9TH MEETING OF THE GROUP ON CAPACITY BUILDING INTIATIVES (GCBI)

20-21 May 2021

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

The Group on Capacity Building Initiatives (GCBI) held its 9th meeting from 20 to 21 May 2021. The meeting was held virtually.

The meeting was attended by all members of the GCBI except Mr Majid Al Madhloum. Ms Moaza Alshukairi attended as an observer. Ms Gladys Ogallo and Mr Aziz Bin Awang excused themselves for the second day.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Lidia Stępińska-Ustasiak, Deputy Director, Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of Electronic Communications (UKE), and Chair of GCBI.

The meeting began with opening remarks provided by Ms Sulyna Abdullah, acting Chief, Digital Knowledge Hub Department at ITU on behalf of Ms Doreen Bogdan, Director, BDT, ITU. The remarks emphasized the importance of digitals skills to keep up with technological developments, and the importance of the GCBI in providing guidance to the ITU on its capacity development work. In their discussions the group noted the presentation on the activities carried out by ITU during the past year, and the presentations made GCBI members on the implications of Covid-19 on regional capacity development activities, and the strategies to address the digital skills requirements within their regions. The group also discussed the findings and recommendations of the feasibility study to establish an ITU training institute as well as the upcoming strategic review of the CoE programme.

The key outcomes of the meeting are:

1. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased reliance on the Internet and use of technology to work and learn. This has fast-tracked learning, especially at basic digital literacy levels.
2. In the short term, there has been an increase in demand for specific digital skills, specifically those skills that can enable individuals to participate in the digital economy and access services during periods of lockdowns.
3. Online learning is generally accepted as a mode of training and learning across the regions. As a result, countries had to develop national standards and guidelines for online learning, transform educational platforms and develop training materials to support online learning.
4. There are still many households around the world without Internet access and computers at home necessary to engage in online education.
5. There is a growing demand for automation, AI, Cybersecurity, VR and digitization which will spur demand for a wide range of workers such as robot repair technicians and 3-D printing engineers. This change in labour demand will require a major retraining effort.
6. Digital skills of trainers have to be enhanced to cope with not only the digitization but the need to develop more independent learners required by the online learning environments.
7. Regions are updating their skills agendas to focus on addressing emerging digital skills needs and build resilience based on the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare to provide access to education, training and lifelong learning in times of crises.
8. Countries are developing strategies to ensure job-ready skills are delivered to their citizens and to create opportunities to sustain existing jobs through re-training.
9. Capacity and skills development has been included in several of the Regional Priorities in preparation for WTDC highlighting the importance of the topic for most countries.

10. GCBI members commended the final report of the feasibility study to establish an ITU institute, its level of depth and thoroughness and number of recommendations provided. They noted that not all GCBI members were consulted as part of the study. They considered several of the short-term recommendations as useful and pointed out that further discussions will be required. They observed the significant improvements made and high quality of the ITU Academy platform. They expressed interest in staying involved in the discussions on the implementation of the recommendations.

11. GCBI members proposed that a strategic review of the CoE programme should address the following items, among others: the training topics and their relevance, quality assurance, good practices and the CoE selection process. The quality of the programme could be strengthened through developing common standards and frameworks, improved monitoring and benchmarking focusing on quality, exploring new ways of teaching and learning and enhancing the dialogue with CoEs.

12. The outcome of this meeting will be reported by the Chair of GCBI to the next meeting of TDAG, which will be held virtually from 24 to 28 May 2021.

The next GCBI meeting will tentatively take place on 9-10 March 2022. The exact dates will be confirmed at a later stage.

The final draft report of this meeting will be circulated to GCBI members for comments by 30 May 2021. GCBI members are invited to submit comments within one week thereafter. The final report will then be posted on the GCBI webpage by 10 June 2021.

Dr Lidia Stępińska -Ustasiak, Chair, GCBI

Geneva, 21 May 2021