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| **Virtual consultation of councillors starting 9 June 2020** |  |
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|  | **Document VC\18-E****18 June 2020****Original English** |

SUMMARY RECORD

OF THE

FOURTH MEETING

Friday, 12 June 2020, from 1200 to 1530 hours

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

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|  | Subjects discussed | Documents |
| 1 | Outcomes of discussions held on 11 June 2020 | [VC/DT/1(Rev.2)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-200609-TD-0001/en) |
| 2 | Report on progress on the Union's headquarters premises project and summary report on the work of the Member States Advisory Group (MSAG) on the Union’s headquarters premises project (continued) | [C20/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0007/en)**,** [C20/48](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0048/en) |
| 3 | Proposed dates and duration of the 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 sessions of the Council and the CWG clusters for 2020, 2021 and 2022 | [C20/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0002/en) |
| 4 | New ITU Index | [C20/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0062/en),[VC/3](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0003/en), [VC/14](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0014/en) |
| 5 | List of candidatures for chairmen and vice-chairmen of CWGs, EGs and IEGs | [C20/21(Rev.2)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0021/en) |
| 6 | Schedule of future conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union: 2020-2023 | [C20/37](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0037/en) |
| 7 | Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning and activities of ITU | [C20/66](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0066/en), [VC/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0002/en), [VC/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0010/en), [VC/13](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0013/en) |
| 8 | Closure of the virtual consultation | - |

**1 Outcomes of discussions held on 11 June 2020 (Document** [**VC/DT/1(Rev.2)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-200609-TD-0001/en)**)**

1.1 Document VC/DT/1(Rev.2) was **noted**, subject to the addition of the words “in order for a decision to be taken in 2020” to the text of the outcome relating to Document C20/49, to clarify the full intent (the full text of the outcome is presented in §2.14 of the summary record of the third meeting of the virtual consultation – Document VC/17).

**2 Report on progress on the Union’s headquarters premises project and summary report on the work of the Member States Advisory Group (MSAG) on the Union’s headquarters premises project (continued) (Documents** [**C20/7**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0007/en) **and** [**C20/48**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0048/en)**)**

2.1 The Chairman invited councillors to resume consideration of the reports contained in Documents C20/7 and C20/48.

2.2 Two councillors expressed appreciation for the work carried out by MSAG and welcomed the efforts to minimize risk to the headquarters premises project in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need to adapt to the new post-pandemic normality and other related factors must be taken into account in the design of the new premises. One councillor requested clarification regarding why the suggestion was being made to transfer any outstanding funds on completion of the project to the After-Service Health Insurance (ASHI) fund, rather than the Reserve Account, and what the legal, ethical and economic implications of that transfer would be.

2.3 The representative of the secretariat, responding to those concerns and other points made during the discussions the previous day, said that it was currently too early to predict the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the headquarters premises project; more time would be required to conduct a full impact assessment. She added that mitigation measures were being organized to facilitate a return to the office, some of which might be incorporated into the new premises design for the purposes of hygiene and to ensure future pandemic preparedness. A list of the possible impacts would be prepared in time for the next meeting of MSAG, which would advise on measures to be investigated further, with cost assessments to be presented to the Council at its next physical meeting. An in-depth analysis of the Risk Register would be presented to MSAG. Planned and actual expenses were presented in Annexes B and C, respectively, to Document C20/7. The financing schedule under the current and future loan can be found in the link in section 3.9 of doc C20/7. While the complete evaluation regarding the Tower had not been available in time for the latest MSAG meeting, it had since been issued as an information document. The secretariat could provide answers to the questions raised by MSAG members, including on the lease-back option. An information session for Member States would take place at the end of September 2020. Lastly, regarding Decision 619, the secretariat appreciated councillors’ support for the proposed amendment to *decides 4*, to allow further sponsorship and donations provided they did not incur additional costs for ITU or delay the project. The deadline for design changes would remain January 2021, but depending when the next physical session of Council takes place it may be too late.

2.4 The Chief of the Financial Resources Management Department said due to the system pay as you go the ASHI allocations were provided in each biennial budget, as approved by Member States. In accordance with the IPSAS standards, an actuarial study was required to forecast long-term liabilities in that regard.

In line with Decision 5 of the plenipotentiary conference held in Dubai 2018, which instructs the Council to authorize the Secretary-General to allocate as a matter of priority an appropriate amount to the ASHI Fund, the secretariat was proposing that any such surplus should be allocated to the building project as a priority, and subsequently any surplus remaining in the Risk Register after completion of the building should be transferred to ASHI, rather than to the Reserve Account.

