of the Document, you will also find a reference, a mapping exercise that was conducted to link the ten existing and current BDT thematic priorities with the relevant ITU resolutions, the WSIS action lines and BTU Study Groups, Sustainable Development Goals as well as the target to connect the 2030 Agenda.

This mapping is found as an Annex to another Document, which is Document 4 which provides, again, the whole comprehensive analysis and mapping of all of the elements relates to the current, and with that I conclude my short presentation. I'm open and available for further questions.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Marco Obiso, for this presentation of Document Number 5. Let us look at what is happening in the virtual room to see whether there are any questions, comments, concerns, that somebody would like to raise relating to Document Number 5. Any reactions, please? Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues.

I don't see any raised hand at this stage. So if this is the case, I would like to thank Mr. Obiso for this clear presentation. And invite RPM to take note of this Document. The next item is item number 7 of our agenda. This relates to the preparations for WTDC21, the world Conference which is scheduled to take place as you know in Ethiopia. So I'm very happy to be able to move to 7.1. 7.1 relates to the TDAG Working Group on the preparations of the WTDC and its report. The Working Group known as TDAG‑WG‑prep, and I will begin this part of this afternoon's session by giving the floor to the host country who has a shored video clip to show us. I would like to invite Mr. Mesve from the ministry that is responsible for ICTs in Ethiopia to show us this video. I give you the floor. Thank you very much.

>> ETHIOPIA: I don't have the video, but a presentation of Document 14 and I will be happy to get displayed Document 14 to be shared so that I will go through the Document, thank you, sir, and this is just a brief report on the summary status of the host country preparation for WTDC21, and the report is organized in two sections, page 1, please, organizational issues and major activities. In terms of organizational issues, the staring committee has already established a number of institutions like Ministry of Finance, foreign affairs, customs and all representatives are a member there, and apart from that, we have also established subcommittees here at local level around ten Committees are organized and these subcommittees are regularly meeting with ITU counterparts every time, in two weeks' time, once in two weeks' time, and in addition to that, we have organized a COVID Working Group, COVID‑19 Working Group which is actually evaluating the COVID issue with respect to the WTDC‑21. A number of proposals are also practically displayed.

The second part of the report is what are the major activities. The first one is the Host Country Agreement. Chair.

>> MODERATOR: There seems to be a connection problem from Ethiopia.

>> CHAIR: Please continue with your presentation, sir.

>> ETHIOPIA: The second one would be the road to Addis and this will be April 28. The third Chairing of interregional meetings, as you know the first interregional meeting has been conducted 11 March, and we have actually tried to have the privilege to Chair. The other one is securing venue, and as the United Nations Conference here in Addis Ababa has been secured and we are working in that regard. Regarding travel and accommodation, we have identified hotels, guest rooms and so on, and we have also been negotiating with the airlines to get some discount in that regard. Finally, we have actually tried to approve the logo which is already displayed by many participants here also at the background, and the logo of WTDC21.

This is actually a brief report on what is done from the country of preparing the WTD21 and if there are some questions, I will be happy to respond and my team members are also here in the room and they can also support me. Thank you very much. Back to you, Mr. Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for this presentation, which was very clear. This Document which shows that all that has been done by your country to ensure smooth running of this very important meeting for us, WTDC21.

I would like to invite the African Telecommunication Union, Marion, to present Document 23 to us in this context, and it gives us a good overview of the state of preparedness of this Conference on the side of the African Telecommunication Union. If you are there, ma'am, I would be very happy for you to present Document 23 to us.

>> AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION: Can you hear me? This is a brief presentation on the state of preparation of WTDC‑21. Regarding the preparatory process that has been initiated by ATU for the development of a joint proposals on the part of Africa for WTDC, we organized a first preparatory meeting Chaired by Sudan in October of 2020. And during this first meeting, a lot of work was undertaken. It was followed by the setting up of two Working Groups, a first Working Group entrusted with political issues or policy issues rather, declarations, regional initiatives and a second Working Group entrusted with development issues. Relating to ICTs.

These Working Groups met several times to prepare and a certain number of proposals that will be discussed during the joint preparatory meeting with the ITU, the ATU‑ITU, and we think that there will be a second preparation meeting of ATU. The date has yet to be set, but it will take place after this first ATU meeting. As regards African common proposals, what do we mean by this? We have the definitions here, they are proposals that an ATU member state or continental association presents to the Africa ca preparatory meeting for discussion and approval.

There has to be at least 15 Member States that join in the proposal. The first preparatory meeting as I said, we set up two Working Groups. The first which is Chaired by Mr. Richard Anago, Burkina Faso, Vice Chaired by Ms. Safwat from Egypt. And Zimbabwe. The mandate is joint proposals regarding working methods, the declaration, the Action Plan of ITU‑D, this the second group was Chaired by Mr. Women Paterson from South Africa and Co‑Chairs by Mr. Elhag from side Dan and Mr. Kanvoli of Côte d'Ivoire. They were responsible for developing joint African proposals on development programmes in particular, as well as the study questions for ITU‑D for the next cycle.

The next slide. During these preparations, we actually received 16 contributions from Member States to be considered as AFCPs, African common proposals. On the following topics, questions, ICT development, the Addis declaration, thematic priorities of ITU‑D, the operation and strategic plan, the ITU‑D working methods and future study questions of Study Groups 1 and 2 as well as regional initiatives.

Among the African priorities that were identified for WTDC‑21 during the preparatory meetings which I have just mentioned, well, these included broadband connectivity including in rural and remote areas, which is important, digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and confidence building, spectrum management, and bridging the standardization gap.

The setting up of an enabling environment for digital transformation and the implementation of SDGs, promoting ecosystems, innovative ecosystems and the use of emerging technologies for development, and, of course, a review of the outcomes of WSIS. So these are the regional priorities that were identified during the discussions of this Working Group.

As regards aspirations, African aspirations for WTDC21. The members of ATU think that it's a very important to strengthen the role of ITU‑D in addressing ICT development issues including in the area of digital transformation.

And as regards also the realization of the SDGs and all of the members have needs in this respect. Second as suspicious, review the Study Group questions to address the new development challenges and improve the results obtained by the Study Groups. Another as suspicious is, of course, to enhance coordination and collaboration with the various sectors, that is D with the R and the T‑sector. Standardization in radio communication, foster the participation of all and on equal footing as regards the use of the six languages of the Union, the six official languages and also facilitate participation and contribution of Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries including youth, academia, and local industries.

