7TH MEETING OF THE GROUP ON CAPACITY BUILDING INTIATIVES (GCBI)

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

19-20 MARCH 2019

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

1. The Group on Capacity Building Initiatives (GCBI) held its 7th meeting in Geneva Switzerland, from 19 to 20 March 2019. The meeting was convened to review priority areas for capacity building and skills development and implications for ITU's work as well as to discuss and agree on the scope of work of GCBI over the next four years, as described in Resolution 40 of WTDC-17.

2. The meeting was the first to be held following the call in 2018 by the BDT Director for the nomination of new members to the group by the regional bodies after the end of tenure of several members. As a result, eight members of GCBI were nominated as new members while four members were retained from the previous cycle.

3. The meeting was attended in total by nine GCBI members. Ms Andrea Grippa from the Americas and Ms Ainura Sadyrbaeva from the CIS region were unable to attend in person but participated in the meeting remotely. Mr Babou Sarr from the Africa region was unable to attend. The group welcomed the presence of Mr Roberto Hirayama, from Anatel, Brazil, who participated as an Observer.

4. The group endorsed the appointment of Dr Lidia Stępińska-Ustasiak, Counsellor, Head of Social Policy Unit, Office of Electronic Communications (UKE), as the new Chair of GCBI, who then went on to chair the meeting. The group also welcomed the re-nomination of Ms Gladys Ogallo, CEO & Founder, Virtual Human Resources Services, Kenya, as Vice Chair of GCBI.

5. The group was welcomed by Dr Cosmas Zavazava, Chief, Projects and Knowledge Management Department/BDT. Dr Zavazava gave some welcoming remarks and extended apologies on behalf of the Director BDT, who was unable to attend in person as she was on mission. In his opening remarks, Dr Zavazava highlighted the importance of the group in its advisory role to the Director BDT, and emphasized that as much as they represented their regions, the members are appointed on the basis of their individual professional expertise in the field of ICTs and capacity building. He looked forward to their invaluable contribution to the work of BDT during the upcoming cycle.

Overview of recent ITU capacity building activities

6. ITU presented an overview of the mandate from which capacity building activities are drawn within ITU. This was important especially as there are many new members who joined the group. ITU also highlighted the major capacity building areas and the activities undertaken in each of these areas.

7. The group was taken through recent the work undertaken in the field of capacity development. Two key activities were highlighted, namely the closure of the last Centres of Excellence cycle 2015-2018 and the performance review of the Centres of Excellence which operated during that cycle, and the selection of the new Centres of Excellence for the current cycle 2019-22. With respect to the review of the cycle 2015-2018, the group was informed that 90 % of the responding CoEs viewed their experience as being a CoE as either "Very good" or "Excellent". Over 5000 people were trained under the CoE during the period, with 55% of the training taking place as face-to-face courses. With respect to the new cycle, 31 Centres were selected globally (six each in Americas, Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe, four in the Arab region and three in the CIS) operating in 15 priority areas identified by the membership during WTDC 2017.

8. Members were also updated on progress made in relation to the ITU Academy platform. The platform is being redeveloped to improve its features and functionalities. The group noted that the ITU Academy platform has proven to be a reliable source and useful tool to deliver training courses and promote ITU's capacity development activities and welcomed the work being undertaken to strengthen and enhance the platform. New approaches, such as learning-by-doing, new channels, such as posting short learning videos, and the delivery of short or specialized courses based on existing programmes like spectrum sharing in the spectrum management programme, could be explored.

9. Other ongoing capacity building activities include the work on the third issue of the ITU online publication "Capacity Building in a Changing ICT Environment", which is due for release in the second quarter of 2019, and the ongoing development of standardized training materials.

10. The presentation concluded by highlighting a number of challenges and opportunities for capacity building that would inform discussions in the meeting and the formulation of strategies going forward. Opportunities included the strong mandate of the membership, the existing networks of partnerships and the expertise that is within the ITU membership and is at the disposal of ITU. Challenges included how to assess digital skills gaps at national and regional level, and how to measure qualitative impact of some capacity building activities.