2.5 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation wished to propose to the next physical meeting of the Council to note the report contained in Document C20/7, which would be updated by the secretariat to reply to the questions raised and comments made during the meeting, and to continue the discussion on the conclusions contained in the MSAG report (Document C20/48) at the next physical meeting of the Council. Further, it encouraged the secretariat to prepare considerations on the impact of COVID-19 and conduct further investigations on the different sale options of the Tower for the next MSAG meeting and report to the next physical meeting of the Council. It noted that councillors looked forward to attending an information session in late September 2020.

2.6 It was so **concluded**.

**3 Proposed dates and duration of the 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 sessions of
the Council and the CWG and EG clusters for 2020, 2021 and 2022(Document** [**C20/2**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0002/en)**)**

3.1 The Secretary of the meeting, introducing Document C20/2, said that, pursuant to Resolution 77 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), and taking into consideration Decision 612 (C19), the Council was invited to schedule its next three ordinary sessions and review the Council meeting schedule on a rolling basis. Decision 619 on the headquarters premises requested the Secretary-General to address the need for temporary conference and meeting facilities during the demolition and early construction phase of the project. Discussions were therefore under way with the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG) and every effort was being made to secure dates for Council sessions that did not clash with other meetings of the Union. To improve scheduling, it was also proposed that the Council should agree the dates of the clusters of CWGs and EGs for 2020, 2021 and 2022. Given the urgent need to secure the venue for Council sessions from 2023 onwards, a consultation could be held by correspondence to approve the proposed meeting dates and adopt the draft decision in the annex to Document C20/2.

3.2 In the discussion that followed, councillors endorsed the need to hold a consultation by correspondence and to secure the dates and venues for future meetings while demolition and building work were ongoing. One councillor pointed out that scheduling conflicts between the Council sessions and meetings of the Universal Postal Union Council should be avoided. Councillors expressed concern that a date had not been set for the 2020 physical meeting of the Council. Suggestions included replacing the planned CWG meetings in September 2020 with a physical session of the Council, or holding the physical session in November 2020 in the period reserved until then for the WTSA. Other councillors pointed out that the unpredictability of the future regarding the COVID-19 pandemic currently made it impossible to schedule meetings for 2020 with any certainty. Given the likelihood that the pandemic would continue, every effort should be made to optimize the use of ICTs; contingency plans must be put in place in the event that a physical session of the Council could not be held in 2020. While some councillors felt that the scheduling of the second cluster of CWG and EG meetings in 2020 should also be reconsidered, others requested clarification regarding logistics to ensure continuity in the work of those groups should they or the Council be unable to meet. The CWGs should not meet until after a physical session of the Council had taken place.

3.3 The Chairman said that while it was not currently possible to set a date for the 2020 session of the Council, the Secretary-General hoped to be able to update councillors by the end of July 2020. Coordination with other organizations would be ensured to guard against any potential clashes in the dates of major meetings. He took it that the virtual consultation was of the following opinion:

- Keeping in mind the fact that that item was urgent as room reservations must be made as soon as possible in order to secure venues, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States should be organized in order to confirm the dates for its 2021 and 2022 sessions, as well as to approve the dates for its 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026 sessions and the dates of the clusters of CWGs and EGs for 2020, 2021 and 2022, and to adopt the draft Decision contained in annex to Document C20/2;

- As soon as the sanitary situation improved, it encouraged the secretariat to undertake consultations with the chairmen of the CWGs and EGs to decide if meetings of the groups should be held in September, and if so in which format; and

- As soon as the sanitary situation improved, it encouraged the Secretary-General to propose dates for a physical meeting of the Council in 2020 if possible.