The next slide, please. so here you have a table which summarizes the proposals we have received. I'm not going to run through it because it will be presented in greater detail by the Chairs of the Working Groups. Could I have the next slide, please?

There we go, so in terms of focal points, we have here our focal points for the TDAG Working Groups, and you have the list of those who have been appointed to represent ATU to represent the African common proposals, the different Working Group meetings.

I think that's it. Thank you very much. We at the ITU are going to coordinate the candidates for the different Study Groups, ITU‑D Study Groups and the Vice Presidents of TDAG for the African region. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much for presenting this Document. In passing, I would like to thank the ATU for all of the progress that you have made, which enhances the coordination of our work and the preparation, stated preparation of our region with the, for the upcoming World Telecommunication Development Conference.

I would like to hear your reactions on Document 14 presented by Ethiopia, and Document 23 presented by the African Telecommunications Union. You have just seen the presentation. Are there any comments? From the floor? I see one hand from Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso, you have the floor.

>> BURKINA FASO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, everyone. I have a question I would like to ask Ethiopia. I would like to thank Ethiopia for the presentation, but I do have a question, and a concern about the current situation regarding COVID‑19. If the situation ‑‑ we would need to have the situation settled down quite rapidly if we want to hold the Conference physically, and we certainly don't want to be instrumental in propagating or worsening the pandemic.

Are there any other concerns or questions? From where I'm sitting, I can't see any other hands up. And I will, therefore, give the floor to the delegate from Ethiopia to respond to the concern raised by Burkina Faso. The delegate of Ethiopia. If you can hear me, I would like to give you the floor.

>> ETHIOPIA: Thank you, Chair ... thank you for the question from Burkina Faso. Add indicated in the opening speech, our preference is actually to hold the WTDC21 as planned, but as indicated also by our friend from Burkina Faso in his question, if things are actually changing, we have been actually requesting all African countries to support the proposal to postpone the event by some, which is really appropriate.

Of course, this will be, actually be approved by the member countries at large, and because of this we cannot actually comment on that, but from the preparation perspective, as I already discussed, we have actually tried to do Saul majors, as I said, we have established one COVID‑19 Working Group where all stakeholders, Ministry of Health, and other institutions are also members so that we want actually to comply with the international standards as well as local parameters.

But as I said, if things are actually becoming worse, then we seek the support from African countries to postpone the event by some time. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much. Thank you for such a clear answer. If there aren't any other hands raised. I don't see any new hands up.

>> Mr. Chairman, I believe in the chat there was a question from John.

>> ATU SECRETARY‑GENERAL: Thank you very much, Chairman. It was pretty much the question that has been raised by Burkina Faso in terms of the various options that Ethiopia and ITU are considering because those were mentioned in brief during the opening remarks, but that aside as Chair you do realize that in Sudan now that Ethiopia is seeking that support. Africa supports the chance to postpone the Conference by some months. There was also that request that Ethiopia could host with our help a meeting of African ICT Ministers just to drum up that support and to highlight the sort of preparations that are being made S. and to give the impression that this is truly an African meeting.

Following that discussion in Sudan, we did inform Ethiopia of that fact and do hope that perhaps it's something that Ethiopia could consider. Thank you very much, Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary‑General. If Ethiopia would like to come back now, I will give you the floor before we continue our work with the other Agenda Items, Ethiopia do you have a reply for the Secretary‑General of the ATU.

>> ETHIOPIA: Not specifically. I do actually compliment on what Secretary‑General has already said and we have noted that we will be having actually a truly African Conference, and we will be also engaging the ministerial engagement and other initiatives as well.

And thank you also for adding some consideration of supporting us on in case something happened or COVID is becoming worse to postpone. I don't have any specific response, rather a complement to add. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ethiopia for the information you provided to the meeting. I think this concludes the discussion on this item, and I would like to commend all of the parties for the activities under way. The host country, Ethiopia, the African telecommunications communion, which is in charge of coordinating the contributions and work under way in the different African countries. So I would like to comment both parties for their work under way. I would also like to reassure Ethiopia that the countries in our region are with you every step of the way.

Of course, we all hope that the pandemic will, there will be a lull or it will set will so that the Conference can take place physically in your country. We have taken note of the documents, documents 14 and 23, and now we will move to item 7.1, which is the report of the TDAG work, the telecommunications advisory Working Group, and I would like to invite Mr. Santiago Reyes from Canada to make the presentation based on Document 6. Are you in the virtual meeting? If you are, you have the floor. Thank you very much.

>> CANADA: Thank you very much, Chairman.

It's a pleasure to see you this morning. And good day to everyone. Mr. Chairman, I'm going to make a brief presentation of the final report of the Working Group on preparations for the TDA, the WTDC and I'm going to continue in English.

The report with the recommendations are approved and adopted by consensus. The report if we can kindly ask the second yacht to start scrolling down includes basically two sections, one on the preparatory process and the second on the Conference arrange. As the report is self‑explanatory I would like to go through a couple of points.

First and foremost, the Working Group agreed on the theme of the Conference, which is connecting the unconnected for sustainable development. And we all know that now more than ever connectivity remains probably the most important priority. There are 3.6, 3.7 million people still unconnected. The WTDC to ensure that we take concrete actions towards the connectivity challenges we still face.

Particularly, Mr. Chairman, you will see that on section 1 we address the issue of the interregional meetings, the format of the Conference, the agenda, and the steps that need to be taken to ensure that guide ITU‑D membership would participate. And for the Conference arrangements, Mr. Chairman, in terms of content, thematic track, themes and stakeholders, it is clear that we need to be very focused because now more than ever this upcoming WTDC is critical.

COVID‑19 has highlighted the urgency to go from the ongoing narrative of closing the digital divides to the adoption and to output results of the Conference that will effectively translate into concrete deliverable projects to address and resolve this issue.

Mr. Chairman, we very much look forward to the conclusion of the other two Working Groups, the one on resolutions, the declaration on the thematic priorities and the one on the strategic and operational plan. And finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say that on my side, as Chair of the Working Group for the World Telecommunications Development Conference, we remain poised to continue to work strongly with other regions so that this Conference will be a resounding success. I am at your disposal if there are any questions that the colleagues would like to ask. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Santiago. Thank you for presenting the Document on the TDAG Working Group's progress. I would like to now ask the participants to make a comments or place any questions you may have from what you just heard from the Chair of the Working Group.