11. There was discussion as to whether 31 Centres were enough to deal with the huge capacity building challenges facing the globe at the moment. It was explained that the number of Centres had been scaled down from what it was in the past, based on the recommendation of a study that was initiated by the ITU membership, with the aim to increase the quality of the training delivered. Furthermore, Centres of Excellence are targeted for specific specialized skills and not for every level of skill.

Roundtable on trends in ICT and capacity building: regional perspectives

12. GCBI members delivered presentations on regional ICT trends and their implications for capacity building. All the regions made presentations highlighting skills gaps and skills requirements in the region; priority areas for capacity development and training; and suggestions on how GCBI could engage different stakeholders in the region in identifying priorities for capacity and skills development initiatives.

    - The Africa region highlighted the importance of digital skills for social inclusion as the main imperatives, in addition to other capacity development priorities associated with a connected world such as cybersecurity, data science, cloud computing, coding and

automation. They emphasized the need to make digital inclusion a human right, calling on the need for a pilot study to determine the level of digital skills needed for Africa. Issues of developing the use of ICTs for empowerment, governance, social participation, and enhancing learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems were also highlighted.

- The Arab region analyzed the skills needs based on the analysis of the trends in the region and the ITU Regional Initiatives as the framework for measuring the interest and needs of the countries in the region. The level of skills needs for the different initiatives was classified in terms of awareness raising, to the need for specific skills for training-of-trainers for purposes of scaling, as well as organizing platforms for the sharing of experiences. The presentation emphasized the need for the development of tools to measure the skills needs at regional level, highlighting the fact that technology diffusion is a function of the ability to learn and absorb the new technologies. There was a need for multi-stakeholder partnerships for capacity building involving private and public sectors including SMEs and entrepreneurs in formulating a regional approach to capacity building.

- The Americas region recognized the diversity in the region between North America, Central America, the Caribbean islands, and Latin America. This diversity is reflected in the priority areas and the related skills requirements. Issues of accessibility and affordability were key, and therefore deployment of broadband infrastructure and provision of services for rural areas was important. Capacity building needs were also linked to the development activities reflected through the ITU Regional Initiatives. Assessment of skills gaps was undertaken through regional telecommunications organizations. It was noted that there was a match between the priority areas of the Centres of Excellence in the region and the topics of the Regional Initiatives.

- The Asia Pacific region focused on developing smart solutions: smart cities, smart government, and smart environment. They also mapped the digital priorities and skills needs to the Regional Initiatives. They emphasized the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships on capacity building along the model of the CoEs in the delivery of planned capacity building actions. The need to collaborate with academia in building capacity was emphasized. Further, there was need to provide platforms for dialogue and knowledge exchange in capacity building through regional and global forums.

- The CIS region presented the pillars of the digital economy. Development of an information infrastructure as the foundation for the development of the skills needed to support and promote the digital economy. Various subprogrammes of the digital economy, such as human resources and education, needed to be implemented to ensure that there are enough people with the necessary education and digital skills to support this digital economy. Emphasis was also placed on the development of research competencies.

- The Europe region presentation emphasized the need for multistakeholder collaboration and co-ordination across policy silos and levels of government to steer policies towards an inclusive and sustainable digital future. The changing nature of jobs and skills profiles in the digital age was emphasized, hence the need for continuous lifelong learning becomes a real challenge. The experience of the Centres of Excellence as a skills development mechanism was demonstrated. Europe had adopted a Skills Agenda and was working on an EU-wide approach to dealing with the digital skills challenge facing the region. This was based on skills intelligence to understand the new job profiles and skills needs in order to make better informed career decisions. The experience of successful

training delivery through the ITU Academy was presented, highlighting the key success factors for this training.

Following the presentations and from the subsequent discussions, the following points were highlighted:

13. While there are differences in stages of digital development between regions, the capacity development challenges are the same. Capacity building challenges of a networked world, such as those related to cybersecurity, are common to all regardless of the development stage. The differences would lie in the priorities which differ from region to region.

14. The importance of fostering digital opportunities and social inclusion by enhancing the use of ICTs was highlighted. Digital skills development is still a preserve of the privileged few and ITU should focus on development of digitals skills for citizenry, at grassroots level or the majority of populations that do not use ICTs due to lack of skills, and promote digital inclusion.

