Global Standardization Activities

Report of the 4th Meeting of the APT Preparatory Group for WTSA-20

Noriyuki Araki

Abstract

In preparation for the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) of the International Telecommunication Union - Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), the 4th meeting of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Preparatory Group for WTSA-20 (APT WTSA20-4) was held in an online conference from November 16 to 20, 2020. This article reports the results of APT WTSA20-4 and the schedule for the WTSA.

Keywords: APT, WTSA-20, TSAG

1. Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) is an international organization promoting developments in the information and communication technology (ICT) field in the Asia-Pacific region. It was established in 1979 and has 38 member countries in the region. The APT has been holding preparatory meetings to discuss the APT Common Proposal (ACP) for the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) of the International Telecommunication Union - Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T). Four meetings of the APT Preparatory Group were planned for WTSA-20, and the 1st meeting was held in June 2019 in Akihabara, Japan. Other meetings had been scheduled to be held in Thailand, China, and the Philippines. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan was revised, and the second and subsequent meetings were all held online.

Participants registered for the 4th meeting of the APT Preparatory Group for WTSA-20 (APT WTSA20-4) held from November 16 to 20, 2020 were 235 members (16 countries) from APT member countries, 25 associate and supporting members, 22 representatives from other international standardization organizations, and 7 from the APT Secretariat, a total of 289 participants. An analysis by country shows that 59 participants, 1/4 of the total, were from China. The number of participants from emerging countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia, India, and Indonesia, is also increasing. From Japan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, as the representative, participated with 14 representatives from private companies.

2. Management team of the APT Preparatory Group for WTSA-20

The list of officers at the APT Preparatory Group for WTSA-20 is shown in **Table 1**. As the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the three Working Groups (WGs), which promote detailed discussions on specific issues, three experts (Mr. Naganuma (NEC), Mr. Araki (NTT), the author of this article, Mr. Hondo (KDDI)) were selected from Japan. Accordingly, Japan serves as WG officers while maintaining cooperative relations with China, the Republic of Korea, and India.

3. Study items and work method

WTSA-20 is a general meeting of ITU-T that is held once every four years. It is an important meeting for organizing the ITU-T Study Groups (SGs) after 2021, selecting the positions of chairmen and vice-chairmen of SGs, and preparing Resolutions on standardization strategy such as on artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), smart cities, Beyond

Table 1.   APT Preparatory Group for WTSA-20 management structure.

APT WTSA-20	Chairman	Vice-Chairmen
Plenary	Mr. Yoichi Meda (Japan, TTC)	Dr. Hyoung Jun Kim (Korea) Ms. Li Fang (China) Mr. U. K. Srivastava (India)
Working Group (WG)	WG Chairman	WG Vice-Chairmen
WG1: ITU-T Working Methods	Dr. Kangchan Lee (Korea)	Ms. Miho Naganuma (Japan, NEC) Mr. Ashutosh Pandey (India) Mr. Tong Wu (China)
WG2: ITU-T Work Organization	Mr. Noriyuki Araki (Japan, NTT)	Mr. P. K. Singh (India) Mr. Nguyen Van Khoa (Vietnam) Mr. Kihun Kim (Korea) Ms. Wang Liang (China)
WG3: Regulatory/Policy and Standardization Related Issues	Dr. Cao Jiguang (China)	Ms. Eriko Hondo (Japan, KDDI) Ms. Arezu Orojlu (Iran) Mr. Premjit Lal (India) Ms. Nguyen Thi Khanh Thuan (Vietnam)

5G (fifth-generation mobile communications), and quantum communications, which are recent standardization topics in ITU-T.

In the APT Preparatory Group, three WGs share the task of drafting and examining relevant Resolution documents and draft Recommendations and discuss issues on the basis of the contributions from each country in accordance with the Terms of References of each WG.

Proposals that have reached consensus at the WG meeting will be considered as candidate proposals for approval at the plenary. The candidate proposals, which were approved at the closing plenary of the APT Preparatory Group meeting, became the Preliminary APT Common Proposal (PACP). The PACP, which was approved by the administrations of APT member countries, will then be the final ACP.

The approval of a PACP is based on the agreement reached at the plenary. However, if there is a disagreement, the approval of at least 25% of the countries attending the plenary is necessary. If the number of dissenting countries is not more than the number of countries supporting the approval, the PACP will be adopted.

The conditions for approval of an ACP are as follows: all APT member states (38 countries) are consulted on the approval of the ACP (endorsement); more than 25% of the APT member states (10 countries) approve the ACP; and more than 50% of the APT member states (19 countries) do not oppose the ACP. The approved proposal is submitted to the WTSA as an ACP.