Do you have any concerns with respect to the Document of the TDAG Working Group? Any requests for the floor. I don't see any. There is one hand up from Kenya. Chris, if you can hear me, I give you the floor.

>> KENYA: Thank you very much for giving me the floor.

Let me first take the opportunity to most sincerely thank Mr. Santiago, the Chair of this particular group for the very skillful coordination of these proposals. Indeed most of the proposals presented are excellent.

They will indeed go along with ensuring that the next WTDC, and I hope it will be WTDC21 that will benefit from these very excellent proposals. Having said that and I'm saying that deliberately to ask Mr. Santiago to what extent would some of these proposals find its way into implementation in the next WTDC and if there are such opportunities, what would be the process?

And I say this because clearly there are very good posals that go a long ‑‑ proposals that go a long way to ensuring that the Conference is focused, and more impactful and more resource oriented, but I'm concerned about the process and whether there are opportunities to ensure that some of the good proposals coming from this Working Group would find their way in terms of the way the Conference that is coming is going to be organised. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much for this question, Kenya.

It's a very relevant question, and as I see no other raised hands for the time being, I will give the floor back to Santiago to answer this concern raised by Kenya. You have the floor, sir.

>> CANADA: Thank you very much, Chair. In our discussions, we have been discussing this issue thoroughly and we hope we can conclude with a very good approach for our regional preparatory meeting on the 26th and 27th of April, and mainly for the following reason. When we looked at the draft thematic priorities, provided by the group of Dr. Sharafat, we saw one which is of key importance which is that of international cooperation for resource mobilization because it is essential in our view that the regional priorities are able to create projects that can be implemented, fully delivered and monitored.

And to that extent, we hope that we will all work together towards the WTDC and at the Conference itself to see how we can with the priorities that can be fully implemented. Given the fact that, of course, the ITU and in particular the BDT doesn't have the financial resources to translate all of those priorities into concrete projects, we are going to need to work closely with all kinds of partners to ensure that those priorities can be made into projects that can be delivered and concluded between WTDCs.

So on that note, it's going to be very important that we continue to focus our efforts on having, first of all, these linkages between the ITU‑D thematic priorities and the regional priorities which at the end should be consistent with the thematic priorities because the priorities for the ITU‑D end up being the work that we will task the BDT to do.

So we really need to work closely together to ensure that we have all of this international cooperation for resource mobilization. I hope that with this I have answered the question, but, of course, offline or on the chat I would be more than willing to continue this conversation. Thank you so much, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much. This was a very detailed answer and I hope this answered the concern raised by Mr. Kemei. Now, let's see whether there are any other questions or raised hands on the platform. I do not see any so with your permission, I would like to thank Santiago for this excellent work. Undertaken by the Working Group of the BDT. A lot of work went into this and I would like our meeting to now take note of the Document.

And we will now move to the next point on our agenda, identifying the regional priority areas. I would like to ask the ATU, probably Mrs. Miriam Salami to introduce Document 20. Are you with us, Ms. Meriam. You have the floor.

>> ATU: Yes, thank you, Chair. In fact, this Document will be introduced by Mr. Hama Sufwet who Chaired the preparatory work behind the African common proposal. If he is with us, he should raise hi hand on the platform to interest ‑‑ his hand on the platform to introduce this Document on behalf of the ATU. I see he is there. You have the floor, sir.

>> ATU: A good afternoon to everyone, and to ITU thank you so much for organising this important meeting. Just time, I will walk you through very quickly through the work we have done during the past two weeks in order to get, come up with the regional initiatives for Africa. After three core four consecutive meetings, in the beginning we had the impression should we retain the initiatives that were adopted in Buenos Aires in 2017 or should we revisit them? Should we keep the headlines? Keep parts of them and try to have another look at the details and the spectrum results.

After going through the five original initiatives at that time and we were under the impression that we set up four main areas that we should be working under them. First of all, we thought of digital infrastructure that is of paramount importance to Africa. So the first regional initiative had to do with connectivity and the infrastructure. The second one, it had to do with digital transformation, but now digital transformation as a broad concept. We tried to narrow it as much as possible for transformation to the digital economy. So this transformation to usher African countries to realize their digital economies.

The third one had to do with cybersecurity and trust in the network. And, of course, it had to do with the establishment of certs, the establishment of interest additional and regional operation for various CERTs for those own countries that have their own CERTs.

It was of enormous importance for those CERTs to be in close coordination together, and for those who do not yet have their own CERTs, we were asking the ITU to take necessary actions in order to help those countries to establish the national CERTs.

The fourth one was, it was a kind of a combination between the different concepts that had to do with fostering innovation ecosystem in Africa as well as the use of emerging technologies and integrating them in the different sectors of the economy. So those were the four main regional initiatives. The fifth one, it had to do with radio frequency and migration to digital broadcasting.

At that time, Honorable Delegates we agreed that this was a long standing issue, and it's of very pressing importance to Africa. That's why we decided to suppress this one and go with the four main focus areas in order to be more focused and more concentrated. So just to conclude, I would like to thank all of the Honorable Delegates and all Member States for their valuable contribution during the meetings that we had during the last two weeks in order to will could up with those initiatives and sincere thanks to the ATU for organising the meeting as well.

I'll be more than happy to answer any questions or comments.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much to the representative of Egypt concerning this presentation on the African regional initiatives. I would also like to thank the Working Group of the ITU and the correspondence group that was set up for their excellent work. Before moving to the next Document, Document 9, I see that Mr. Stephon has a raised hand. So Mr. Stephon, you have the floor.

>> ITU: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was trying to intervene to help respond to the earlier question. I don't know if we still want to do that, but that would mean going back to a previous Agenda Item. I don't want to disrupt the meeting.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Stephon. I will first give the floor to Mr. Turhan Muluk from the Intel Corporation for his reactions to the Document. You have the floor.

>> INTEL: I would like to congratulate drafting team for this excellent work. I believe this is really a very good initiative and really reflects the needs of the African region. My only comment on page 3, designing and executing awareness raising and campaigns as well as on benefits of 5G. I believe here if we say wireless communications. 5G is only one of the wireless communication systems.

There are other wireless communications systems and we need to have all of communication. Thank you. Item 12 on page 3.

>> CHAIR: I believe that Mr. Safwat from Egypt who is the Chair of the group will have heard your concerns, and I hope that this suggestion will be taken into consideration.

