



## General Secretariat (SG)

Geneva, 24 April 2020

Ref: **DM-20/1004**

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To Member States of ITU Council

Subject: **Informal consultation of Member States of the Council by the Secretary-General on a suggested virtual meeting of the 2020 Session of the Council (9-19 June 2020)**

Dear Councillor,

Further to [CL-20/17](#) sent on 12 March 2020, noting the present Covid-19 situation in Geneva, it is impossible to hold a physical session of Council 2020 in June 2020 as planned. It is not possible either to propose a time slot later in 2020 when we could have this session in Geneva. It is also my belief that nobody would like to cancel the Council 2020.

As we are in an unprecedented situation, there are no specific provisions in the Constitution and Convention to deal with such a situation of "Force Majeure". My Elected Official colleagues and I have discussed the best solutions to ensure business continuity in the interest of the Union. After consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and feedback from informal consultations carried out by the secretariat, I suggest to hold a virtual meeting of the 2020 session of the Council. Some more details are available in Annexes.

The virtual Council meeting will only draw proposed conclusions pending formal decisions at the subsequent physical meeting. For proposed conclusions that would call for an urgent decision by the Council that cannot wait a physical meeting, the written procedure as per Rule of Procedure 3.2 would be applied.

I would therefore like to invite you to inform me of your preference at [gbs@itu.int](mailto:gbs@itu.int) by **11 May 2020** amongst the two options below:

1. To hold a virtual meeting of the 2020 session in June 2020 and to hold a shortened physical meeting of the 2020 Council session later in the year if the situation would permit it, keeping in mind that for any urgent decision that would be identified by the virtual meeting and cannot wait for an unknown delay, a formal agreement by correspondence would be applied;
2. Not to hold a virtual meeting of the 2020 session.

Should any Member State of the Council object to hold a virtual meeting, it appears that we will have no choice but to postpone the session *sine die*. Nevertheless, I would welcome any other suggestions you may have.

In the preparation for the virtual meeting, individual support would be provided to each delegation by the secretariat to ensure their technical and connectivity concerns are addressed. A rehearsal will be organized on **8 May** so the Councillors can experience the platform available before finally deciding on a virtual Council meeting.

The secretariat remains committed to provide Member States of the Council all information. Should you have any legal, technical, or organizational enquiries, the legal adviser ([Arnaud.Guillot@itu.int](mailto:Arnaud.Guillot@itu.int)), the Chief of the IT Department ([anders.norsker@itu.int](mailto:anders.norsker@itu.int)), and the Head of the Member State Relations and Governance Division ([beatrice.pluchon@itu.int](mailto:beatrice.pluchon@itu.int)) remain at your disposal.

I count on your support, cooperation, and goodwill to ensure that the virtual meeting be as constructive as possible. Together we can make a practical demonstration that ITU is the leading UN specialized agency for ICTs.

Yours faithfully,

*(signed)*

Houlin ZHAO  
Secretary-General

**Annexes:**

1. – Caveats for a virtual meeting of the 2020 Council session
2. – Preparation and roll-out of the virtual meeting of the 2020 Council session
3. – Detailed information on the functionalities offered by the Interprefy Platform
4. – List of relevant provisions of the legal corpus of the ITU that it is suggested should not be used in a virtual meeting of the Council

## ANNEX 1

### **Caveats for a Virtual meeting of the 2020 session of the Council**

1. This is a one-off exception without any precedence setting.
2. The virtual meeting of the 2020 Council session will only draw proposed conclusions pending formal decisions at the subsequent physical meeting (or by written procedure as per Rule of Procedure 3.2 for decisions that cannot wait a physical meeting).
3. All Council Member States' and Observers' rights will be maintained; see, however, Annex 4.
4. After the closing date for submissions, Council Member States will be consulted on which documents can be maintained on the agenda or deferred to the agenda of the subsequent physical meeting of the Council. The detailed process regarding the documents is explained in Annex 2.
5. If any one Council Member State wants a document or conclusion deferred as above it will be moved to the subsequent physical Council meeting.
6. Based on the responses to the consultation referred to in point 4 above, the length of the virtual Council meeting will be reduced, starting on 9 June and finishing earlier than 19 June 2020.
7. If during the discussion of a document on the agenda in the virtual meeting any one Council Member State proposes to suspend discussion or object proposed conclusion on the document, it will be deferred to the subsequent physical Council meeting.
8. Meeting time will be kept strictly to 12:00-15:00 Geneva time.
9. There will be full interpretation using Interprefy.
10. There will be no ad hoc groups.

## ANNEX 2

### Preparation and roll-out of the virtual meeting of the 2020 session of the Council

#### DOCUMENT PROCESS IN PREPARATION FOR THE VIRTUAL MEETING AND AGENDA SETTING

In order to facilitate the roll-out of the virtual meeting of the Council, while ensuring that all the agenda items included in the preliminary draft agenda (as in [DM-20/1000](#)) are addressed, and while abiding by the Council's Rules of Procedure, it is proposed that agenda items be dealt with in four groups below.