3.4 It was so **concluded**.

**4 New ITU Index (Documents** [**C20/62**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0062/en)**,** [**VC/3**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0003/en) **and** [**VC/14**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0014/en)**)**

4.1 The Director of BDT introduced Document C20/62, containing the report on the new ITU Index. She also drew attention to information Document C20/INF/17. The original ICT Development Index (IDI) was based on 11 indicators and was first released in 2009 and published annually until 2017. In 2016, an update of the Index had been initiated. A revised set of 14 indicators has been proposed. Unfortunately, over 50 percent of the data needed to compute the revised IDI was missing, thereby making it impossible to release the revised IDI in 2018. Despite two rounds of capacity-building workshops in all the regions in 2018 and 2019 to assist Member States, the data availability issue could not be solved which meant that an index for 2019 could not be released either. A suggestion to resume reporting using the original Index methodology, pending the resolution of issues with the revised indicators, had not been well received by some Member States. The secretariat had therefore informed the ITU membership that it would continue its efforts to develop a transparent, robust and reliable methodology. Two expert group meetings had been held to that end in 2020 to discuss a new index, which would focus on the extent to which countries leveraged ICTs in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Again, no consensus had been reached regarding the proposed focus and the process to develop such index. Upholding the integrity, quality and relevance of ITU statistics must remain one of the Union’s highest priorities. The ITU statistics division had striven continuously to meet that objective. Public trust in ITU statistics was anchored in the professional independence of the secretariat in the use of data. With those concerns in mind, the secretariat sought the Council’s guidance on how to proceed.

4.2 The councillor from the United Arab Emirates, introducing Document VC/3, expressed appreciation for the efforts made by BDT to seek solutions and facilitate reporting under the IDI, in line with Resolution 131 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). Resuming use of the original 11 indicators would not be in line with that resolution and was therefore not an acceptable solution. The preliminary new Index, linking use of ICTs to the SDGs, relied too heavily on data reported to other organizations, which could be problematic. His Administration therefore proposed that the 14 proposed new indicators under the existing Index should be reviewed by the expert group, with all administrations represented, to resolve any concerns and enable the IDI to be updated as soon as possible, thereby facilitating a swift resumption in the publication of Index reports.

4.3 The councillor from Saudi Arabia introduced Document VC/14, noting that the failure to report under the IDI for the past two years was a failure to uphold the provisions of Resolution 131 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). The proposed new Index, while excellent in principle, given the clear links between ICTs and sustainable development, required considerable refinement before it could become operational. His Administration proposed that ITU should resume reporting under the existing IDI indicators, while continuing to develop the new Index through the EGTI/EGHI.

4.4 In the ensuing discussion, councillors agreed that the data reported by ITU must be of the highest quality. Some councillors insisted that continuity in reporting was particularly important as per Resolution 131 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). A solution must therefore be sought as a matter of urgency. While some councillors wished to resume reporting immediately under the original IDI methodology, others could not agree to that suggestion, as the indicators were out of date and needed to be revised. With the revised IDI, gaps in data collection of the new indicators remained a problem. ITU had a reputation for producing statistical reports of outstanding quality; that reputation must not be compromised. The membership therefore needed sufficient time to overcome obstacles to data collection and ensure data quality. Given the exceptional circumstances in 2020, it was unlikely that those issues could be addressed in time for 2021. By way of compromise, one councillor suggested that indicators could be identified among the revised set of 14, for which reliable data was already being collected, and a reduced but high-quality report produced.

4.5 Although many councillors welcomed the proposal to develop a new digital technology and sustainable development index, especially given the critical role of ICTs as a driver of sustainable development, they expressed concern that reliance on data sourced from other organizations could pose problems. The proposed new framework represented work in progress and required considerable further development and consultation., preferably through an expert group with the participation of all Member States. Ideally, the expert group would submit a proposed new index to PP-22 for consideration.

4.6 The Director of BDT thanked participants for their engagement. ICTs were undeniably a crucial driver of sustainable development. The United Nations Secretary-General had launched a new roadmap for digital cooperation, which underscored the importance of data in policy- and decision-making. Although no longer reporting under the IDI, ITU was continuing to collect and publish ICT-related data. However, the lack of consensus on the process that should guide the development of the new SDG-related index remained problematic. The expert group meeting scheduled for September 2020 could, however, afford a valuable opportunity to discuss the proposed index in greater detail. Information on the specific problems regarding the revised set of 14 IDI indicators was provided in information Document C20/INF/17. The secretariat would continue to seek solutions with Member States on those issues and would bring further information to the Council at its next physical meeting. The Council’s guidance on how to proceed would, however, be essential; BDT had made every effort to identify solutions but a lack of consensus persisted with regard to how to proceed.

4.7 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation, having examined Documents C20/62, VC/3, and VC/14, wished to propose to the next physical meeting of the Council that it consider the issues raised in those documents and advise on the way forward on the development of an ITU index. In the meantime, it encouraged the secretariat to continue to work with the expert group on the development of an index based on a robust, sound and scientifically proven methodology, and with a view to publishing an accurate index as soon as possible taking into account Resolution 131 (Rev. Dubai, 2018).