>> TURHAN MULUK: Thank you, Chairman.

>> CHAIR: I would like to move onto presentation of Document 9, a contribution by Huawei. Could you please introduce this Document?

>> HUAWEI:: Hi, this is Adam from Huawei. You want me to introduce the Document? This Document was already, I think, discussed in order to come up with, so I don't think we need to go in detail now, but just, I can still, I guess, highlight a few of the key points which were discussed in the previous Working Group discussed for the other Document. I think some of the key points was the emphasis in Africa on connectivity generally rather than just on emerging technologies. Another can he aspect was around education and healthcare facilities being connected, and around aspects of USF and spectrum policy and so on. So I think those are some of the key points. We also focus a lot on digital skills and inclusivity for underserved groups, and the third one was around digital transformation of industries specific to Africa.

We recognize that the industries in Africa such as tourism, maybe energy and extractives, hospitality may be unique to others as well as culture so it may be helpful to consider the digitalization in an African context, African framework, but we did review this Document and it was taken into consideration and we are happy that the recommendations were incorporated into the overall Document that was just discusses previously. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much for introducing this Document. If you have any questions, I will give you a couple of minutes to raise your questions or indicate your comments. If there are no questions, I suggest this contribution of Huawei be sent to Working Group number 1 that was set up by the ATU.

The Working Group in charge of methods of work of the declaration and the initiatives for further discussion. I see that Egypt wishes to take the floor. You have the floor.

>> EGYPT: Thank you so much. Apologies for taking the floor once again.

It's just like a reflection on what Adam from Huawei has mentioned and presented to us. This Document actually, I wish to thank him so much for it and thank Huawei because we took too into serious consideration while we were setting up our priorities and regional initiatives. So as he indicated that we were continue into consideration, so if you wish to send any further amendments or further topics or something, so please do that as Mr. Chair has indicated through sending it to Working Group number one.

And we have also incorporated Intel's recommendations and take them. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, AMR, Chairman charm of the Ad Hoc Group. This Document can be sent to Working Group one for further discussion. We will continue with our agenda and we will move to Document 10 submitted my after Friday NIC, the African Network Information Center. I would like to ask the representative of AFR NIC to introduce the Document, Document 10.

>> AFRINIC: Thank you very much, the Chair, and thank you very much for the floor given to AFRINIC to share its contribution given to this August Assembly. The topic of accelerating a secure Internet behind the COVID‑19, so as many of you can know, since the COVID‑19 pandemic, the African continent has taken note of the effort of African countries in accelerating the digital transformation by speeding up the deployment of Internet infrastructure to provide Internet and connectivities to citizens from any part of our beautiful continent.

Anticipating the AFRINIC (Garbled audio). The services including IP numbers and IPv6 environment. They are now accessible and available from any devices. That means that the services are constantly improved to meet the increasing demand of Internet activities in our African region.

So during the (Garbled audio). we will surely contribute to catalyze the economy and social development and mitigate the impact. (Garbled audio).

>> CHAIR: Thank you, AFRINIC. for this Document that you have submitted to our meeting. So let me see if there are any hands raised and if there are any comments following the presentation of this Document. Question? Comments? This does not seem to be the case. I will invite the meeting now to approve the proposals contained in this Document and to send this Document for further study at the Working Group number 2 of ATU for more in depth examination of its contents. So let us look at the other documents that we have on the agenda, documents 11 and 12, which are contributions from Ethiopia. 11 is innovative use of universal funds, innovative way of using Universal Access Funds to support African digital transformation. We are also going to present Document 12 which is from Ethiopia as well, and Document 12 relates to the issue of rural connectivity which should be a priority for our region.

These two documents have been submitted to us for examination. And will be presented by Ethiopia.

>> ETHIOPIA: Thank you, Chair. Again, we are actually proposing two documents. The first one is innovative way of using the Universal Access Fund to support African digital transformation while the Document is already hosted, member countries can actually, I assume, member countries have already seen the content. I will go through the major propose will quickly.

As we know, WTDC2021 has a theme of connecting the un‑‑ a theme of connecting the unconnected part of the population, and in this regard, we can actually try to be in line with Sustainable Development Goals. And to do this for sure, the priorities have to actually be given to access, and with digital literacy skills and for that clearly access to Internet and telecommunication services really is critical a point to all African countries. And Ethiopia has endorsed digital transformation strategy called digital Ethiopia 2025, and the African Union has developed its digital transformation strategy.

The Universal Access Service Fund can actually be used efficiently so we will actually be trying to achieve the objective of the African digital transformation strategy. And as per our evaluation, the universe at service fund is not actually be utilized as per the initial thought, and there are some countries where this fund is actually being left in the Government's pocket and not achieving what is supposed to be achieved.

And for that reason, due to the limited and the limited and the weakness visible on design and structure, design structure and the implementation of the Universal Service Fund, then we propose that there must be some alternatives to actually be followed by member countries and by the community at large.

And the alternative measures to achieve this universal service can actually be a number of points. For example, identifying the policy challenge, and opportunities associated to the Universal Access Fund, and on page 3 we have actually specified some more points like look at the way how they already implemented the Universal Service Fund has malfunctioned and what are the possible options to hibernate and to solve some of the challenges, and what are the best practices and how do we actually try to make this fund utilized so that it will actually support the strategies.

And in general, member countries should actually try to look into the innovative way of using Universal Access Fund to support African digital transformation so that clearly we will be achieving the objective of the Universal Access Fund.

This is Document 11, and Document 12, if I may, is also related to similar topic, but more concentrating on the connecting rural communities as a priority to African nation. Again, the Document is hosted and you can look into the details. And in this Document on page 2 we have actually tried to give some background information about connectivity, and specifically even in the opening speech, the African Union Commissioner has actually indicated that we have to actually tackle and specifically work towards rural connectivity, and the rural section of our population has to actually get the advantage of being connected.

And with relation to the COVID community, the challenge will be even more severe because our population 70 to 80% of the population is located at rural section of the continent, and really reaching them is a mandatory requirement. And to achieve this clearly specific strategy has to be followed. If we are not actually covering the urban area or the urban population, the rural area and the rural population, then the SDG and the strategies what we are actually planning will not be actually fulfilled.

For that reason, clearly we are actually suggesting clearly a better way of tackling the, connecting the unconnected part of the nations, and with that WTDC has to discuss some complementary way how to actually reach the rural area so that the maximum population are residing.