15. GCBI members' analyses and presentations on capacity building needs should take a regional rather than a national approach. This will ensure the solutions proposed reflect regional needs and priorities. For this reason, GCBI members should engage the regional bodies that appointed them to collect comprehensive information relating to the situation of capacity and skills gaps and needs in their regions, which could become very valuable input to their work in the GCBI. Some regional telecommunications organization have human resources and/or capacity building subcommittees within their structures, and these could be consulted for purposes of alignment of positions. Regional Telecommunications bodies need to be more involved in capacity building work and in a stocktaking process.

16. While aligning capacity building to Regional Initiatives is a good idea, it is important to note that not all regional Initiatives have or require capacity building as an integral component of the initiative. There is therefore need to adopt a holistic approach in developing and identifying skills needs beyond just Regional Initiatives and reaching out to a large number of stakeholders. The experience and knowledge from developing countries should also be considered in the design of training activities, such as rural communications or financial inclusion.

17. A call was made for a standardized framework to be developed by the Group for undertaking a stocktaking of capacity development initiatives in the regions. Such a tool could be either online or offline, and will become the basis for information gathering on capacity building initiatives.

18. Capacity building activities are taking place at different places and at different levels. Within ITU, there are activities taking place outside BDT that can be classified as capacity building but may not be captured in the capacity building statistics collected by BDT. Further, there is no uniform understanding of exactly what constitutes capacity building. There is a need to undertake an aggregated approach to capacity building across all sectors, and to develop a taxonomy of capacity building activities showing the clear classifications and definitions of the activities within each classification. These standardized tools will also help GCBI play its advisory role to the Director BDT more effectively.

19. ITU needs to strengthen its existing capacity building programmes and incorporate capacity building needs for people/communities at the grassroots level, and in order to address

groups for whom lack of skills is the main barrier to digital inclusion. In this regard, there is a need to establish programmes that complement the Centres of Excellence programme (which focuses primarily on training professionals in the ICT industry) and which focus on the development of basic and intermediate digital skills. Training-of-trainers should be a core element of such a programme.

20. Capacity building should be customized to respond to specific needs and priorities of different target groups. In this respect, strong stakeholder engagement and feedback of technology users beyond policy makers and regulators is important to analyze capacity building needs and priorities.

21. There is a need to carry out digital skills assessments at the national level which will inform the capacity building needs in countries and regions. This includes establishing a set of measurements for assessing digital skills levels, and for setting targets of what needs to be achieved through capacity building and training. ITU was urged to support countries in this regard.

22. There is a need to define the assumptions and expectations of any capacity building activity and to set measurable goals and objectives. A suggestion was made for countries to consider establishing a “Maturity Index” for capacity building that will measure the progress made as a result of capacity development.

23. There is an increase in the demand for digitally skilled workers in all regions and most countries are not able to develop the required skills at the pace dictated by the digital transformation. These include skills related to artificial intelligence, big data analytic, machine learning, IoT, 5G, cloud computing, cybersecurity and others. Basic digital literacy skills are now required by almost any job in public and private sectors.

24. The target audience for capacity building activities needs to be broad and include professionals (e.g. middle and senior-level managers), young people and students, researchers, SMEs, underserved communities and other users of ICT. In particular, there is an increasing growth of “digital natives” who are spearheading innovative ICT advances. It was highlighted that planning of capacity building requires new approach to stakeholders segmentation and targeting new audiences.

25. Training should take a more interdisciplinary approach, where one course combines the technical, business and regulatory aspects. It was also highlighted that different approaches to learning should be adopted to suit the different categories of learners. For example, the young generation is now inclined to “learning by doing”, and even Universities are also adopting this approach. Methods of learning and delivering training are also changing. In particular, e-learning is becoming more popular in all regions as it provides working professionals with an opportunity to work and learn at the same time. There is a need to explore new tools and methods and integrate all these new approaches into the learning methodologies.

