The World Standardization Summit sets new directions for the ITU–T

The World Telecommunication Standardization Conference (WTSC-96), convened in Geneva from 9 to 18 October, took some important decisions and set new directions for the future work of ITU–T. The Conference was chaired by Hans K. Pfyffer, Senior Counsellor to the Director-General of Swiss Telecom PTT.

Held every four years, the mission of the WTSC is two-fold: reviewing the past and setting the agenda for the future work of the Sector. The Sector's 15 Study Groups, the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG), and the Director of the TSB, Theodor Irmer, presented reports on their activities, highlighting the most important developments between 1993 and 1996. In total, some 900 Recommendations were produced during that period.

The key decisions and achievements of the Conference are summarized below.

Highlights of the Conference

Working methods

Throughout the period under review, there has been great interest in finding new tools for speeding up the approval process for ITU–T Recommendations.

The decision reached by the Conference to bring the consultation phase forward (i.e. Member States will now be consulted before the Study Group takes the decision to approve a Recommendation and not after as was the case in the past) will help shorten the approval process time significantly (at least by four months). It will also help to facilitate the publication process.

A giant step for multimedia services and systems

As markets globalize and the use of multimedia services becomes more widespread, the importance of agreed common standards can only become more vital to all telecommunication operators, manufacturers and users. One momentous decision has been the creation, by the Conference, of the new Study Group 16 to deal with multimedia services and systems. This is a clear indication that the distinction between three currently separate industries — telecommunications, computing and audio-visual entertainment — is rapidly blurring. The growing conver-

Pekka Tarjanne presents the ITU medal to Hans K. Pfyffer (ITU 960070)

gence of these industries which will usher in the information age, is bringing with it not just challenges but opportunities as well. To some extent, WTSC-96 was about "Meeting the challenges and opportunities for ITU standardization in the information age".

Changes to Study Group mandates and structure

The Conference endorsed TSAG's proposals concerning Study Group structure. The 15 Study Groups of the 1993–1996 structure have been reduced to 13 (the new Study Group 16 brings that number to 14 [see box]). The former activities of SG 1 and SG 14 have been merged with those of other Study Groups. Furthermore, the Lead Study Group concept has been endorsed and will apply to eight Study Groups which will, as part of an additional responsibility, lead studies in the areas shown in parentheses (see box).

New Study Group structure

Study Group 2: Network and service operation (Service definition, numbering, routing and global mobility)
Chairman: G. Gosztony (Hungary). Vice-Chairmen: A. Lewis (Canada), J. Martory (France) and R. Blane (United Kingdom).

Study Group 3: Tariff and accounting principles including related telecommunications economic and policy issues
Chairman: T. Matsudaira (Japan). Vice-Chairmen: W. Lucas (United Kingdom) and S. Al-Tiwaniy (Oman).

Study Group 4: TMN and network maintenance (Telecommunication management network — TMN)
Chairman: D. Sidor (United States). Vice-Chairmen: N. Fujii (Japan) and A. Rojdestvensky (Russia).

Study Group 5: Protection against electromagnetic environment effects
Chairman: G. Meineri (Italy). Vice-Chairman: G. Varju (Hungary).

Study Group 6: Outside plant
Chairman: L. Molleda (Spain). Vice-Chairmen to be appointed at the first meeting of the Study Group in agreement with the TSB Director.

Study Group 7: Data networks and open system communications (Open distributed processing (ODP), frame relay, and communication system security)
Chairman: H. Bertine (United States). Vice-Chairmen: Y. Hiramatsu (Japan), Y. H. Lee (Rep. of Korea) and V. Ossipov (Russia).

Study Group 8: Characteristics of telematic systems (Facsimile)
Chairman: W. Staudinger (Germany). Vice-Chairmen: A. Pugh (United Kingdom) and A. Macchioni (Italy).

Study Group 9: Television and sound transmission
Chairman: J. L. Tejerina (Spain). Vice-Chairmen: R. Green (United States) and H. Murakami (Japan).

Study Group 10: Languages and general software aspects for telecommunication systems
Chairman: A. Sarma (Germany). Vice-Chairman: A. Meisingset (Norway).

Study Group 11: Signalling requirements and protocols (Intelligent network, and FPLMTS — future public land mobile telecommunication systems)
Chairman: S. Kano (Japan). Vice-Chairmen: E. A. Matarazzo (Brazil), W. Van den Broek (Belgium) and P. Distler (France).

Study Group 12: End-to-end transmission performance of networks and terminals
Chairman: M. Cao (China). Vice-Chairmen: C. Dvorak (United States) and J. Y. Monfort (France).