And this is actually a very brief explanation or a highlight, and I will be happy, actually, to respond to questions on those documents or forwarded from Ethiopia. Thank you very much. Back to you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Ethiopia. For having presented these two documents to our meeting. I'm having a look around the virtual room, to see if there are any questions, whether any hands are raised for questions or comments regarding the two documents presented by Ethiopia. And we are talking about documents 10 and 11, rather, 11 and 12. Kenya would like to take the floor. Chris Kemei, you have the floor.

>>

>> KENYA: Thank you very much, Chair, for giving me the floor. I wish to really thank Ethiopia for these two documents, Document 11 and 12 that generally lead is to connectivity in the rural areas or areas that are either underserved or unserved.

Chair, I think the question of having innovative ways of closing the connectivity gap perhaps would be the approach to this, because Universal Service Fund is in my view just one of the many ways of ensuring universal access in the rural areas. So it is an important question, but it is a question that requires a very delicate balancing.

As you realize, Chair, even the recent report by ITU that undertook to study the absorption levels of Universal Service Funds globally, I think the best turned out to be about 15 or 16%. And in my view, Chair, it is a matter that is about, I think, there are a number of facets to this.

As you know, before you implement funds, remember there are funds which are from the Universal Service Fund. There are also funds from the private sector, and the best way to balance this is basically to come up with a financial model that then defines the boundary between the two access gaps and, you know, commercially viable areas where the private equity can be used to do that because if you already rely on Universal Service Fund, it will be largely inadequate.

So I think there is a case for proper design of programmes based on the appropriate financial modeling, and in my view, in my submission, I think there is a big gap in terms of internal capacity to design appropriate financial monitoring for implementation of Universal Service Fund, and I guess this brings the question, could we initiate a process of maybe through a study question that leads to us harmonizing models for bridging universal access in one hand using the fund, and on one hand using the private equity.

So, again, just to reiterate that these are very, very important topics, and it's a topic that is not just important to Africa. It is a global issue, and a lot of the restrictions are facing challenges in utilization of the fund for a myriad of reasons. I think it is an opportune time that we undertook a detailed study to really prepare ourselves in terms of accelerating the utilization of these funds going forward for our benefit.

I thank you, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Kenya.

The floor is to Ghana. Ghana, you have the floor.

>> GHANA: Thank you, Chair. And thanks to Ethiopia for this Document.

I want to more buttress what my friend, Chris, from Kenya has said. We need to bring back the conversation of universal access found through a mechanism which could be like a study question. Because of the experiences that we have had over a couple of decades, this has been there, but we could pinpoint countries who may not be utilizing the Universal Service Fund.

They are countries who you can say have over utilized the Universal Access Fund to the extent that we are now seeking additional funding to accomplish the goals. The Universal Access Fund goes beyond building infrastructure in rural communities. Well also want to deepen the use of the service in building community centers where people can have access to ICTs. The issues of devices are also very key in where this fund will tend to service as well as financing the building of skills or capacity building for people in the use of ICTs.

We were used to a certain model where a certain percentage of revenues from telecom service was used to finance this fund. So, now we have to look at additional sources of funding and structure as to how the fund is resourced, again, what scope, how the scoping is like when it comes to what services and programmes that it can attend to.

I think we can share this knock when this should go into probably a study question. So as we prepare for WTDC. This could be an adjustment we will make to the Study Group that is currently being modified. Thank you, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Ghana, for your relevant statement. I'm going to have to continue going through these documents. ESOA has asked for the floor. You have the floor.

>> ESOA: Good DAI, Mr. Chairman. I will continue in English. (Audio is very faint). Make consultations and try to improve the ‑‑ one of the things we have realized is that in many cases the reason to use it is not as clear as it should, and we believe it should be used specifically for places where they are needed. So use them (Garbled audio). We will review and see how can we at this stage of technology also, how can we ensure that the places that are most needed and that we continue improving connectivity everywhere. So we would support that there is a question on this area of information. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, ESOA, for your very clear and I think important contribution. Now, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Abdul OLOYEDE, you have the floor, sir.

>> INTERPRETER: I'm sorry, Chairman, we cannot hear him.

>> CHAIR: Can you please turn your microphone on. We cannot hear you. While we wait for Antol to figure out what his technical issue is, I'm going to give the floor to Santiago from Canada. Santiago, if you can hear me, I am giving you the floor.

>> CANADA: Yes. Thank you, Chairman.

Over the last 18 months there is a report that has been sent by CITEL to the Organization of American States towards the upcoming General Assembly. That report contains a series of 21 recommendations on what needs to be done on rural, remote connectivity, particularly focusing on underserved regions as well. And just so let you know, that we will be happy to send a copy of that report both to the BDT in Geneva, both to the regional office for Africa, and as well to the ATU. Thank you, Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Santiago for your offer. which I would like to thank you for as session Chair, meeting Chair. I'm sure the Secretary‑General of the ATU will be grateful as well. Now, I would like to give the floor to Doreen Bogdan‑Martin. If you can hear me, you have the floor.

>> DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to support the discussion of rural connectivity and financing of connectivity in general. Just to highlight first that the broadband commission has been working for many, many months on a report on 21st century financing. I hope that that will be completed soon. So I wanted to share that. The other thing that I wanted to mention, Mr. Chair, is that for the upcoming Global Symposium for Regulators, we will have a service fund. So I look forward to sharing that with you for comments soon.

And then, finally, Mr. Chairman, we have our last mile connectivity solutions guide that was completed last year. Many of you worked on that, and I think that's a very good practical guide for connectivity solutions in last mile situations. So I just wanted to offer those few thoughts. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Madame Director, for this extremely helpful information, very useful for our work. I do not see any other hands raised. I would like to ask the meeting now to take note of these two documents, the Documents from Ethiopia. Given the fact that we had quite a few comments I think that broadband connectivity and financing seemed to be important topics, and I would like to send these documents to Working Group 2, the African Telecommunications Union's Working Group, looking into telecommunications as a possible study question.

Our meeting takes note of these two documents and sends them for further consideration to Working Group 2.

Now, I see a hand that's still up ‑‑ no, I'm sorry, it's been put down now. So I sham move ahead. In four program, but Cecilia seems to be requesting the floor. So I will give it to her. Cecilia, you have the floor.