4.8 It was so **concluded**.

**5 List of candidatures for chairs and vice-chairs of CWGs, EGs and IEGs
(Document** [**C20/21(Rev.2)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0021/en)**)**

5.1 The Secretary of the meeting introduced Document C20/21(Rev.2), the annex to which contained a complete list of chairs and vice-chairs of Council Working Groups, Expert Groups and informal groups of experts, including new candidatures for positions that had become vacant. She said that it was proposed that a consultation of Council Member States by correspondence should be organized in order to approve the proposed new chair and vice-chairs so that they could take up their functions as soon as possible.

5.2 One councillor, while not objecting to that suggestion in principle, asked why the matter was considered urgent when vice-chairs could act as chairs, if necessary, until a physical meeting of the Council could be held.

5.3 The Secretary of the meeting replied that some of the groups planned to hold meetings in the near future. Confirming the candidates in their roles would make it easier for them to start work.

5.4 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation wished to indicate that, keeping in mind the fact that the item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States should be organized in order to approve the nomination of new chair and vice-chairs so that they might take up their functions as soon as possible.

5.5 It was so **concluded**.

**6 Schedule of future conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union: 2020-2023 (Document**[**C20/37**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0037/en)**)**

6.1 The Chief of the Conferences and Publications Department introduced Document C20/37, which presented a schedule of events for 2020-2023 planned taking into account relevant resolutions of the plenipotentiary conference. For the year 2020, various date changes and cancellations owing to the COVID-19 pandemic needed to be taken into account, on the understanding that most of the Union’s meetings could be held virtually. Dates and venues for the second half of 2022 and for 2023 were provisional, as they would depend on constraints relating to the demolition and reconstruction of the Varembé building.

6.2 The Chairman said that, following consultations between the secretariat and the co-organizers of the WSIS Forum, it was proposed to hold the 2022 WSIS Forum from Sunday, 29 May to Thursday, 2 June 2022 and the World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (WTPF) from Wednesday, 1 June to Friday, 3 June 2022.

6.3 One councillor emphasized the importance of avoiding the month of Ramadan when planning events.

6.4 The Chairman reassured councillors that the secretariat would take account of such considerations. He took it that the virtual consultation wished to encourage the secretariat to update Document C20/37, taking into consideration the outcome of the discussions of the virtual consultation, to avoid religious periods if possible, and to present it at the next physical meeting of the Council.

6.5 It was so **concluded**.

**7 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning and activities of ITU
(Documents** [**C20/66**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0066/en)**,** [**VC/2**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0002/en)**,** [**VC/10**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0010/en) **and** [**VC/13**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC-C-0013/en)**)**

7.1 The Chief of the Strategic Planning and Membership Department introduced Document VC/13, which summarized the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the telecommunication/ICT sector and on the functioning and activities of the Union; it also outlined new initiatives, work programmes and measures introduced in response to the unprecedented circumstances faced.

7.2 The councillor from the Russian Federation, introducing Documents C20/66 and VC/2, expressed support for a statement made by the Secretary-General on the launch of a global platform to help protect telecommunication networks during the COVID-19 crisis and the associated initiatives that the Union had introduced. COVID-19 had starkly demonstrated the importance of telecommunications, ICTs and information to society and individuals, not least in ensuring the continuity of vital services and preventing people from feeling isolated, while robust ITU standards would support work in a range of fields such as distance learning, remote working and telemedicine. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to highlight ITU activities related to the COVID-19 response in United Nations forums. A draft resolution on the use of telecommunications and ICTs to support the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts, contained in Document C20/66, was presented for comment, pending full consideration and potential adoption at the next physical meeting of the Council.

7.3 The councillor from China introduced Document VC/10, which outlined the impact of the pandemic on the work of the Union and its Member States. In particular, difficulties had been faced with regard to the uncertainty around resuming physical meetings, the fact that rules and decision-making procedures for virtual meetings were not clearly defined, and inequality of opportunity to participate in virtual meetings because of differences in network infrastructure quality and affordability between developed and developing countries. It was therefore suggested that the Union should enhance remote participation by increasing capital and technological input and making active use of new ICTs; studying and developing guidelines on remote participation in ITU conferences, while taking into account differences among the three Sectors in that respect; increasing financial and technical support for developing countries and providing capacity-building, particularly for LDCs; and sharing relevant experience and best practices.

