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| **Additional 2019 session of the Council Geneva, 27 September 2019** |  |
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|  | **Document C19-ADD/6-E** |
| **14 November 2019** |
| **Original: English** |
| summary record  of the  ADDITIONAL 2019 SESSION OF THE COUNCIL | |
| |  | | --- | | Friday, 27 September 2019, from 0920 to 1210 hours |   **Acting Chairman:** Mr F. BIGI (Italy) | |

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|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Opening remarks | – |
| 2 | Report of the Secretary-General on progress on the Union's headquarters premises project | [C19-ADD/2(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CLADD-C-0002/en)  [C19-ADD/3](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CLADD-C-0003/en)  [C19-ADD/4](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CLADD-C-0004/en) |
| 3 | Statement by the councillor from the Bahamas | – |
| 4 | Matters pertaining to Council working groups | – |
| 5 | Closure of the additional session | – |

**1 Opening remarks**

1.1 The Secretary-General welcomed councillors to the additional session and informed them that the Chairman, Mr E.E. Azzouz (Egypt), was unable to attend because of his involvement in the preparations for WRC-19. He would be replaced by Mr F. Bigi (Italy), as Acting Chairman, who was acting Chairman of the ordinary session of Council-19.

1.2 After briefly reviewing the work done in previous years on the headquarters premises project, the Secretary-General said that the time had come to move forward with a definitive project and cost envelope. After the ordinary session of Council-19, he had given the project team clear instructions to amend the design to fit the currently available financing of CHF 170.14 million (CHF 150 million loaned by the Swiss Government, over CHF 15 million in sponsorships and donations and CHF 5 million from the 2018 surplus) and to consult with the Member States Advisory Group (MSAG) and the ITU Staff Council in the process. The final proposal would be submitted to the host country authorities in December 2019. It would be unaffected by any future sponsorships or donations.

1.3 The Acting Chairman also welcomed councillors to the additional session, which was being held pursuant to the decision of the June 2019 Council session to discuss the report on progress on the Union's headquarters premises project. The secretariat had worked diligently to address the questions raised by Council in June.

**2 Report of the Secretary-General on progress on the Union's headquarters premises project (Documents** [**C19-ADD/2(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CLADD-C-0002/en)**,** [**C19-ADD/3**](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CLADD-C-0003/en) **and** [**C19-ADD/4**](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CLADD-C-0004/en)**)**

2.1 The Deputy Secretary-General introduced Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1), which contained the Secretary-General’s report on progress on the Union’s headquarters premises project and information requested by Member States, providing assurances that the project could be completed within the funding available as a result of some design changes. The Council was invited to consider and approve the report and the proposed direct and indirect project costs and to authorize the Secretary-General to proceed with the request for the second part of the loan. .

2.2 The President of the Staff Council delivered a statement available at:  
<https://www.itu.int/en/council/ties/Documents/2019/StaffCouncil-e.pdf>

2.3 Mr István Manno, Ministerial Commissioner from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, made a statement in which he highlighted Hungary’s commitment to the promotion of ICT in central and eastern Europe and to collaboration with ITU, as borne out by its recent hosting of ITU TELECOM World 2019. He reiterated an offer made previously by Hungary to enter into negotiations with ITU with a view to the temporary hosting of some ITU conferences and meetings during the implementation phase of ITU’s new headquarters premises project (2023-2026).

2.4 H.E. Mr Valentin Zellweger, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organizations in Geneva, delivered a statement available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/council/ties/Documents/2019/Switzerland.pdf>. Notably, the Ambassador stated that the host country continues to be at the ITU’s disposal to assist in finding the best solutions for all the organization, staff and member states, to hold ITU conferences and meetings during the project’s implementation phase in Geneva. Geneva has enough space to accommodate conferences and meetings. He stressed that the host country is concerned that it would be detrimental to the quality of the output of the meetings of the ITU if many of them, and for a longer period, would not be benefitting from the unique ecosystem of specialized agencies, NGOs and permanent missions of member states located in Geneva.