>> CAECILLA NYAMUTSWA: I wanted to say on connectivity we have completed our work in Study Group one on ICTs for rural and remote areas, and there are quite a number of solutions that have been offer in that report which can also be taken into account by the Working Group. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Caecilla. So in these two documents, so we have already taken note of these two documents and we will send them to Working Group 2 refer them to Working Group 2.

Now, friends, I would like us to move onto the following item. Can I call on the Internet Society, ISOC to present Document 13 to the meeting. This is a Document about expanding Internet access to remote and rural areas. So I would invite ISOC to present the Document.

Thank you.

>> ISOC: Thank you, Mr. Chair for giving us the opportunity to present. I will present the Document. The Document is titled expanding Internet access to remote and rural areas, and I think it resonated well with the discussion we are just having, the previous discussion. The Internet Society believes that Internet creates opportunities for socioeconomic development, and we believe that everyone should have access to the Internet and as such we are also thinking that there is need to invest quite a lot of our effort in supporting the complementcy connectivity solutions ‑‑ complementary connectivity solutions.

We are submitted to work with the member, ATU members in order to achieve this shared vision. And Mr. Chairman, I think the COVID‑19 pandemic has shown that there, has sort of shown us that the digital divide has been widening especially in remote areas, and the gender digital divide is proving to be quite difficult to overcome. So for quite a number of years, we have been working in Internet development and networking infrastructure and trying to find ways of supporting the development of if community‑based initiative, community‑powered networks that are based on innovative and sustainable resource models. So this is one of the solutions to close this digital divide.

We believe with this contribution, members can also take note of this complementary initiatives that can be powers by communities.

Over the years, our experience has shown that these community networks can be very, very important in closing this gap, but there are quite a number of challenges that some of these community networks are facing, and among these challenges include regulatory frameworks that doesn't really give them the opportunity to grow and thrive. Also the business licensing models, and also issues to do with funding that we talked about, and, of course, maybe things like the universal service fund could be among those funding mechanisms that can support community networks.

So we believe, Mr. Chair, that community networks can become important elements in expanding access to rural access to Internet in remote and rural areas where traditional networks would not be interested to invest. We also think they can also support the partnership that comes with various stakeholders in building our networks, especially in building those remote areas.

So we have shared in our Document a few examples of some of these networks in the countries we are working with, and we want to invite members to look at this Document and also consider it for this meeting, Mr. Chair. I thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you ISOC for presenting this Document to our preparatory meeting. Now, let me look around the virtual meeting room and see if there are any comments or questions. I see Caecilla's hand up. If Caecilla, you are asking for the floor, you have it. Please go ahead.

>> CAECILLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I must have forgotten to lower my hand.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much. Are there any other comments on the ISOC Document which has just been presented. I see Kenya's hand up again. Kenya, if you are asking for the floor, Chris, please go ahead.

>> KENYA: Yes, thank you very much, Chair. And thank you ISOC for presenting this Document. Chair, I'm looking at the Document and the critical part of this Document is mainly the challenges that community networks are facing and if I look at them, starting from business, licensing, regulatory fees, taxes, and so on, so forth, it then boils down to the same question as to the best approach to financing universal access whether or not it's through community networks. I'm just trying to scratch my head and still fetch out the specific needs of community networks that is over and above the normal, the general, you know, challenges that faces any organisation that provides connectivity in, perhaps, areas that are not commercially viable, and I wanted to understand from ISOC, in particular because in some of our jurisdictions, community networks are welcome, they are encouraged, but as much as you encourage them, very few of any sustainable models, very few are as indicated in this Document have the capacity to even tackle from the beginning the issues that have been presented here in terms of licensing fees, access to spectrum, so on.

In our view, and I'm speaking from our case, we indeed, a few cases where we have waived all of those requirements and there are issues of sustainability, there are issues of concrete achievement. So I just wanted to further understanding and more concrete proposal on the table so we can, as we discuss this Document going forward, we then address the real core issues that the various community networks even as much as we most welcome in this endeavor. Thank you, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr. Kemei from Kenya for your close reading of this Document. Let me look around the room one more time for any raised hands, comments or questions. I do see a hand raised, APC, Carlos Moreno, Rey Moreno. If you can hear me, you have the floor.

>> APC: One of the questions was around community networks and the meeting took place in January, and there are a lot of documents from different organisations including the ITU on the topic. Till put the link in the chat as I think it contained very relevant information. On to unpacking some of those issues.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr. Moreno, for your suggestion which we have taken note of. I see other hands up now in the room. So let's start with the representative of South Africa, and then Caecilla and then Ivory Coast, you have the floor. Please go ahead.

>> SOUTH AFRICA: Thank you, distinguished Chair, chairperson, and good day to everyone.

I think as in the Council Working Group on Internet, we have come to recognition of the complementary role that community networks can actually play in supplementing the traditional networks that we already know. However, as my colleague has mentioned, we have actually debated with there was no challenge from where we are sitting from the point of view of licensing. Obviously if you look at spectrum access issues, yes, there will definitely be challenges there, because if community networks are actually looking for the very same spectrum, for instance, your traditional telecos are actually using nationwide, it's going to be quite difficult unless we have got experiences elsewhere that actually show in areas where additional telecos do not actually use that spectrum.

What sort of spectrum management approaches we can adopt at a national level, but in the very same spectrum is the spectrum that is actually usually dedicated to Mobile Network Operators, which is very important for quality of service. That cannot actually be compromised. But I think what we need to actually be looking at is some of those challenges which are truly experienced elsewhere, how can we actually come up with spectrum management approaches that we can actually adopt at a national level. Thank you, chairperson.

>> CHAIR: Thank you to the representative of South Africa for this important comment. I'll now give the floor to Ms. Caecilla followed by Ms. Caroline from Côte d'Ivoire. And Ghana will come after Caroline. You have the floor. Ms. Caecilla.

>> CAECILLA NYAMUTSWA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The views that have been expressed in relation to community networks is that people have been seeing them as hobby‑like projects that are not covering much ground in terms of connecting the rural and the remote areas. And that argument has been expressed in some fora. Each time I have been listening to presentations on community networks. So perhaps this need for the Internet Society to make sure that when you do your presentations or make contributions, you need to highlight what strategy is in place to make sure those community networks can be expanded to a level where they benefit the rural and remote areas.

