

## ITU and Accessibility

ITU focuses on a series of strategic issues ranging from the rights of the disabled, to making technical design standards accessible, to providing education and training on accessible ICT.

**Excerpts from <http://www.itu.int/themes/accessibility/index.html>**

Theme 2008: *Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All*

This year, World Telecommunication and Information Society Day has adopted the theme: **“Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All”** to address the special requirements of persons with disabilities.

The [World Summit on the Information Society](#), through the [Geneva Plan of Action](#), urged Member States to address the special requirements of persons with disabilities in their national e-strategies and encouraged the design and production of ICT equipment and services suited to their needs, including adherence to the Universal Design Principle and use of assistive technologies. A further call was made for research and development to facilitate accessibility of ICT for all, including people with disabilities.

The [Doha Plan of Action](#) endorsed the Tunis Commitment of building ICT capacity for all, including people with disabilities, through the promotion of universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT. It encouraged adoption of universal design and assistive technologies to ensure that the benefits are evenly distributed within societies as well as to bridge the digital divide by creating digital opportunities for all and by harnessing the full potential for development offered by state-of-the-art ICT.

**Achieving the goal** of equitable communication for everyone requires:

- **Accessible design:** Accessibility has to be built in into products and services from the very beginning
- **A availability:** Accessible products and services must be on hand to users
- **Affordability:** Access to products and services must be reasonable

Finding solutions to these challenges is not always a simple matter. On the one hand, equipment and software is now available that provides amazing breakthroughs for people with disabilities. On the other hand, there are many barriers to finding the most appropriate equipment, particularly at a price that is affordable. This is a policy and digital divide issue because the majority of disabled persons, even in OECD countries, are unemployed and in low-income brackets.

Ensuring easy and effective communication for those with disabilities is by no means a “fringe issue.” With an estimated 10 percent of the world’s population – or around 650 million people – living with a disability, this represents a significant communication challenge. And with current trends in population growth, medical advances and an increasingly greying population, this number will only grow. Which is why ITU will continue to work hard – around the world – to improve the quality of life and help build an inclusive information society.

## **Joint ITU and G3ict Forum 2008 on “The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Challenges and Opportunities for ICT Standards”**

**Geneva, 21 April 2008**

### **Introduction**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is one of the fastest human rights treaties ever adopted. It was developed with the active participation of country delegations and NGOs representing persons with disabilities, includes a number of detailed mandates related to accessible and assistive Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Today, ICT devices such as personal computers, fixed and mobile telephones and television are widespread, with over one billion people, globally, having access to the Internet. An increasing number of applications and services for e-commerce, e-government, transportation, public services, health services, cultural life and leisure are delivered electronically. However many of these services are developed without consideration of the needs of the 10 per cent of the world population with disabilities. This directly impacts the rights of these persons. The Forum will explore the likely impact of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the evolution of ICT standards with the active participation of industry, Standards Development Organizations (SDOs), NGOs, and other interested parties. It is addressed to leaders overseeing accessibility standards issues, representatives from the industry, SDOs, NGOs representing persons with disabilities, research institutions, assistive technology developers, governments and academia.

### **Objectives:**

- Review existing and in-progress technology standards and standardization of product development methodologies.
- Discuss the role of public policy and procurement in support of standardization and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Identify follow-up actions to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Expected Outcome of Meeting:**

Review and document the areas of standardization which match the mandates of the Convention and explore critical gaps. Receive feedback and suggestions from industry, policymakers and NGOs to explore how they can best support the work of SDOs in fostering greater accessibility of ICTs.

### **Online webcast**

The Workshop will be available as a **webcast (video and audio)** in order that remote participants can see and hear presentations from wherever they are in the world. If you wish to attend remotely, please see (<http://www.itu.int/ibs/ITU-T/200804access/index.html>).

See programme at:

<http://www.itu.int/ITU-T/worksem/accessibility/200804/programme.html>

Also see:

[ITU TUTORIAL ON ACCESSIBILITY: “Making ITU Accessible: Web Design, Web Conferencing and Real Time Web Captioning” 22 April 2008, Geneva, Switzerland](#)