

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Submission from the International Telecommunication Union to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Collaborative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) welcomes the opportunity to express its recommendations concerning the relation between Information and Communications Technology (ICT)/Telecommunication and Climate Change in the framework of the AWG-LCA and the Bali Plan of Action.

Background

ITU is the specialized agency of the United Nations for ICT/telecommunications and is unique in that its membership comprises 191 Member States as well as more than 700 private companies and organizations. ITU led the organization of the World Summit on the Information Society of the UN (held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005).

The ICT industry has undergone explosive growth in recent years and is now the largest economic sector. ICT play a critical role in all phases of economic and social activity. Increased access to ICT is a global success story; as more than 4 billion persons now have mobile phones and there are 1.5 billion Internet users.

Due to this growth, ICTs currently contribute 2-3% of global green house gas (GHG) emissions and this figure is expected to rise. However, it is reliably estimated that ICTs can reduce emissions in other sectors by at least 15%, making them a significant enabling technology to combat climate change. A future high-bandwidth, lower-carbon society offers a platform for economic, social and cultural development that is sustainable. Key areas where ICT can significantly reduce emissions include smart buildings, smart grids and efficient supply chain management. The use of ICTs can also reduce GHG emissions through videoconferencing, tele-working, on-line commerce, intelligent transport systems, building management, etc. The ICT sector is also endeavoring to mitigate its own carbon footprint through new energy-efficient devices, applications and networks.

Global standards are an important component of efforts to measure, report and verify reductions in GHG emissions. The membership of the ITU has given high priority to this work and recently developed a globally-agreed methodology to measure the impact of ICTs on climate change throughout the lifecycle of these products and services. Action also has been taken to establish a knowledge repository at ITU on ICT and Climate change. ITU provides the spectrum for much of the monitoring of climate, including the WMO Global Climate Observing System.

ITU also leads a Dynamic Coalition in the Internet Governance Forum on the Internet and Climate Change, looking at ways to reduce the environmental impact of the Internet.

ICTs can generally help countries, especially developing countries, adapt to the impact of climate change and thus should be part of national adaptation strategies. ITU is supporting this goal through the development of an e-Environment toolkit that will aid Member States in assessing their level of e-environment readiness, while helping them identify gaps in their policies to promote sustainable development.

The provision of Emergency Telecommunications is particularly critical in organizing relief efforts to repair damage and rebuild nations that have been struck by extreme weather events. ITU efforts focus on the planning, development and standardization of ICT solutions used in these situations.

The ITU Membership has recently adopted two statements emphasizing the critical role of ICTs in addressing climate change ¹.

Recommendations

ITU respectfully requests consideration of the following recommendations for inclusion in revisions to the draft text of the Chairman, presented to the AWG-LCA (FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/8). Suggestions of specific paragraphs for inclusion of the proposed text are offered only to facilitate consideration.

Shared Vision

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be powerful enablers to achieve cuts in emissions; they can contribute to adaptation and mitigation efforts, and thereby are a vital means to achieve the ultimate objective of the convention. (para. 9)

Adaptation

(g) Encourage {Parties} {All developing country Parties} {Particularly vulnerable developing country Parties} to consider any potential benefit that ICTs could bring to address some of the identified adaptation needs. (para. 23)

Efficient use of ICTs as part of cross-sector approaches for adaptation programmes and their particular role in addressing the impacts of extreme weather events. (para. 25/f)

Mitigation

The enabling role that ICTs can play in reducing emissions across sectors. (para. 57)

Further consideration should be given to the role of global standards that provide agreed methodologies for measurement, reporting and verification in meeting the objective of the convention. (para. 66)

The development, promotion and deployment of new more energy-efficient ICTs (para. 73/i)

(f) Facilitate the identification of best practices and best available technologies, including information and communication technologies, for each sector through cross-border analysis and promote the transfer of those best practices and best available technologies from developed country Parties through analysing reduction potentials and setting indicators. (para 129/f)

Mitigation Actions

“...which can be facilitated by the use of agreed global standards for measurement, reporting and verification.”(para. 142)

¹ Res. 73 of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-08) on “Information and Communication Technologies and Climate change” (<http://www.itu.int/publ/T-RES-T.73-2008/en>) and Opinion 3 of the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF-09) on “ICT and the Environment” (<http://www.itu.int/md/S09-WTPF-C-0004/ens>).

Enhanced Action on Technology

Harness the power of ICT to tackle climate change and ensure that their benefits are accessible to developing countries (para. 180/j)

(e) Awareness-raising activities for policymakers and the general public on the potential benefits of ICTs for measuring, mitigating and adapting to climate change. (para. 184/e)

Capacity Building

(h) Capacity-building on the efficient and effective use of ICT applications for climate change mitigation and adaptation. (para. 199/h)