So maybe using examples like what has happened in Tushet and all of that might go a long way, but a strategy definitely is required, the cry for licensing waivers and spectrum. So that's the comment that I have, perhaps. If that strategy could be shared. If there is anything other than those issues that you have been crying for, that is the place to make sure that these networks can make a difference who would like to hear it. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much Ms. Caecilla for this comment. So you would like to know whether there is a strategy to extend these networks further. I'm sure we will be able to come back to this issue by giving the floor to the representative of ISOC. In the meantime, I give the floor to Côte d'Ivoire.

>> CÔTE D'IVOIRE: Thank you very much for giving me the floor, Chair.

I would like to thank all of the actors of the Internet Society. They have been making excellent presentations in recent years on the question of community networks. Following PP‑18 this, where this question was raised and this was followed by intense discussions and more recently within question 5.1, a joint workshop was organized on broadband networks and we heard presentations on community networks.

And now today, during this preparatory meeting for Africa, once again the issue has come up. This is a Document for information. It has raised a certain number of questions and I believe you have adopted good approach by sending documents to Working Groups. In this case, it should be to Working Group 2 so that we can further discuss this question of community networks within this Working Group.

Thank you. I now give the floor to Ghana.

>> GHANA: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, ISOC, for your very kind presentation on some of the options that you have. I want to again follow up with my colleagues from Kenya, Zimbabwe South Africa, and Côte d'Ivoire on how far we are your propositions over the years. Countries are very welcoming to solutions that will get everyone among the ICTs connected. So be very much rest assured that countries are really desperate to get connectivity to their citizens.

But you have to understand that in the market, your solution is one of many, as the BDT shared with us, among the solutions, countries will have to see how viable one concept may apply in certain circumstances. And really, their focus is making big impacts, sustainable projects. These are the ambitions. If you should go on to share the examples in terms of country cases, countries are looking for collaboration rather than competitive stance.

So where there are existing operators, and there is the consideration that certain rural communities cannot be connected, it could be you're strategy to approach these operators and see how best you can collaborate with them, and get those places covered.

It is a concept which is working in many countries. The issue of spectrum in rural communities as to whether it will be licensed or not, there are unlicensed spectrum for a number of countries, TDY, for example, is one of them. In my country, Ghana, it will be for ten years now, we give the opportunity for such a network to be operated, not really in a remote place, but even in a municipal place where there are universities.

Unfortunately, that network closed shop and vanished from its place. So look at it in the entirety of whole proposition in context where it applies. We feel that sometimes the focus is too much on what Member States can do rather than how best the solution can satisfy the needs of Member States. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you for this contribution from Ghana. I would now like to give the floor to ISOC in order to answer the question raised by Caecilla. The question concerned the existence of a strategy. You have the floor, ISOC.

>> ISOC: Thank you Mr. Chair, and thank you very much colleagues for all of the comments, very useful comments that I think are meant to support this kind of initiative.

Just to give a bit of perspective in the presentation that I made, yes, certainly there are very positive and very encouraging case studies that we are seeing from community networks that have been given an opportunity to make those deployments in a few countries. In the Document that I shared, we did present a few of those case studies, and to maybe emphasize on the sustainability aspect, we have seen over the years that actually the community networks that have been given the enabling policy environment to thrive, they have actually done so very well.

And they are even giving better option for connectivity, especially in light of the affordability aspect that we talked about in the introduction. Because some of the issues, some of the challenges that our communities do have in terms of connecting is actually the affordability or the price that is charged by operators.

So we are seeing, and we are learning that community networks are looking at very innovative ways of addressing this challenge, of making sure that the price is affordable, but also give very stable or it lists a very strong connectivity options for their communities. I would ask Mr. Chair that probably the next discussion we can also provide supporting documentation to this note to present those to Member States of those communities, community networks that are thriving well, and maybe the discussion could be much stronger.

But one of the challenges that we have seen in other countries is that even though the community networks may have all of the resources they need to establish the policy or the legislative environment doesn't allow them to do so. So we do understand that in places like Kenya, for example, I think my colleague from Kenya did mention this, that it is possible to, these networks have been supported and some of them are probably having other challenges that are related to business models. So I'm happy that members are considering supporting this initiative and term will be happy to provide additional smart and also evidence to show the strength of this concept. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

>> CHAIR: I would like to thank ISOC for submitting this Document to us. Given the interest for this Document, I would like to ask our meeting to take note of the Document, and send it to Working Group it of the ATU in charge of the development of telecoms and ICTs, and of study questions. In order to proceed with a detailed examination of the Document and see whether these community networks can support our communities and narrow the digital divide. We will now move to the next point.

The next point will be contribution 24 of the Africa Youth Group. The Document was already presented this morning, but we weren't able to raise any questions about it this morning. So if you agree, we could now have a discussion about this Document that was introduced by the Africa Youth Group this morning. Document 24.

It concerns the empowerment of youth for the digital transformation of our region. You have the floor for your comments. Maybe I could ask the ATU Secretariat whether they can make this Document available on the screen. I do not see any reactions from the participants. I would like to ask you to take note of Document 24.

Now, we can move to the next point. I see Thibeaulte who wishes to take the floor.

The Secretariat of the ITU would like us to identify ourselves with the organisation we represent.

>> Thank you I'm Eric Thibeaulte. I'm head of the Unity Youth Sport and Citizenship at the international Francophony organisation. I would like to make a distribution because after two months of intense mobilization by youth, more than 120,000 young people took part in a consultation process. 134 countries submitted contributions from 74,000 young people.

We put different questions to the youth on digital and telecommunications and several solutions were suggested to our organisation thanks to these consultations. We were very interested and I was surprised by the commitment of the 26 young people who made the presentation this morning. I hope that these young people will join the mobilized youth in French speaking African countries.

Indeed the conditions for the access to digital infrastructure have been raised by those who took part in the consultation and the challenge is the quality of connection very often of the Internet connection at an affordable cost for the youth and mainly in countries that are experiencing some fragility and landlocked countries in particular where broadband thanks to connectivity does not reach the country because there are no submarine cables that reach the landlocked countries. In regards to the major themes that were broached by the young people. What is important is to be able to use all of the recommendations that are made to the French speaking youth as regards the gambit of connectivity and access to digital content, especially in the current situation.

It's very important to foster and stimulate the motivation of young students as well as their teachers to be able to benefit from good connectivity to foster the incentive to go to school in person. It's not always possible because of the pandemic to be able to go to schools and to have in‑person tuition. It's very important to work with the students to be able to do remote teaching and design content and share those contents and there is an effort, a joint effort that has to be made here between the various linguistic sectors that are representatives by the ITU, the various languages, the six official languages were mentioned earlier, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, French and English.

