

## Activities of ITU-T TSAG

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### Abstract

This article reports on the activities of TSAG (Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group) in the last study period (2001–2004). TSAG is responsible for administrative and operational matters that are common to all Study Groups of ITU-T (International Telecommunication Union Telecommunication Standardization Sector).

### 1. Position, roles, and structure of TSAG

The Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) [1] is responsible for administrative and operational matters that are common to all Study Groups (SGs) of ITU-T (International Telecommunication Union Telecommunication Standardization Sector). It is positioned in parallel with SGs under the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which is held once every four years (Fig. 1) and is responsible for giving the Director of

ITU-T and other SGs various advice on administrative and operational matters related to standardization activities. TSAG meets with the same frequency as other SGs: once every nine months. It is developing Recommendations and advice related to:

- Enhancement of working methods for SGs (enhancement of WTSA Resolutions and A-series Recommendations)
- Work program for standardization in SGs and relevant coordination across SGs
- Electronic document handling (EDH) methods and ITU-T promotional activities
- Development and implementation of ITU-T strategies
- Cooperation and coordination between ITU-T

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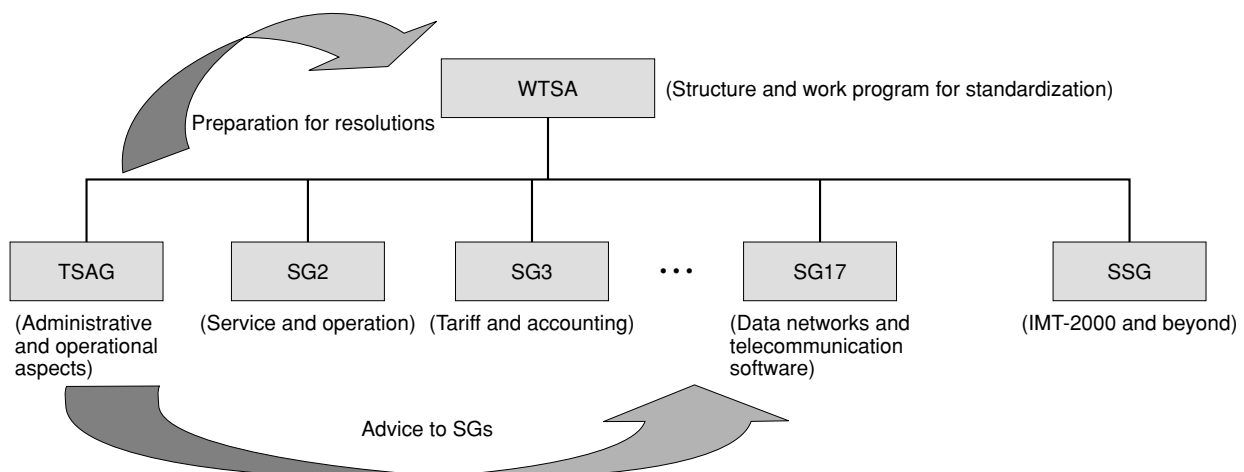


Fig. 1. Position of TSAG.