2.5 The councillor from the United States, introducing Document C19-ADD/3, said that many of the concerns expressed therein with regard to the need for clarity, transparency and sound financial planning had been addressed in the Secretary-General's opening addresses and in his report in Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1). Thus, her country was one of those putting forward the draft decision in Document C19-ADD/4.

2.6 The Chairman of MSAG reported that the Group had met on 19 September 2019 to consider Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1). It had concluded that the future of the Popov room was a political issue to be resolved by the Russian Federation and the secretariat (the sale of the Tower building had not been factored into the project's financing as, under Resolution 212 (Dubai, 2018), any proceeds it generated would be used to pay back the loans from the Swiss Government as soon as possible). The Advisory Group had also concluded that the headquarters premises project was stable at an estimated cost of CHF 170 million. It had noted that the Risk Register did not contain a worst-case financing scenario, which, following consultations, had been estimated at CHF 12.6 million. That amount could be raised, in keeping with the Financial Rules and Financial Regulations, either through savings or by making a withdrawal from the Reserve Account, or a combination of the two; MSAG had not considered it feasible to seek to increase Member State contributions to cover the amount. Some members of MSAG, noting that the project's indirect costs included CHF 1.07 million for the introduction of a paperless working environment, had considered that task as independent of the project. MSAG had nevertheless decided to maintain that amount as part of the project proposal, given that no corresponding amount had been allocated in the financial plan for 2020–2023 and that the scanning of all paper files would have to be completed by 2022, when the Varembé building was demolished.

2.7 Several councillors expressed general support for the secretariat's proposal and thanked the secretariat and MSAG for the work carried out since the June session of the Council, notably to produce Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1).

2.8 One councillor suggested that there might be better ways to achieve savings than to eliminate green aspects of the project such as grey water recovery. Another councillor underscored the need for a project monitoring mechanism. A third voiced concern about the working conditions of ITU staff during the construction of the new building. Would health and safety conditions be met if staff were temporarily housed in the Montbrillant and Tower buildings in the numbers indicated, and were open-plan arrangements being considered for the Montbrillant building? A further concern related to the indirect costs indicated in §4.4 of Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1), notably for security staff and consultants. It was to be hoped that ITU would not hire consultants where qualified staff were available. He also expressed doubt about the amounts set aside for scanning of documents.

2.9 The Secretary-General informed the meeting that due to the budget constraints, new technologies for building, including grey water recovery, could not be accommodated in this project, and he assured councillors that no consultants would be engaged to perform tasks for which ITU had qualified staff, and the staff concerned can take care of the task in addition to his/her main duty. Regarding open-plan working spaces, although in principle they were to be introduced for everyone, the design of the Montbrillant building might limit their introduction there. The intention is to ensure that staff enjoyed at least the minimum working conditions required in any United Nations agency, and the secretariat would continue to engage with the Staff to that end. The idea was to have a state-of-the-art building in terms of environmental technology, but the project had to be finalized at some point and could not be constantly adapted to technological developments.

2.10 Numerous councillors expressed their appreciation for the detailed information contained in Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1), which went a long way towards addressing all their concerns.

2.11 Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1) was **noted**.

2.12 The councillor from Germany introduced the draft decision submitted by several Member States in Document C19-ADD/4, which expanded on the *decides* and *instructs the Secretary-General* sections of the draft decision contained in Document C19-ADD/2(Rev.1) in order to clearly define limits. In particular, it fixed the final project cost and addressed the issue of non-mitigated risks of up to CHF 12.6 million and indirect project costs; it also instructed the Secretary-General to work with the host country to address the implementation of UNDSS requirements for UN MOSS compliance, to draw up a staff working conditions strategy and implementation plan, and to abide by the highest standards in terms of ethics and procurement.