Study Group 13: General network aspects (General network aspects, global information infrastructure (GII) and broadband ISDN)
Chairman: B. W. Moore (United Kingdom). Vice-Chairmen: J. Luetchford (Canada), K. Asatani (Japan) and F. Lucas (France).

Study Group 15: Transport networks, systems and equipment (Access network transport)
Chairman: P. Wery (Canada). Vice-Chairmen: M. Yamashita (Japan) and G. Bonaventura (Italy).

Study Group 16: Multimedia services and systems (SG 16 will be the Lead Study Group in this field)
Chairman: P. A. Probst (Switzerland). Vice-Chairmen: J. Magill (United Kingdom), F. Tosco (Italy) and G. Helder (United States).

Structure of the other groups

TSAG — Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group
Chairman: G. Fishman (United States). Vice-Chairmen: J. Fanjul (Spain), Ms I. V. Kreinguel (Russia), K. S. Park (Rep. of Korea), R. F. Brett (Canada) and N. Kisrawi (Syria).

TAF — Tariff Group for Africa
Chairman: P. G. Touré (Senegal). Vice-Chairman: Ms E. Migwalla (Kenya). More Vice-Chairmen may be appointed if it is felt necessary, in agreement with the TSB Director.

TAL — Tariff Group for Latin America
The WTSC-96 authorizes Study Group 3 to appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of this Group in agreement with the TSB Director.

TAS — Tariff Group for Asia and Oceania
Chairman: P. Watt (New Zealand). Vice-Chairmen will be appointed at the first meeting of this Group in agreement with the TSB Director.

TEUREM — Tariff Group for Europe and the Mediterranean Basin
The WTSC-96 authorizes Study Group 3 to appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of this Group in agreement with the TSB Director.

The increased role of TSAG

TSAG's achievements since 1993 have been of great importance not just to the ITU–T, but to the ITU as a whole. The Conference has approved Resolution 24 (Stability of the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group) which foresees a revision to the ITU Convention at the next Plenipotentiary Conference (Minneapolis, 1998), establishing TSAG as a permanent body of the Union. In addition, Resolutions 22 and 27 have been endorsed to give TSAG some authority to act in the four years between WTSCs to meet the needs of the market-place in a more timely manner.

EDH

The Standardization Sector has been a leader in the introduction of electronic document handling and publishing. The recent introduction of the ITU Electronic Bookshop, which allows customers to purchase individual Recommendations, has positioned the ITU at the leading edge of electronic publishers worldwide. In this context, the Conference approved Resolution 25 (Action plan to encourage the use of electronic document handling) to help the Sector enhance the existing EDH capability.

Focus Groups

Resolution 23 (The use of Focus Groups) is to be implemented on a trial basis, as a tactical response to study urgent and strategic issues. This decision follows the wide support, within TSAG, for a new and more flexible structure to address short-term needs and produce specifications and agreements to meet the ever-growing needs of the highly competitive telecommunication business.

Alternative calling procedures (call-back)

The Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994) in its Resolution 21 and the ITU Council (Geneva, June 1996) in Resolution 1099, underlined the adverse effects that these procedures may have on the operation of telecommunication networks, mainly those of developing countries. WTSC-96 in its Resolution 29 (Alternative calling procedures on international telecommunication networks) notes that, in order to minimize the effect of alternative calling

Call-back, still on the agenda

procedures, recognized operating agencies (ROA) should, within their national law, make their best efforts to establish the level of collection charges on a cost-oriented basis and that administrations and ROAs should pursue, vigorously, the implementation of ITU–T Recommendation D.140 and the principle of cost-oriented accounting rates and accounting rate shares. Furthermore, administrations and ROAs should take all reasonable measures, within the constraints of their national law, to suspend methods and practices of call-back which seriously degrade the quality and performance of the PSTN, such as constant calling (bombardment or polling) and answer suppression and adopt a cooperative and reasonable approach to respecting the national sovereignty of others.

The recent developments in the market conditions of international telecommunications (liberalization, competition, and globalization of demand) are also putting intense pressure on the ITU as the sole international organization specialized in telecommunications to study and develop guidelines for Members and their ROAs to respond positively to these evolutions.

The Conference also approved three Questions under Resolution 29 to complement the ongoing studies on alternative calling procedures: Questions A/3 (Study of economic issues and of the impact of national policies as they relate to the development of telecommunication services and networks), 3/2 (Service quality of networks) and V/11 (Signalling methods used by alternative calling procedures).

Cooperation and coordination among standards-setting organizations

A number of international and regional standards bodies and some 46 industry forums and consortia are also actively engaged in standards-making for their specific areas of interest. It is important that they work together with the ITU to adopt standards which have worldwide acceptance. The Conference has approved numerous revisions to Recommendations and Resolutions governing such cooperation and coordination. The changes should enhance the traditional cooperation between the ITU and these organizations significantly. One example is the revised Recommendation A.23 (Collaboration with

the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)).

