

## PCC.I/REC. 28 (XXXIII-18)<sup>1</sup>

### **DEVELOPMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS TO REDUCE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**

The 33 Meeting of Permanent Consultative Committee I: Telecommunications/Information and Communication Technology (PCC.I),

#### **CONSIDERING:**

- a) That the digital divide affects 3.8 billion people, 1.2 billion of whom are not covered by a broadband network.
- b) That in the Americas, and mainly in Latin America, more than 60 million people live in areas with no data coverage, which means they have no internet access of any kind in the areas where they live. That reaching these rural, remote, or underserved areas with data coverage to reduce the digital divide and promote the economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of the people who live there is a key challenge.
- c) That United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 9 indicates in its target 9.c that an effort must be made to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet and to substantially increase access to information and communication technology.

#### **RECOGNIZING:**

- a) That the Member States face a considerable challenge to develop public policy to promote infrastructure development and investment in rural, remote, or underserved areas.
- b) That regulations in rural, remote, or underserved areas must adapt to the challenges and realities of these areas incentivizing infrastructure deployment.
- c) That, by means of Resolution CCP.I/RES. 268 (XXVIII-16) on the “Implementation of Recommendation ITU-D 19 for the Americas Region”, it is asserted that, despite efforts of Member States over the past few years, the divide in telecommunication/ICT services remains. Nevertheless, on the basis of the development of telecommunication/ICT infrastructure in rural and remote areas, the innovative experience of various countries in the region has been recognized as a result of the participation of communities or small non-profit operators who have guaranteed the availability of affordable and accessible services.

#### **REMEMBERING:**

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<sup>1</sup> CCP.I-TIC/doc. 4639/18 rev. 1 cor. 1

a) That through Resolution CCP.I/RES. 285 (XXXI-17) on “Guidelines for Digital Inclusion and Meaningful Broadband Adoption in the Americas”, the Member States must adopt actions to:

- i. Update public policy regarding the deployment of broadband infrastructure and also the use of spectrum, in line with technological development and innovation to reduce the digital divide.
- ii. Implement spectrum management policies, especially tax policy, regulatory flexibility, and the need for coordination of various public entities for the development of the Digital Economy.
- iii. Consider it state policy to deploy national networks based not only on securing a return on investments but also on providing greater coverage and broadband universalization.

b) That the Member States, at the Seventh Regular Meeting of the Assembly of the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), through the Declaration of Buenos Aires, agreed:

- i. To strengthen cooperation in the drafting of strategies for the deployment of infrastructure and the development of telecommunications/ICT services and applications with the aim to improve connectivity and the social, economic, cultural and environmental development of the Americas.
- ii. To foster regulatory frames that facilitates public investment and private investment, in addition to public-private partnerships in pursuit of the improvement of quality and diversity of telecommunication/ICT services, with emphasis on remote and underserved areas.
- iii. To devote special attention to the vulnerable groups and those with specific needs, the indigenous peoples, remote, and/or hard-to-access populations, with the aim of increasing digital inclusion and with the possibility to include the participation of communities in the deployment of their networks.

## **RECOMMENDS:**

1. That the Member States facilitate regulatory models to foster the deployment of infrastructure in rural, remote, or underserved areas, identifying the changes needed in a) Regulatory Policy and b) Models to achieve Universal Access, taking into consideration the examples of Annex 1.

2. That Member States and Associate Members contribute by documenting, compiling, and disseminating actions and experiences that were developed and/or are being developed in the countries of the region in order to incentivize the deployment of infrastructure in rural or remote areas and to reduce the coverage divide annually through the Rapporteurship on Broadband, universal access, digital inclusion and gender equality.

## Annex 1

### *a) Regulatory Policy*

- i. Facilitate infrastructure deployment in rural or remote areas by harmonizing, to the extent possible, rules among municipalities for the purpose of reducing impediments for obtaining permits, administrative approvals, and access to the available land and infrastructure.
- ii. Incentivize different models used by Member States that look for solutions to reduce the digital divide in order to provide coverage to rural and remote areas, as well as to indigenous communities, where investment and coverage are not planned or are not profitable for other companies
- iii. Foster conditions in the provision of services that are adapted to the realities, needs, and limitations of rural and remote areas.
- iv. Implement policies that guarantee access to telecommunication/ICT services in rural, remote, and underserved areas.
- v. Consider the participation of non-profit operators and community operators such as telecommunication service providers in order to provide coverage to rural and remote areas that do not have telecommunication/ICT services, as well as in indigenous communities, if that is the case, where investment and coverage are not being planned or are not profitable for other companies.

### *b) Models to achieve Universal Access*

- i. Exchange best practices on models that are financially feasible in unserved areas, including those that are supported by public, private, and public-private programs such as, for example, those implemented through Universal Service Funds or access policies developed and implemented by the States themselves.
- ii. Incentivize the deployment of new networks and the strengthening of existing ones in rural or remote areas through adequate/innovative taxation arrangements
- iii. Identify tax incentives and sources of financing for infrastructure development projects in rural and remote areas.
- iv. Promote policies to use amounts already collected through Universal Service Funds for infrastructure development projects in rural and remote areas.