2.13 The Secretary-General assured councillors that ITU applied United Nations best practices in terms of procurement.

2.14 Councillors agreed to base the discussion on the text of the draft decision submitted by several Member States in Document C19-ADD/4. In the ensuing discussion, one councillor proposed deleting *instructs the Secretary-General* 9 as it implied that ITU did not comply with the highest standards in terms of ethics and procurement. Other councillors stressed the importance of the reference to ethics and standards in the light of the recent case of fraud. One councillor argued that the case of fraud had been dealt with adequately and mechanisms were being put in place. Nevertheless, she suggested amending the text of the paragraph to begin “to continue to abide”, thereby retaining the reference while recognizing general compliance with the highest standards.

2.15 It was so **agreed**.

2.16 One councillor proposed deleting *decides* 6 as it was not for the Council to interpret decisions of the plenipotentiary conference and such references were better placed in preambular paragraphs. Two other councillors preferred to retain *decides* 6, considering it logical for a preambular paragraph of a resolution of the plenipotentiary conference to be reflected in the operative part of a Council decision.

2.17 It was so **agreed**.

2.18 Following various comments regarding *decides* 5, it was **agreed** to add the words “up to” after “indirect project costs of” to address the concerns raised and provide clarity.

2.19 The councillor from the Russian Federation stressed that the recommendation on the Popov room approved by the Council in June should be applied as it stood. He therefore proposed that a new *instructs the Secretary-General* 3*bis* be added to the draft decision, reading:

“to continue implementation of Council Decisions regarding preservation of the Popov Room, including § 2.2.18.13 of the ninth and last plenary meeting of the 2019 ordinary session of the Council (Document C19/120)”.

2.20 Several councillors opposed inclusion of the proposed new paragraph as it was already reflected in a Council recommendation under §2.2.18.13 of Document [C19/120](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0120/en) (summary record of the ninth plenary meeting of Council-19). It should remain a recommendation. Councillors were attached to the idea of having a Popov room, but maintaining the existing Popov room, and therefore having two large meeting rooms in the future headquarters, would be difficult.

2.21 Following informal consultations, the councillor from the Russian Federation proposed an amended version of *instructs the Secretary-General* 3*bis*, which read:

“To continue implementation of Council decisions regarding the preservation of a Popov room, including providing financial and legal analysis of the options presented in §2.2.18.13 of the ninth and last plenary meeting of the 2019 ordinary session of the Council (Document [C19/120](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0120/en))”.

2.22 It was so **agreed**.

2.23 The Council **adopted** the draft decision as amended.

2.24 Two councillors stressed that the demolition of the Varembé building should not be allowed to affect meeting efficiency. In that respect, it was particularly important to ensure that participants did not encounter visa difficulties if meetings were held outside Switzerland.

**3 Statement by the councillor from the Bahamas**

3.1 The councillor from the Bahamas expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by ITU to his country in the wake of Hurricane Dorian.

**4 Matters pertaining to Council working groups**

4.1 The Council **agreed** to appoint Mr W. Berezowski (Poland) as Vice-Chairman for the European region of the Council Working Group on WSIS & SDGs, the current vice-chairman for the region being unable to continue in that position.

4.2 One councillor asked the secretariat not to schedule Council working group clusters at the same time as advisory group meetings, as often the same experts participated in both.

4.3 The Acting Chairman announced the dates of the 2020 Council working group clusters:   
3‑14 February and 7-18 September 2020.

**5 Closure of the additional session**

5.1 The Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General applauded the Council’s adoption of the decision on the headquarters premises, which reflected the good spirit of cooperation prevailing at ITU and guaranteed that the Union would continue to occupy an important place in Geneva. The Acting Chairman was particularly to be thanked for his contribution to the 2019 ordinary and additional sessions.

5.2 A number of councillors, echoing those remarks, thanked the secretariat, MSAG and the Staff Council for their work to move the project forward. The Acting Chairman thanked everyone who had contributed to the successful outcome of the additional session

The Secretary-General: The Acting Chairman:

H. ZHAO F. BIGI

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