4. Results of discussion

(1) WG1: ITU-T Working Methods

WG1 is considering modification (MOD) or suppression (SUP) of the WTSA Resolution on ITU-T working methods. Since the revision of the ITU-T A series Recommendations (e.g. Recommendations A.1, A.7) requires consideration at the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) meeting, WG1 prepared APT Views, which is a document type that enables submission of contributions to TSAG.

Regarding the deliverables from WG1, eight proposed PACPs were prepared and approved at the plenary. The proposed PACPs related to the MOD of Resolutions 22 (Resolution on the authorization of TSAG) and 32 (Resolution on electronic working method) and SUP of Resolutions 35 (Appointment and Term of ITU-T SG and TSAG Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen) and 45 (Resolution on coordination of standardization work across SGs) are based on the Japanese proposal, and Japan is in charge of editing the proposal documents.

(2) WG2: ITU-T Work Organization

WG2 is studying the structure of ITU-T SGs, including the work plans and Questions to be addressed by each SG. New standardization work items are also discussed in WG2 as they are closely related to the future SG structure.

New Resolutions were proposed regarding new work items by China and the Republic of Korea, including pandemic countermeasures including e-health for new coronavirus infections by using AI in ICT, promotion of studies on machine vision,

enhancement of studies on quantum information technology, and examination of future networks considering vertical applications. However, it was argued that it was too early to draw up a resolution, and some countries opposed the new Resolution since it is closely related to the work items in ITU-T SG11, SG13, and SG16, that each SG is currently studying these new work items, and that these new work items are being continuously examined by the Focus Group. At the closing plenary session, more than one country expressed their concern on the proposed Resolutions. Regarding the new Resolution, WG2 was able to agree only on the PACP of the Resolution "ITU-T's role in facilitating the use of ICTs to prevent the spread of global pandemics," which is an important issue related to new coronavirus infections. WG2 also agreed with a proposal on the MOD of the existing Resolution 78 on e-health.

Regarding the principle of SG restructuring, the APT View was agreed on the basis of a proposal from China, which was based on the seven high-level principles for SG structure* agreed upon at WTSA-16.

With respect to SG restructuring proposals, at the TSAG meeting, the TSB (Telecommunication Standardization Bureau) Director proposed a draft of the SG structure (Food for thought), and the proposal to drastically reduce the number of SGs from the current 11 is under consideration at other regional meetings such as the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) in Europe. At the APT, there were opinions in favor of reducing the number of SGs, such as those from the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia. At this meeting,

Japan proposed an SG structure. However, proposals to partially transfer SG20 IoT security issues (Question 6/SG20) to SG17 and SG2 are included, which would maintain the number of existing SGs. With the support of China and the consent of the Republic of Korea and Malaysia, the proposal was agreed as an ACP. Since discussions on SG restructuring are closely related to the election of the SG chair and vice-chair, it is necessary to understand the circumstances of each country and region and take further actions toward the conclusion of the WTSA.

(3) WG3: Regulatory/Policy and Standardization Related Issues

The number of PACPs agreed in the closing plenary of this meeting was 29 for revisions to existing Resolutions and 5 for APT View. The PACPs for the agreed revisions of Resolutions and Recommendations are listed in **Table 2**.

5. Future plans

In APT WTSA20-4, discussions on a substantial PACP were completed, but the WTSA was postponed until March 2022. Accordingly, it was proposed and approved to hold an additional meeting of the APT Preparatory Group for WTSA-20 in 2021. The schedule of future WTSA-related meetings is listed in **Table 3**. At the APT Preparatory Group meeting in 2021, APT policy for WTSA will be discussed. Discussions will be held on how to deal with the upcoming TSAG meeting, and common proposals from other regional standardization organizations to the WTSA will be analyzed.

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*   Seven high-level principles for SG structure: Optimized structure, clear mandates, enhanced coordination and cooperation, cost-effectiveness and attractiveness, efficient and productive working methods, timely identification of standardization needs, and support for bridging the standardization gap.

Table 2. List of proposed Resolutions and Recommendations of the APT.

