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| **Virtual consultation of councillors  starting 9 June 2020** |  |
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|  | **Document VC\15-E**  **16 June 2020**  **Original English** |

SUMMARY RECORD

OF THE

FIRST MEETING

Tuesday, 9 June 2020, from 1200 to 1500 hours

**Chairman:** Mr S. BIN GHELAITA (United Arab Emirates)

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|  | Subjects discussed | Documents |
| 1 | Opening of the virtual consultation | - |
| 2 | Nomination of the chairman of the virtual consultation | - |
| 3 | Opening remarks by the Chairman | - |
| 4 | Approval of the draft agenda of the virtual consultation | [VC/1(Rev.2)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0001/en) |
| 5 | Draft time-management plan | [VC/ADM1(Rev.2)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-ADM-0001/en) |
| 6 | Organizational matters | - |
| 7 | World Telecommunication and Information Society Day | [C20/17](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0017/en), [C20/68](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0068/en) |
| 8 | Preparations for WTSA-20 | [C20/24](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0024/en), [VC/5](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0005/en) |
| 9 | Preparations for WTDC-21 | [C20/30](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0030/en) |
| 10 | Preparations for WTPF-21 | [C20/5](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0005/en) |
| 11 | Summary of the outcomes of the virtual consultation | [VC/DT/1](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-200609-TD-0001/en) |

**1 Opening of the virtual consultation**

1.1 The Secretary-General declared the virtual consultation open and welcomed all delegates. Thanking the Administration of the United Arab Emirates for its kind sponsorship of the technical platform used for the virtual consultation, he delivered the address available at:   
<https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/2020/Secretary-General-opening-e.pdf>

1.2 The councillor from the United Arab Emirates said that his country had been grateful for the opportunity to demonstrate its active support of ITU and sponsor the platform of the virtual consultation, thereby ensuring the broadest possible participation at a time when ICTs were proving a key driver in overcoming the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating international cooperation and contributing to the continued delivery of essential services.

1.3 The Chairman of Council-19 said that he hoped that the virtual consultation would reach consensus on all items on its agenda. He stood ready to provide any assistance to serve that end.

**2 Nomination of the chairman of the virtual consultation**

2.1 The Secretary-General invited the meeting to approve the nomination of Mr Saif Bin Ghelaita, Vice-Chairman of Council, as chairman of the virtual consultation.

2.2 The nomination of Mr Saif Bin Ghelaita was **approved**.

**3 Opening remarks by the Chairman**

The Chairman delivered the address available at:  
<https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/2020/VCC-Chairman-opening-e.pdf>

**4 Approval of the draft agenda of the virtual consultation (Document** [**VC/1(Rev.2)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0001/en)**)**

4.1 The draft agenda of the virtual consultation (Document VC/1(Rev.2)) was **approved**.

**5 Draft time-management plan (Document** [**VC/ADM1(Rev.2)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-ADM-0001/en)**)**

5.1 The Secretary of the meeting introduced Document VC/ADM1(Rev.2), containing a rolling time-management plan that would be updated daily as the meeting progressed.

5.2 The draft time-management plan (Document VC/ADM1(Rev.2)) was **approved**.

**6 Organizational matters**

6.1 The Secretary of the meeting said that the working hours of the virtual consultation would be from 1200 to 1500 hours (Geneva time), from Tuesday to Friday. Interpretation and documentation would be provided in the Union’s six official languages. Captioning would be available in English.

6.2 The information on the organization of work for the virtual consultation was **noted**.

6.3 The Chairman requested the cooperation of all participants to ensure that items on the agenda requiring immediate action to ensure the business continuity of the Union be concluded successfully. The meeting would note other items not requiring immediate action and submit them to the next physical meeting of the Council with comments or proposals. He sought the meeting’s agreement with that approach.

6.4 Two councillors requested a more precise understanding of the process involved in formulating agreement reached on agenda items, and the bearing that would have on their future treatment at the next physical meeting of the Council. Another councillor said that, to her understanding, formal agreement could not be reached on any item without the intervention of the Council proper. Her delegation therefore suggested transmitting “common opinions” to the next physical meeting of the Council for further discussion.

6.5 The Chairman said that it would be perfectly appropriate to refer to any conclusion reached on an agenda item insofar as the conclusion pertained to proposed action to be taken by the Council at its next physical meeting or via correspondence, transmitting all the proposals to the Council at its next physical meeting.