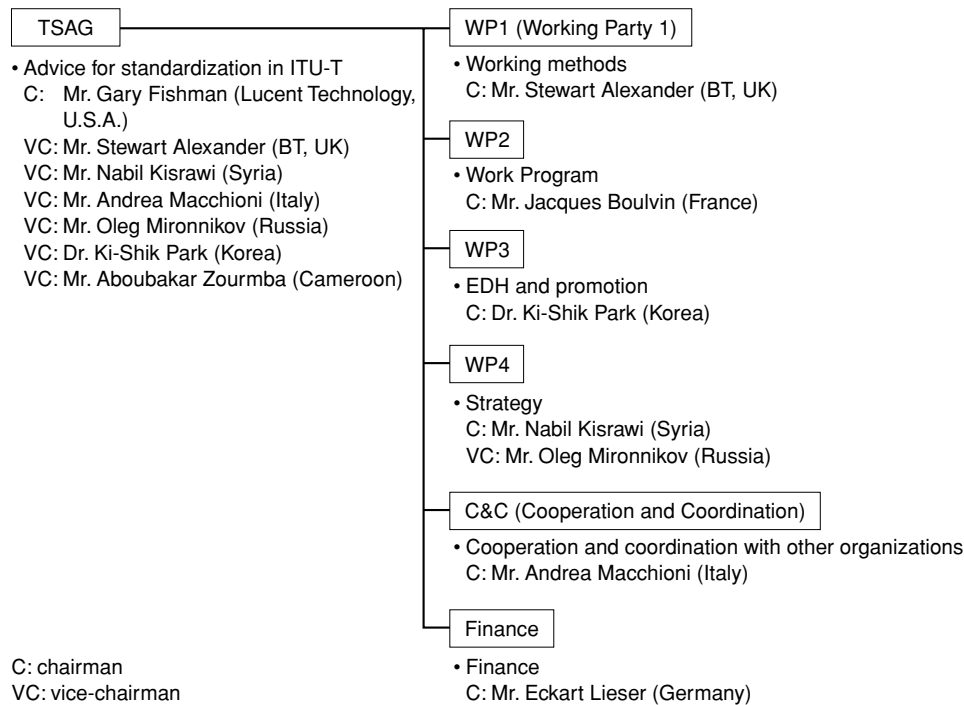


Fig. 2. Structure of TSAG (2001–2004).

and other organizations

- Improvement of ITU-T's financial status

The structure of TSAG is shown in **Fig. 2**. In addition, there is the Director's *ad hoc* group on IPR (intellectual property rights); this meets just before TSAG and its results are reported to TSAG. The following sections introduce the major achievements of TSAG for each item during the last study period (2001–2004), focusing on discussions up to the most recent TSAG meeting in July 2004 and briefly mentioning WTSA-04 held in October 2004.

## 2. Enhancement of working methods

ITU-T has been asked to make its work even more effective by aligning with emerging outside forums and consortia that are becoming more active. At the beginning of this study period, AAP (alternative approval process) was implemented, which allowed accelerated approval of Recommendations that are purely technical and do not contain policy and regulatory matters, by posting them to the ITU-T Web site. This has made it possible to shorten the approval period for Recommendations from nine months to an average of two months. Up to June 2004, over 750 Recommendations had been approved by AAP. Furthermore, the following matters were considered

based on proposals from Japan and Australia.

- Possible introduction of “Technical Specification” as another normative deliverable besides Recommendations and its approval process including voting
- Possible introduction of a “Proposal For Standardization (PFS)” to replace a “Question” as the framework for project-oriented work programs
- Accelerated process for approval and deletion of Questions
- Proposal of a “Project Group” or “Coordination Group” to facilitate coordination across SGs in a project-oriented manner
- Avoidance of one Member State veto that may emerge in the approval process for Recommendations based on consensus (approval of Recommendations with a few Member States objecting)

These proposals are based on the working methods being carried out in forums and consortia outside ITU-T, and they aim to achieve more effective cooperation and coordination between ITU-T and other forums and consortia by aligning ITU-T's working methods with theirs. However, the first two proposals were rejected due to a lack of consensus about their necessity. The last two proposals did not reach full agreement at TSAG and were submitted to WTSA-04 held in October 2004 as APT (Asia-Pacific Telecom-

munity) common proposals and approved with some modifications. An accelerated process for the approval of Questions was approved at WTSA-04, while that for the deletion was not.

### 3. Work programs

At the beginning of this study period, there was an issue as to how the work on ASN.1 (abstract syntax notation one) should be shared between SG 7 (data networks and open system communications) and SG 10 (languages and general software aspects for telecommunication systems). As a result of the discussion in TSAG, it was decided to merge these two SGs as SG17 (data networks and telecommunication software). Also, the terrorism in the U.S.A. triggered the initiation of studies across SGs on security and TDR (telecommunications for disaster relief and mitigation). Towards the end of this study period, as

WTSA-04 was approaching, discussion on study group restructuring became active. The hottest discussion point was to study the structure of the NGN (next-generation network) and how to share out roles among relevant SGs. **Table 1** shows the SG structure and possible changes discussed for the present study period (2005–2008).

### 4. EDH and promotion activities

These activities were conducted in close cooperation between TSAG and other SGs.

#### 4.1 EDH

In the last study period, a wireless local area network (LAN) was installed in the meeting rooms of ITU headquarters, in addition to the wired LAN, which made it even easier for delegates to immediately download meeting documents from the net-

Table 1. Existing SG structure and possible restructuring for the next study period.