Conclusion

It was clear from the Conference that the expansion of national networks, the inclusion of more and more countries in the global network, the constant introduction of new technologies and new services, all call for a more rapid development of standards which have worldwide acceptance.

"This Conference has been attended by 501 delegates from 83 countries; this shows a great interest in the work of ITU–T standardization. It cannot be taken for granted that this interest will continue, unless the 'products' meet the needs of the market

place", said Mr Pfyffer at the closing of the Conference. He added that the Conference had offered challenges but at the same time opportunities for ITU standardization in the information age.

Mr Irmer observed that although WTSC-96 had taken many straightforward decisions to make the ITU–T more efficient, to accelerate and to rationalize standards production, the boundaries set by the ITU Constitution and Convention were to be observed. "The next step to reform ITU–T even further will therefore be the revision of these ITU instruments, and that will be the task of the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis", he concluded. ■

New technologies and new services, call for a more rapid development of standards

WTSC-2000 in Canada

At WTSC-96, which has just completed its work in Geneva, Canada announced that it would host the next world standardization conference, WTSC-2000. We asked the Head of the Canadian delegation, Pierre Gagné, for his comments.

■ *Mr Gagné, where and when will the conference be held?*

The next world standardization conference will definitely be held in Canada, although we have not yet chosen the host city. However, I can already tell you that we intend to convene the conference in late September or early October of the year 2000, when the weather is still fine and winter has not yet started. ■

■ *Why the invitation?*

We had four reasons for issuing the invitation. The first has to do with enhancing the profile of the Canadian private sector involved in telecommunication standardization work. Even though Canada may not be a heavyweight of international standardization, the ITU Standardization Sector does enable some Canadian private companies to play a role at world level, and it seemed to us

that the advent of the new millennium would provide an excellent opportunity to highlight the contribution made by the Canadian private sector to the international standardization process.

We also wanted yet again to emphasize Canada's very close commitment to the ITU. In telecommunication, as indeed in other fields, Canada has a choice between putting all its eggs in the basket of bilateral relations with its closest neighbour, the United States, and giving its allegiance to multilateralism. Although our bilateral relations with the United States are excellent, there can be no doubt that the ITU has made it easier for us to protect and promote our interests in the field of telecommunications. It is therefore to our advantage for the ITU to function smoothly, and that is why Canada has so strong a commitment towards the Union.

Third, we expect significant changes to take place between now and the year 2000 in the functioning and structure of the ITU in general and the Standardization Sector in particular, where there is talk of substituting focus groups for study groups and of enhancing the private sector's rights and obligations in respect of the Union's standardization activities.

Canada intends to participate very actively in the restructuring of the Standardization Sector and would like to be directly involved in the action taken at the next world conference with a view to strengthening the ITU's role in the field of telecommunication standardization.

Finally, WTSC-2000 gives us the opportunity to do something which we in Canada regard as very important, that is to build up cooperation and dialogue between the Federal Government and the Canadian telecommunication industry in order to promote our international interests; this is what we call the Canada Team at home and it involves the implementation of projects calling for very close cooperation between the public and private sectors.

We are confident that, thanks to the Canada Team, WTSC-2000 will be a success and that the ITU will be able to maintain its pre-eminent role in respect of standardization.

The projects to which I refer are implemented jointly, either in Canada or abroad, by the private and public sectors. The year 2000 will be an occasion for the Canada Team to show how these two sectors can work hand in hand.

■ *You have spoken at some length of changes within the ITU, changes which at this very moment are being discussed by the ITU-2000 Group. Do you have any comments?*

These changes are crucial. If the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference in the United States does not manage to adopt a certain number of structural and operational changes proposed at the first ITU-2000 Group meeting — and here I am thinking in particular of a contribution submitted by some 20 companies — the private sector will find it difficult in the coming years to participate more actively in the ITU's work.

■ *The Council's reaction to the RevCom report, which even if not perfect was a very good starting point, was perhaps a little discouraging. Will ITU-2000 be able to move ahead?*

I agree that the RevCom report contains some good recommendations and can serve as a starting point. The position taken by the Council was no doubt due to lack of time to prepare adequately for taking action on all the recommendations.

■ *What financial implications will the organization of WTSC-2000 in Canada have for the ITU?*

There will not be any additional financial implications for the Union. Under the Financial Regulations, a country hosting a world or regional conference meets the costs which are additional to the cost of holding the conference in Geneva. For example, if WTSC-2000 would cost CHF 1 million in Geneva, the Canadian Administration and private sector will meet expenditure over and above that amount, such expenditure corresponding by and large to the travel and daily subsistence costs of the ITU staff sent to Canada on that occasion. ■