6.6 It was so **agreed.**

**7 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (Documents** [**C20/17**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0017/en) **and** [**C20/68**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0068/en)**)**

7.1 The Chief of the Strategic Planning and Membership Department introduced Document C20/17, which invited the Council to note the celebration of WTISD-20 on the theme “Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, and to approve the theme “Trust in the Era of Digital Transformation” for WTISD-21. He stressed the importance of promptly reaching agreement on a theme for WTISD-21 in order to avoid any delay in preparations and noted the secretariat’s view that the theme should be short and concise.

7.2 Councillors welcomed the celebration of WTISD-20, which had highlighted the importance of ICTs in modern society. Councillors noted, however, in regard to such events and their themes, that reference should be made to both ICTs and telecommunications, in line with usual practice.

7.3 The councillor from the Russian Federation introduced Document C20/68, which she stressed had been prepared for submission to the physical meeting of the Council, and which proposed that the theme for WTISD-21 should be: “Strengthening trust and security in the era of digital transformation, including in the use of ICTs in response to emergencies, such as pandemics, and in mitigating their effects”. The proposal gave due reflection to the new challenges and threats that had emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it reflected that trust was not always a product of security, as trust might be given naively, without awareness of potential dangers.

7.4 In the ensuing debate, some councillors argued that the theme proposed by the secretariat, “Trust in the Era of Digital Transformation”, should be retained, to ensure the theme remained clear and concise. The addition of “security” was redundant, as security implied trust. Other councillors supported the proposal of the Russian Federation, though they were prepared to accept “Trust and Security in the Era of Digital Transformation” in the interests of conciseness. Others stressed the importance of drawing an explicit link to the COVID-19 pandemic in the theme, while some delegations wished to see a reference to “resilience”.

7.5 The Chief of the Strategic Planning and Membership Department suggested that a way forward could be found with the theme “Trust and Security in the Era of Digital Transformation” and sub-themes to reflect the rest of the Russian proposal and any other references deemed necessary.

7.6 While that suggestion garnered broad support, some councillors reiterated their preference for the original language contained in Document C20/17 and one councillor wished to avoid the use of sub-themes for fear of diluting the message of the event. The councillor from the Russian Federation, for her part, insisted that any compromise solution should include “security” and sub-themes.

7.7 The Chairman, recognizing that there was little prospect of reaching consensus in the allotted time, suggested deferring further discussion of the item to the next physical meeting of the Council.

7.8 It was so **concluded**.

**8 Preparations for WTSA-20 (Documents** [**C20/24**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0024/en) **and** [**VC/5**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0005/en)**)**

8.1 The representative of TSB introduced the report in Document C20/24, which described ongoing logistical and technical preparations for WTSA-20, currently scheduled to be held in Hyderabad (India) from 17 to 27 November 2020.

8.2 The councillor from India introduced Document VC/5, in which his Administration proposed, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions on work and travel, to reschedule the next WTSA for 23 February to 5 March 2021, after the Global Standards Symposium on 22 February 2021 and subject to the restoration of normal work and travel conditions in India and in other Member States.

8.3 Several councillors said that they had no objections to the proposed new dates.

8.4 Councillors raised concerns about the continuity of TSB activities and asked what arrangements would be made during the period of postponement with respect to the work of TSAG and the study groups. One said that in her opinion TSAG would most likely also have to be postponed, or arrangements made for an additional meeting. Another asked whether a contingency plan was in place should it be impossible to hold WTSA in February–March 2021.

8.5 One councillor drew attention to preparatory activities in the Asia and the Pacific Region. He stressed that health should remain the top priority and that all Member States should be in an equal position to attend an event of the importance of WTSA. In that regard, another councillor suggested that the host country agreement reference the arrangements that would be made for any participants not able to attend physically.

8.6 Several councillors, noting the key role played by industry in developing standards, suggested that an effort be made to expand industry engagement. They expressed concern that many industry participants would be unable to attend WTSA because they would be at the GSMA’s Mobile World Congress in Barcelona (1-4 March 2021). One councillor asked TSB to provide an updated calendar of preparatory events as soon as possible. The extra time before WTSA could be used to organize two interregional meetings instead of one. She drew attention to activities in the Europe Region, which had already adopted ten common proposals, and encouraged representatives from other regions to attend her region’s meetings virtually, as interregional cooperation was constructive.

