

AG/RES. 2966 (LI-O/21)

**INITIATIVES TO EXPAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ICTs IN RURAL,
UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED AREAS**

(Adopted at the second plenary session, held on November 11, 2021)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

CONSIDERING:

That telecommunications/ICT are an essential tool for people to carry out their daily activities and exert a direct impact on the economic, social, and cultural environment of countries;

That the global telecommunication/ICT infrastructure is essential and indispensable for world and national economies and for the well-being of all societies;

That the participation of communities, NGOs, and local government is key to the success of a rural connectivity initiative;

That the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) on the “Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/information and communication technologies, including broadband, for sustainable development,” especially target 2, relative to “reducing the digital divide and achieving universal access to broadband”;

That World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) Recommendation ITU-D 19 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on “Telecommunication for rural and remote areas” establishes that telecommunication services and ICT applications contribute significantly to improving the quality of living of the population, optimizing social well-being, boosting productivity, saving resources, and contributing to safeguarding human rights;

That CITEL Resolution PCC.I/RES. 268 (XXVIII-16) mentions ensuring the equitable implementation of telecommunications/ICT, as they foster the sustainable socioeconomic development and minimize the poverty and social inequalities of remote rural and indigenous communities;

That CITEL Recommendation PCC.I/REC. 28 (XXXIII-18) recommended that member states must facilitate the development of regulatory models that promote the deployment of infrastructure in remote or underserved rural areas, identifying necessary changes in: a) regulatory policies and b) models to achieve universal access; and

That new alternatives must be found to resolve, over the short term, the absence of connectivity and telecommunication/ICT services in areas that do not have them or for which they are not affordable,

That it is necessary for the Member States to promote urgent actions to facilitate technological development and connectivity to broadband networks, which should be affordable to benefit all sectors of the population.

RECOGNIZING:

That the experiences shared in the document on “*Best practices for bridging the digital divide by connecting the unconnected in unserved or underserved rural areas*” presented at the 37 Meeting of PCC.I by the Working Group on Policies and Regulation (WGPR) are a key contribution to compiling and reviewing the status related to connectivity in rural areas in the region;

That deploying more infrastructure can provide access to services, education, and jobs;

That enhanced access to telecommunication and ICT services can provide economic and social inclusion and gender equality; and

That the innovations being seen in the regulatory and technological field can accelerate the bridging of the digital divide,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER:

That as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need to accelerate the implementation of connectivity solutions to serve all citizens.

The importance of technological neutrality.

That the availability of spectrum and orbit resources are an extremely important input to bridge the connectivity divide and should be developed as recommended by the ITU-R and other similar organizations.

That the administrations may have different priorities, legal and regulatory requirements, social and economic-financial conditions and availability of radioelectric spectrum.

That it is necessary to consider new alternatives, technologies, means of access, and services that can solve in the short term the lack of connectivity and Telecommunication/ICT services in areas that do not have them or that are not affordable.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES:

That CITEL administrations that wish to develop projects or initiatives for the expansion of Telecommunications/ICTs in rural, unserved or underserved areas, observing the regulatory provisions applicable in each country, consider the following initiatives:

1. Promoting the use of universal service funds or assistance funds for connectivity projects aimed at remote or underserved rural areas and ensuring they have the facilities that would make it possible for them to gain access to all kinds of operators.
2. Fostering and supporting the implementation of business models that motivate the entry of new economic agents and promote their financial sustainability.
3. Encouraging the discussion, in the region’s countries, of the analysis of fiscal measures to favor connectivity.

4. Rural connectivity policies should give priority to technologies and projects that show sustainability, efficiency, and rapid implementation in rural areas.
5. Boosting public and private investment, as well as public-private ventures, partnerships, and the sharing of infrastructure in rural areas.
6. Promoting local innovation ecosystems, as well as strategies for ownership of technology in rural areas.
7. Providing incentives for the participation of small and community operators in providing services to unserved areas, through specific licensing measures, access to key infrastructure, and social coverage promotion programs.
8. Promoting cooperation and dismantling barriers to the deployment of infrastructure between central and local government to resolve the issues of permits and rights of way.
9. Promoting the drafting of Guides on Best Practices for the deployment of infrastructure, as well as the standardization of local requirements and regulations.
10. Periodically examining the regulation applicable to rural connectivity in order to respond quickly to the specific demands and needs of connectivity in rural areas.
11. Adapting minimum standards of service quality, speed, and continuity of service in rural communities.
12. Promoting specific incentives for rural areas (investment, rates, contributions, etc.).
13. Continually measuring the progress of projects in order to foster connectivity, publishing their reports systematically and continually, measuring their impact, and adopting necessary corrective measures, if any.
14. Fostering the development of a connectivity mapping system that identifies the places where there is installed infrastructure and connectivity.
15. Creating a regulatory environment that fosters innovation and investment for technological development, analyzing all the technological offers for connectivity in accordance with the needs of each country.
16. Analyzing the relevance of allowing operators to allocate partially or totally the due contribution amount to access and universal services funds for rural connectivity projects defined by connectivity policies in accordance with the needs of each country.
17. Considering the possibility, if the policies and laws of the country allow it, for enterprises that have deployed connectivity in rural areas to be exempted from the mandatory contribution to the universal access and service fund.

18. Consider incentives for suitable use of the radioelectric spectrum to expand the coverage of affordable, quality Telecommunication/ICT services, implementing flexible regulatory frameworks that facilitate access to service and the use of radioelectric spectrum, in order to encourage investment in these areas and promote compliance with service coverage obligations.

19. Consider alternative, innovative models for assignments, licensing and payment for the use of radioelectric spectrum that aim to facilitate the expansion of coverage.

20. Consider policies to promote targeted investments aimed at satellite, and terrestrial solutions including, aeronautical and stratospheric platforms, among others that could provide Telecommunication/ICT services in the short term.

21. Consider implementing new technologies and techniques for dynamic management of licensed and license-exempt radioelectric spectrum to enable its flexible or shared use.