1. APT WTSA-20 Resolutions

No.	Title	WG	Relevant document
1	Rules of procedure of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector	1	OUT-07 (MOD)
2	ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector study group responsibility and mandates	2	OUT-28 (MOD)
18	Principles and procedures for the allocation of work to, and strengthening coordination and cooperation among, the ITU Radiocommunication, ITU Telecommunication Standardization and ITU Telecommunication Development Sectors	1	OUT-08 /WTSA3 (MOD)
22	Authorization for the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group to act between world telecommunication standardization assemblies	1	OUT-05 /WTSA3 (MOD)
32	Strengthening electronic working methods for the work of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector	1	OUT-06 /WTSA3 (MOD)
35	Appointment and maximum term of office for chairmen and vice-chairmen of study groups of the Telecommunication Standardization Sector and of the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group	1	OUT-05 (SUP)
45	Effective coordination of standardization work across study groups in the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector and the role of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group	1	OUT-07 /WTSA3 (SUP)
50	Cybersecurity	3	OUT-16 (MOD)
52	Countering and combating spam	3	OUT-14 (MOD)
55	Promoting gender equality in ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector activities	1	OUT-04 (MOD)
58	Encouraging the creation of national computer incident response teams, particularly for developing countries	3	OUT-23 (MOD)
60	Responding to the challenges of the evolution of the identification/numbering system and its convergence with IP-based systems/networks	3	OUT-13 (MOD)
64	Internet protocol address allocation and facilitating the transition to and deployment of IPv6	3	OUT-11 (MOD)
67	Use in the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector of the languages of the Union on an equal footing	1	OUT-06 (MOD)
72	Measurement and assessment concerns related to human exposure to electromagnetic fields	3	OUT-20 (MOD)
73	Information and communication technologies, environment and climate change	3	OUT-19 (MOD)
76	Studies related to conformance and interoperability testing, assistance to developing countries, and a possible future ITU Mark programme	3	OUT-13/WTSA3 (MOD)
77	Enhancing the standardization work in the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector for software-defined networking	3	OUT-18 (MOD)
78	Information and communication technology applications and standards for improved access to e-health services	2	OUT-27 (MOD)
79	The role of telecommunications/information and communication technologies in handling and controlling e-waste from telecommunication and information technology equipment and methods of treating it	3	OUT-15/WTSA3 (MOD)
84	Studies concerning the protection of users of telecommunication/information and communication technology services	3	OUT-17 (MOD)
88	International mobile roaming	3	OUT-26 (MOD)
89	Promoting the use of information and communication technologies to bridge the financial inclusion gap	3	OUT-24 (MOD)
92	Enhancing the standardization activities in the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector related to non-radio aspects of international mobile telecommunications	3	OUT-12 (MOD)
95	ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector initiatives to raise awareness on best practices and policies related to service quality	3	OUT-21 (MOD)
96	ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector studies for combating counterfeit telecommunication/information and communication technology devices	3	OUT-22 (MOD)
97	Combating mobile telecommunication device theft	3	OUT-15 (MOD)
98	Enhancing the standardization of Internet of things and smart cities and communities for global development	3	OUT-25 (MOD)
New	ITU-T's role in facilitating the use of ICTs to prevent the spread of global pandemics	2	OUT-29 (ADD)

2. APT WTSA-20 A-series Recommendations

No.	Title	WG	Relevant document
A.1	Working methods for study groups of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector	1	OUT-08 (MOD)
A.7	Focus groups: Establishment and working procedures	1	OUT-09 (MOD)
A.8	Alternative approval process for new and revised ITU-T Recommendations	1	OUT-10 (MOD)

Table 3. Future meeting plans.

Meeting	Date	Location/form of meeting
Additional APT Preparatory Group meeting	Q3 2021 (September, tentative)	Virtual meeting
TSAG	25–29 October 2021	Virtual meeting
TSAG	10–14 January 2022	Virtual meeting (tentative)
WTSA	1–9 March 2022	India (Hyderabad)

Noriyuki Araki
Manager, Standard Strategy, Research and Development Planning Department, NTT.
He received a B.E. and M.E. in electrical and electronic engineering from Sophia University, Tokyo, in 1993 and 1995. He joined NTT Access Network Service Systems Laboratories in 1995, where he researched and developed operation and maintenance systems for optical fiber cable networks. He has been contributing to standardization efforts in ITU-T SG6 since 2006. He was the rapporteur of Question 6 of ITU-T SG6 from 2006 to 2008 and the rapporteur of Question 17 of ITU-T SG15 from 2008 to 2012. He also served as the chairman of the ITU-T Focus Group on Disaster Relief Systems and Network Resilience and Recovery. He has been the vice-chairman of ITU-T SG15 since 2013. He also contributes to the activities of International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Technical Committee 86 (fiber optic systems). He received the ITU-AJ award from the ITU Association of Japan in 2017. He is a member of the Institute of Electronics, Information and Communication Engineers (IEICE).