8.7 The representative of TSB, responding to the concerns raised, said that it was TSB’s understanding that the World Mobile Congress would overlap with only the second week of WTSA, allowing high-level industry participants to participate in the first week. Should the pandemic persist and it prove impossible to hold WTSA on the proposed new dates, a new proposal would be placed before the Council before the end of 2020, based on the information available at that time. Meanwhile, the Council was asked to approve the new dates so as to enable TSB to make plans for TSAG and preparatory meetings in the regions, and to keep the Sector’s work on track. As soon as the Member States had been consulted and those dates decided, a revised agenda of meetings for TSAG and the study groups would be issued. The current plan was for TSAG to meet virtually from 21 to 25 September 2020 and, depending on the Council’s decision, to hold a second meeting in early January 2021. According to the Legal Affairs Unit, the current TSAG leadership team and study group leadership and structure could be maintained until the next WTSA in February/March 2021. Lastly, the host country agreement to be signed shortly could be revised to take account of the possibility of remote attendance.

8.8 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation wished to propose to the next physical meeting of the Council that it note Document C20/24. He further took it that it wished to propose to the Council that it approve the change of date of WTSA-20 to 23 February–5 March 2021. Keeping in mind the fact that that decision should be taken urgently, a consultation by correspondence should be organized, in line with the relevant provisions of Article 3 of the Convention and Section 7 of the General Rules of Conferences, Assemblies and Meetings of the Union relating to *Change in the place or dates of a conference or an assembly*.

8.9 It was so **concluded**.

8.10 The councillor from India thanked his fellow councillors for their support for his Administration’s proposal and confirmed that the host country agreement would be reviewed in the light of the points raised.

8.11 The councillor from Tunisia said that her Administration, which had hosted WTSA-16, stood ready to assist the Administration of India. She thanked ITU for its message of condolences on the death of Moktar Mnakri, who had chaired WTSA-16 and had had a great impact in the field of telecommunications.

8.12 The Director of TSB confirmed that due account would be taken of the overall situation at the end of the year and that the top priority was the participants’ safety and health. He, too, praised the efforts of Mr Moktar to advance ITU standards work.

**9 Preparations for WTDC-21 (Document** [**C20/30**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0030/en)**)**

9.1 The Director of BDT introduced the report contained in Document C20/30, which described ongoing logistical and technical preparations for WTDC-21, to be held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) from 8 to 19 November 2021.

9.2 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation wished to propose to the next physical meeting of the Council that it note Document C20/30.

9.3 It was so **concluded**.

**10 Preparations for WTPF-21 (Document** [**C20/5**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0005/en)**)**

10.1 The representative of the secretariat introduced Document C20/5, which described developments in the preparatory process for WTPF-21.

10.2 One councillor noted that terminology had been a contentious issue when the Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 (IEG-WTPF-21) had examined, at its February 2020 meeting, the draft report by the Secretary-General. A number of written comments had since been received. The issue was a sensitive one that would only be resolved if tackled in a spirit of compromise and cooperation in the future deliberations of IEG-WTPF-21.

10.3 The Chairman of IEG-WTPF-21, recalling that the deadline for receiving comments was 15 June 2020, said that the group’s next scheduled meeting, in September 2020, would most likely be held virtually and would therefore not lend itself to the sort of informal consultations usually used to resolve contentious issues.

10.4 One councillor, endorsing those comments, said that consideration might therefore be given to holding the next WTPF in 2022, especially since several other major events were already scheduled for 2021.

10.5 Three other councillors agreed that it might be best to postpone the next WTPF for the reasons given, with one pointing out that the next plenipotentiary conference would take place in 2022. Effort had been made in the past not to crowd a plenipotentiary conference year with other events.

10.6 The representative of the secretariat, noting that it would be preferable to hold WTPF back-to-back with the WSIS Forum 2022 as per Res. 2 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), proposed that the secretariat consider the matter further and submit a proposal on the rescheduling of events under the relevant agenda item of the present virtual consultation.

10.7 It was so **concluded**.

10.8 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation wished to propose to the next physical meeting of the Council that it note the report contained in Document C20/5. He further took it that it wished to encourage the secretariat, keeping in mind the fact that the item was urgent, to further review possible rescheduling of WTPF-21 and to submit options when reviewing the schedule of events on Friday, 12 June 2020; and to prepare a revised schedule for the preparatory process for discussion at the next meeting of the IEG-WTPF.

10.8 It was so **concluded**.

**11 Summary of the outcomes of the virtual consultation (Document** [**VC/DT/1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-200609-TD-0001/en)**)**

11.1 In response to a request from several councillors, the Secretary of the meeting proposed to compile the outcomes of discussions at the end of the meeting each day and submit them in writing to the meeting the following day, so that participants could check them.

10.2 It was so **agreed**.

11.2 Two councillors stressed that great care must be taken with the terminology used for the outcomes. Councillors were being merely consulted; and all terminology implying a substantive decision was to be proscribed.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:

H. ZHAO S. BIN GHELAITA

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