Existing SG	Mission	Options for restructuring
SG2	Operational aspects of service provision, networks and performance	#1: Continue as now, but move Operation Questions to SG4 #2: Continue as it is now #3: Merge with SG4
SG3	Tariff and accounting principles including related telecommunications economic and policy issues	Continue as it is now
SG4	Telecommunication management, including TMN (telecommunication management network)	#1: Continue (acquire operation Questions of SG2) #2: Continue as it is now #3: Merge with SG2
SG5	Protection against electromagnetic environment effects	Continue as it is now
SG6	Outside plant	Continue as it is now
SG9	Integrated broadband cable networks and television and sound transmission	Continue as it is now
SG11	Signaling requirements and protocols	#1: Continue as it is now #2: Merge with NGN Questions of SG13 (establish NGN-SG)
SG12	End-to-end transmission performance of networks and terminals	Continue as it is now (acquire quality-of-service (QoS) Questions of SG13)
SG13	Multi-protocol and IP-based networks and their internetworking	#1: Continue (acquire Data Network Questions of SG17 and move QoS Questions and Ethernet Questions to other SGs) #2: Merge NGN Questions with SG11 (establish NGN-SG)
SG15	Optical and other transport networks	Continue as it is now (acquire Ethernet Questions of SG13 and Data network Questions of SG17)
SG16	Multimedia services, systems and terminals	Continue as it is now (acquire network signal processing Questions of SG15)
SG17	Data networks and telecommunication software	Continue as it is now (move some data network Questions to SG13 and SG15)
SSG*	IMT-2000 and beyond	#1: Continue as it is now #2: Merge with NGN Questions of SG11 and SG13 (establish NGN-SG)
TSAG	Telecommunication standardization advisory group	Continue as it is now

\*) Special Study Group on IMT-2000 and beyond

work. With this enhancement, all SGs have moved toward paperless meetings and have reduced the amount of paper being copied. Moreover, electronic interim Rapporteur meetings were held as trials using Web-based discussion tools in the Special Study Group (SSG) and other SGs. Based on these experiences, Recommendation A.9 (Working procedures for SSG) was revised and EDH guidelines were developed in various SGs. Furthermore, there was discussion about whether or not we should allow Recommendations and other SG documents to be downloaded free of charge. A trial allowing free downloading of three Recommendations per e-mail address had already been started. A trial for free downloading of SG documents is now pending because copyright problems are foreseen.

#### 4.2 Promotion

Progress was made on issuing news releases when important Recommendations are adopted and on publishing brochures that explain key technologies being standardized by ITU-T (e.g., on xDSL (various types of digital subscriber line services) and security) with the purpose of promoting ITU-T's standardization activities and attracting more experts to participate in SGs. In addition, a total of 48 workshops (on NGN, security, IMT-2000, etc.) were held to clarify future study items through the exchange of views with non-ITU-T members.

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### 5. Strategy

The strategy group (WP4) of TSAG evaluates ITU-T activities based on the standardization strategy adopted at the 2002 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference and gives advice to the Director of ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB) and relevant ITU-T organizations and groups as appropriate regarding necessary modifications to the strategy. In particular, it pointed out the importance of assuring linkage among the strategic, operational, and financial plans and of focusing ITU-T's future activities on areas where it can maintain competence against outside forums and consortia. Also, it promotes information sharing regarding the results of senior-level ITU meetings such as the Council and Plenipotentiary Conference and is encouraging contributions from members. At the end of the study period, it discussed resolutions to help participation from developing countries and proposals on new groups to identify future standardization areas.

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### 6. Cooperation and coordination

The processes for cooperation and coordination between SGs and outside forums and consortia are specified in the following Recommendations with the aim of achieving an appropriate sharing of work:

- Recommendation A.4 (Communication process between ITU-T and forums and consortia)
- Recommendation A.5 (Generic procedures for including references to documents of other organizations in ITU-T Recommendations)
- Recommendation A.6 (Cooperation and exchange of information between ITU-T and national and regional standards development organizations)

Recommendations A.4 and A.6 specify procedures for initiating cooperation and coordination relationships with forums and consortia and with national and regional standards development organizations, respectively. Recommendation A.5 specifies procedures for normatively referencing specifications developed by outside organizations, within ITU-T Recommendations. The number of organizations with which ITU-T had established formal relationships according to Recommendations A.4–6 kept continued growing in the study period, as shown in **Table 2**. Recommendations A.4 and A.6 specify eight criteria for ITU-T to establish formal cooperation relationships. Among them the most important ones are the global nature of organizations, openness and fairness of working methods, and alignment of IPR policies. For example, cooperation with OMA (Open Mobile Alliance) may be reconsidered due to differences in IPR policies.