26. Topics to be delivered should take into consideration the desired impact that should be achieved. Training workers for future labour market needs should focus on the digital transformation and digital economy, including topics around AI, big data analytics and data science, IoT, cloud computing and cybersecurity. In addition, training is required for ICT users with a focus on ICT applications and solutions and non-technical aspects of the digital economy and society.

27. Partnerships for delivery of training should be promoted (e.g. with academic institutions), as well as proactive engagement, coordination and feedback from stakeholders.

28. There is need to define what success is for the GCBI and to set benchmarks and key performance indicators as a guide to the work undertaken in capacity building.

Key outcomes of the meeting

29. At the end of the meeting, GCBI adopted the following key outcomes of the meeting:

1. Capacity building is a core activity of the Development Sector. There is a need to develop a general framework for capacity building in ITU, which could include:
   a) An analysis of capacity building initiatives in all sectors to aggregate all topics and avoid overlaps;
   b) Developing a taxonomy/classification of capacity building activities which reflects the objectives of all ITU sectors and their priorities;
   c) The creation of a common catalogue of all capacity building initiatives, under the framework of the ITU Academy;
   d) Providing a definition of different levels of skills and what they entail (e.g. basic, intermediate, advanced digital skills);
   e) Defining the main target audiences and identifying ITU's competitive advantage in capacity and skills development.
2. The ITU Academy platform has proven to be a reliable source and useful tool to deliver training courses and promote ITU's capacity development activities and should be further strengthened and enhanced. New approaches, such as learning-by-doing, and new channels, such as posting short learning videos, could be explored.
3. ITU needs to strengthen its existing capacity building programmes and incorporate capacity building needs for people/communities at the grassroots level, and in order to address groups for whom lack of skills is the main barrier to digital inclusion. In this regard, there is a need to establish programmes that complement the Centres of Excellence programme (which focuses primarily on training professionals in the ICT industry) and which focus on the development of basic and intermediate digital skills. Training-of-trainers should be a core element of such a programme.
4. There is need to define assumptions and expectations of any capacity building activity and to develop a Maturity Index for capacity building that will measure the progress made in any capacity building undertaking
5. There is a need to carry out digital skills assessments at the national level which will inform the capacity building needs in countries and regions. This includes establishing a set of measurements for assessing digital skills levels, and for setting targets of what needs to be achieved through capacity building and training. ITU should support countries in this regard.
6. Capacity building activities should go beyond topics identified in the Regional Initiatives or the priority areas of the Centres of Excellence. While alignment between Regional Initiatives and capacity building is important, there is also a need to look at skills requirements in a more holistic manner. The experience and knowledge from developing countries should also be considered in the design of training activities.
7. GCBI members should engage the regional bodies that appointed them to collect comprehensive information relating to the situation of skills gaps and capacity building needs in their regions as input to their work. Other relevant stakeholders in the area of capacity development should also be involved. Stronger connections with regions will bring better

identification of potential skill gaps and, as result, more accurate strategic advice to the BDT Director.

8. There is a need to propose new ways of stocktaking to enhance GCBI's advisory capacity using an evidence-based approach. To facilitate and harmonize the process of stocktaking across regions, a new tool (online or offline) could be created for standardized information gathering with indicated areas of interests, categories of capacity building initiatives and deadlines.
9. Partnerships between industry, government and academia need to be reinforced in the area of training and capacity building to ensure the alignment of training activities to industry requirements. In this regard, ITU should continue to partner with stakeholders in the delivery of capacity development activities.
10. ITU should continue to provide a global platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange in the field of capacity building and digital skills development through ITU regional and global forums to share the training resources and infrastructure worldwide.
11. The outcome of this meeting will be reported by the Chair of GCBI to the next meeting of TDAG, which will be held in Geneva from 3 to 5 April 2019.

Future work of GCBI

30. The Chair, in close co-operation with the Vice Chair, will coordinate and organize the future work of the group based on the agreed outcomes. The initial focus will be on developing a general framework for capacity building activities (including developing a taxonomy), stocktaking of main capacity building activities, and defining the main target audiences.

Next meeting of GCBI

31. The next GCBI meeting will take place in the first quarter of 2020. The exact dates and venue of the meeting will be provided at a later stage.