This is something, a combat, a fight that has to be led together. And Francophony is prepared to take part in this process so as to make sure the thought has to be given to this to be able to ensure good access to the young people of the world to good content and to be able to benefit from good connectivity.

So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I can give you the results of the consultation if you are interested. Thank you.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, for this contribution. Mr. Thibeaulte, I would invite you to submit the conclusions of your consultation as a contribution to the work undertaken by our region as we speak. This being said, I'm going to give the floor to Kenya, Chris Kemei from Kenya asked for the floor. You have the floor, dear colleague.

>> KENYA: Thank you for giving me the floor. Indeed, Chair, as you indicated in your opening remarks, this particular Document was presented in the morning, and I think we all received that presentation very warmly, and we ‑‑ I think in taking note of that preparation, we clearly indicated that the youth are the future, are our future, and given the process that it has taken and I remember Kuame from Ghana did make a specific proposal that this particular submission be taken as a very important input into our processes that could be in terms of identifying regional priorities are thematic priorities or whichever the case may be, and closely looking at the submission, share.

I think most of the issues are basically the common issues of connectivity and access, you know, availability of devices, cost of services and I think the issue of the youth wanting to participate in the ICT innovation and so on, so forth, all of these clearly are matters that have always been running challenges for us, and I think the youth have just gone ahead to reaffirm that these are critical areas that require prioritization in our work, and I would submit, therefore, that this particular input be given the favorable consideration in designing our future programmes going forward just the same way or in line with what Kuame did propose in the morning. So I would second the proposal by Kuame that we take this as a very important input Document. I thank you, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thanks, Chris Kemei from Kenya for this comment.

As regards this Document, the meeting takes note of this Document, takes note of the importance of the content of this Document. Our meeting also pays tribute to the youth, African youth in particular and is very grateful for the African youth to have made this contribution, which is a major one. This being said, dear participants, I'm very happy to be able to announce that our meeting has discussed all of the items that were on the agenda for today.

Before closing today's session, I could give the floor to the Secretariat of ITU‑D for logistical announcements or any other information that might be useful for our work tomorrow. And then we will come back to the drafting group on regional priorities that will be discussed in a few moments.

So if you can hear me, representative of the Secretariat, you have the floor.

>> SECRETARIAT: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. And congratulations on work the we have done. I believe we have an hour to go, but if you wish to stop, the items that have not been covered can be picked up in the morning. The logistics are the same, the logging in is the same. But I defer to my colleague, Mr. Omo for his advice.

>> JOHN OMO: Thank you very much, Chairman. And thank you very much delegates for very robust discussions that will shape the future of ICT development in Africa.

Just to indicate that we still have a couple of documents, 15, 16, 17, and 18 which we may not exhaustively discuss on account of time, but the point is that we, there is a lot of work that has been passed onto the various, the two Working Groups, in particular the drafting group that was Chaired by Amr will be spending the midnight oil in trying to internalize some of the work that was sent to that very group.

So my plea is that if we take a break now, the drafting work begins, and we would be available to I believe together with the ITU to facilitate whatever discussion or logistical arrangements that those drafting groups may need in terms of furthering the work that has been assigned to them by your group, Chairman.

Other than that, I sincerely want to thank you in the team here for what I can consider to be a job well done. Thank you very much, Chair.

>> CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Secretary‑General. I'm now going to invite the drafting group on regional priorities to convene under the Chairmanship of Mr. Amr from Egypt to meet now at the closure of this meeting and then to prepare a report tomorrow as regards the progress that will have been achieved in the meantime.

And once again, the log in and password are the same tomorrow. I don't know whether there are any further requests for the floor in the virtual room. If this is not the case, I will close the meeting for today and remind you that our plenary meeting tomorrow will begin at 8JMT, 11 Geneva time. I can see a hand raised. Mr. Ali from ITU.

>> ITU: Just to recall the video from Ethiopia.

>> CHAIR: Indeed, this is something that we forgot. We invite the Ethiopian delegation to show this video now. Ethiopia, are you able to show us the video now. I think it's two minutes maximum from the information I have. Can we have a look at this video own titled Why Ethiopia?

>> Driven by innovation and progress, Ethiopia is a natural choice to be a contender. Why? Ethiopia has already been the setting for many significant triumphs and firsts. An inspiration for multiple flags around the continent serving as a representation of liberty and sovereignty. Ethiopia supports sports achievements on a continental scale. A nurturer and protector of indigenous cultures and human endeavors. We have not lost site sight of the future. Ethiopia's past accomplishments only prove our capabilities and potential for future firsts.

Our economic policies have seen the birth of one of the largest industrialization drives on the continent.

Our future is firmly secure with our youth making up 70% of the population. They are uniquely skilled at capitalizing on the digital industry. The double digit GDP growth goes to illustrate the strong drive and determination of the nation.

This change is supported right from the top. The country's leadership has created an environment conducive to improving technology know‑how and infrastructure. Investor confidence has been bolstered with in sectors open to increased privatization. Ethiopia has a lot going for it, security, accessibility through our aviation sector, diversity, and a vision to enhance all of these sectors.

Considered Africa's diplomatic capital and a major international hub, our capital city is home to one of the largest diplomatic communities in the world. It will be our honour to host another first, the World Telecommunications Development Conference.

>> CHAIR: Thank you very much to Ethiopia for this video clip, a very interesting video clip, which has everything that Ethiopia has done and is doing for our region. And all of you know, of course, that Addis Ababa is the capital of the African Union while also being the capital of Ethiopia. And let us not forget that Ethiopia produces one of the best coffees not only of our region, but of the entire world. All of this to say that Ethiopia has many resources and this symbolizes the attraction of the country.

I will not open the floor after this video clip unless there is an urgent request for the floor but I don't think this is the case.

I'll ask you in collaboration with the Working Group on regional priorities to start the meeting as soon as possible following this plenary meeting using all available and ITU resources. So I will close this plenary meeting and I look forward to meeting you tomorrow morning, 8:00 GMT, 10:00 Geneva time and 11:00 East Africa time. It will be a pleasure to meet you again tomorrow. Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, the meeting is adjourned until tomorrow. Thank you for your availability.

(Meeting adjourned).

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