7.4 During the ensuing discussion, the Union’s innovative and professional response to the COVID-19 pandemic was widely welcomed. Appreciation was expressed to the Chairman of the virtual consultation for his sound guidance. While there was some interest in the proposals contained in Documents C20/66, VC/2 and VC/10, the need for further discussion was highlighted, and it was emphasized that, as the councillor from the Russian Federation had said, adoption of a draft resolution would need to wait until a physical meeting of the Council could be held. It was suggested that the title of the draft resolution could be made more general, rather than referring only to COVID-19.

7.5 One councillor noted that the pandemic situation had resulted in savings on missions and meetings that might offset any additional costs of virtual meetings and teleworking; she asked whether the financial implications of COVID-19 for the Union had been specifically studied and requested information in that regard. Three councillors echoed that request. A fifth said she welcomed the conduct of the virtual consultation and the added value of holding it; consideration could be given to organizing another such consultation should it prove impossible to hold a physical meeting of the Council later in 2020.

7.6 One councillor observed that the Union was to some extent limited in its emergency response capacity by its regulations and rules; she suggested that the Rules of Procedure of the Council in particular might be updated with a view to overcoming the procedural difficulties associated with virtual meetings and restrictions on decision-making in extraordinary circumstances. Another councillor supported that suggestion, but a third said she disagreed with it, emphasizing that the Union’s work should continue within its existing rules and procedures, including the possibility to take Council decisions by correspondence. Yet another expressed support for the contribution submitted by China in Document VC/10, and stressed the need for work to continue pursuant to the relevant provisions of Resolution 167 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). She underscored the importance of the role played by ITU, WHO and other international organizations, and of international cooperation at all levels; and she highlighted the need to ensure that all countries had equitable access to telecommunications and ICTs in general, and to virtual platforms in particular, at the present time of crisis.

7.7 The Chairman took it that the virtual consultation wished to encourage the secretariat to revise Document VC/13 to take into account the elements contained in Documents VC/2 and VC/10 and comments raised during the consultation, as well as the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ITU, and present it to the next physical meeting of the Council; to encourage the Secretary-General to highlight ITU activities related to the COVID-19 response in United Nations forums and to continue cooperation with other United Nations agencies to promote the important role of ICTs in the global fight against the pandemic; and to encourage the secretariat to continue addressing the technical, legal, and logistical concerns to facilitate remote participation in ITU’s meetings.

7.8 It was so **concluded**.

**8 Closure of the virtual consultation**

8.1 The Chairman said that the outcomes of the fourth meeting of the virtual consultation would be reflected in Document VC/DT/1(Rev.3), which would be posted on the Council webpage for councillors to review. Comments were invited by Wednesday, 17 June 2020.

8.2 The Secretary-General welcomed the success of the virtual consultation, which had been organized in line with the principles of transparency, fairness, efficiency, effectiveness and business continuity. A total of 67 Member States, including all 48 Council Member States, had been represented; the proportion of women among the delegates registered had approached 45 per cent. He would review the outcomes of the consultation carefully with the Chairman. As the secretariat continued to monitor the evolving COVID-19 situation, he would report regularly to councillors on the prospects for holding a physical meeting. The suggestion of further virtual consultations would be taken into account. He applauded the spirit of flexibility shown and expressed appreciation to all those involved in preparing for and running the virtual consultation. He also thanked Mr Eric Dalhen, Chief of the Human Resources Management Department, who would shortly leave the Union, for his many years of service and wished him well. In the post-COVID world, ITU must continue to shape a digital future where everyone, everywhere, could benefit from digital technology. He presented the Chairman with a virtual certificate in recognition of his outstanding chairmanship of the virtual consultation.

8.3 The Chairman expressed appreciation to all participants for their constructive approach to the virtual consultation. Working remotely had not always been straightforward, but the four days of discussion would help to ensure business continuity for the Union. He thanked all those who had supported the work of the councillors, in particular the technical teams, the Secretary, the Legal Adviser and all conference service staff. Two months of preparation by the Secretary-General and secretariat had contributed greatly to the success of the consultation. Experienced individuals, especially Mr. Arasteh of the Islamic Republic of Iran, had also provided invaluable support and advice.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:

H. ZHAO S. BIN GHELAITA

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