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### 7. Finance

The budget of ITU-T was cut by 8% at the Plenipotentiary Conference held in October 2002, resulting in ITU-T being requested to make its activities even more effective. An *ad hoc* group on financial matters was established in the middle of the study period to discuss and implement ways of effectively using the budget. In particular, considering that the number of official languages will increase from five to six (Arabic will be added to the existing English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese) as of January 2005 according to the decision made at the 2002 Plenipotentiary Conference, the most important issue was identified as reducing translation and interpretation costs.

Table 2. Qualified organizations for Recommendations A.4–6.

Rec.	Organizations
A4	ASN.1 Consortium, ATM Forum, ATSC, DSL Forum, ETIS, IMTC, IPDR Organization, IPv6 Forum, MEF, MPLS/Frame Relay Alliance, MSF, OASIS, OIF, OMA, OMG, SDL Forum Society, SDL-TFC, TM Forum, W3C
A5	ARIB, ATIS, ATM Forum, ATSC, BSI, CCSA, DSL Forum, ECMA-SICS, ETSI, IEEE, ISOC/IETF, JCTEA, MEF, MPLS/Frame Relay Alliance, NIST, OASIS, OIF, OMA, OMG, SCTE, TIA, TM Forum, TTA, TTC, W3C
A6	ARIB, ATIS, BSI, CCSA, CEA, ECMA-SICS, ETSI, IEEE, JCTEA, NIST, SCTE, SMPTE, TIA, TTA, TTC

ARIB: Association of Radio Industries and Businesses,  
 ASN.1 Consortium: Abstract Syntax Notation One Consortium,  
 ATIS: Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions,  
 ATM Forum: Asynchronous Transfer Mode Forum,  
 ATSC: Advanced Television Systems Committee,  
 BSI: British Standards Institute,  
 CCSA: China Communications Standards Association,  
 CEA: Consumer Electronics Association,  
 DSL Forum: Digital Subscriber Line Forum,  
 ECMA-SICS: ECMA Standardizing Information and  
 Communication Systems,  
 ETIS: E- and Telecommunication Information Services,  
 ETSI: European Telecommunications Standards Institute,  
 IEEE: Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers,  
 IMTC: International Multimedia Telecommunications Consortium,  
 IPDR Organization: Internet Protocol Detail Record Organization,  
 IPv6 Forum: Internet Protocol version 6 Forum,  
 ISOC/IETF: Internet Society, Internet Engineering Task Force,  
 JCTEA: Japan Cable Television Engineering Association,  
 MEF: Metro Ethernet Forum,

MPLS/Frame Relay Alliance: Multiprotocol Label  
 Switching/Frame Relay Alliance,  
 MSF: Multiservice Switching Forum,  
 NIST: National Institute of Standards and Technology,  
 OASIS: Organization for the Advancement of Structured  
 Information Standards,  
 OIF: Optical Internetworking Forum,  
 OMA: Open Mobile Alliance,  
 OMG: Object Management Group,  
 SCTE: Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers,  
 SDL Forum Society: Specification and Description Language  
 Forum Society,  
 SDL-TFC: SDL Task Force Consortium,  
 SMPTE: Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers,  
 TIA: Telecommunications Industry Association,  
 TM Forum: Tele Management Forum,  
 TTA: Telecommunications Technology Association,  
 TTC: Telecommunication Technology Committee,  
 W3C: World Wide Web Consortium

## 8. WTSA-04

At WTSA-04, held in October 2004, it was decided to keep the current structure of SGs and to designate SG13 as NGN SG responsible for coordination between all the relevant SGs. Also, the one Member State (MS) veto was changed to two MS veto for the first time in the history of the ITU-T. Details about WTSA-04 will be published later in a separate article.

## 9. Conclusion

This article described the status of TSAG discussions as of July 2004. During the last study period (2001–2004), regrettably little progress was made. It is important for Japan to continue proposing improvements for a more effective ITU-T in the present study period (2005–2008).

## Reference

[1] <http://www.itu.int/ITU-T/tsag/index.asp>



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He received the B.E. and M.E. degrees from Yokohama National University, Yokohama, Kanagawa in 1976 and 1978, respectively. He joined the Musashino Electrical Communication Laboratories, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation (now NTT), in 1978 and has been engaged in the development and standardization of signaling and data communications systems including ISDN packet, frame relay, and ATM systems. He is a member of IEEE, the Institute of Electronics, Information and Communication Engineers of Japan, and the Information Processing Society of Japan. In 1995 and 2004, the ITU Association of Japan gave him an award for his contributions to standardization work in ITU-T.