After the closing date for submissions of the secretariat documents (10 May), Council Member States will be consulted on which documents can be maintained on the agenda or deferred to the agenda of the subsequent physical meeting of the Council. Response should be provided by 17 May.

**GROUP 1:** Reports from the secretariat on different activities that **are to be noted** by the Council in principle without a discussion.

- Member States of the Council may raise any points of clarification with the secretariat by 26 May. The secretariat will provide a response. The exchange will be posted on the Council website. The documents will then be provisionally noted as a package at the beginning of the first plenary meeting unless a Council Member State requests that a document be discussed during the virtual meeting or it be moved to the next physical meeting of the Council. The proposed conclusions on this package of documents together with the documents will then be transmitted to the next physical meeting for final decision.

**GROUP 2:** Reports from the secretariat that **are to be approved/endorsed** by the Council. They are routine, recurrent documents which may or may not include a resolution or decision and which are usually not discussed.

- Member States of the Council may raise any points of clarification by 26 May. The secretariat will provide a response. The exchange will be posted on the Council website. Member States of the Council may request a comment be noted in the summary record. The documents will then be provisionally approved/endorsed as a package during PL unless a Member State of the Council requests a document be discussed during the virtual meeting or it be moved to the next physical meeting of the Council. The proposed conclusions on this package of documents together with the documents will then be transmitted to the next physical meeting for final decision.
- The comments should be no more than a half-page. A template will be made available.

**GROUP 3:** Reports that are not routine and recurrent documents **and call for discussion and approval** by the Council. They will therefore be discussed during the meeting and are open for formal written contributions by 26 May. To facilitate the online discussion, Member States of the Council are invited to send their contributions to be presented during the virtual meeting. A template will be provided by the secretariat. Contributions should be short (a maximum of 2 pages is recommended) and should facilitate discussion.

- The outcome of the discussion will be reflected in a report that will include proposed conclusions to be transmitted to the next physical Council meeting.

**GROUP 4: Reports presented for information**

- Member States of the Council may request an Information document to be moved to group 1, 2, or 3.

**FORMAT OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING AND DRAFT TIME MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The 2020 virtual meeting will be conducted from Tuesday, 9 June to Friday, 19 June (depending on consultation on documents to be included on the agenda) fully virtually, with 3-hour meetings (from 12:00 to 15:00 Geneva time) each day. The Plenary and ADM meetings will be interpreted in the six languages using Interpretation. There will be no adhoc group meetings.

The Time Management Plan (*indicative only*) is proposed as follows:

**INAUG PL Inaugural Plenary: Tuesday, 9 June, 12:00 -13:00**

In line with the Council RoP, the session will start with the Inaugural Plenary to set up organizational matters:

- Opening remarks by the Secretary-General
- Election of Chair and Vice-chair of the Council (and short speech by the Elected Chair)
- Approval of the agenda of the Inaugural Plenary Meeting which will include:
  - o Agenda of the Council session
  - o Approval of the grouping and allocation of documents for the 2020 session
  - o Adoption of the time management plan for the virtual meeting

It will be followed by the State of the Union Address from the Secretary-General and discussion and proposed conclusions on the operational plans.

**PL 1, immediately following inaugural: Tuesday, 9 June, 13:00-15:00**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | <b>Documents to be noted</b>   |
| 2 | <b>Document to be approved with comments</b> received to be included in SR |

| Agenda item | Subject  |
|-------------|--|
| PL-1.6      | Report of the Council Working Group on Languages ( <i>Res. 154, R 1372 MOD</i> ) |
| PL-2.2      | World Telecommunication and Information Society Day ( <i>Res. 68</i> )           |
| PL 2.11     | World Radiocommunication Conference 2023   |

**PL 2: Wednesday, 10 June, 12:00-15:00**

| Agenda item | Subject   |
|-------------|---|
| PL-2.1      | Report on the hiring of an independent external management consultancy, including recommendations and various strategies ( <i>Res. 11</i> ) |
| PL-1.4      | Guidelines for the utilization of the GCA by ITU  |
| PL-2.3      | Proposed improvements to Plenipotentiary Conference   |
| PL-2.4      | Implementation of Recommendations 6 and 7 of PP-18 Committee 5 (electoral process)  |

**ADM 1: Thursday, 11 June, 12:00-15:00**

| Agenda item | Subject  |
|-------------|--|
| --          | Statement by the Staff Council   |
| --          | Membership of the ITU Staff Pension Committee  |
| ADM 4       | Report by the Chairman of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR) ( <i>D 558, D 563(MOD)</i> ) ( <i>Res. 151, 152, 158, 169, 170, D 558, D 563(MOD)</i> ) |
|             | Support for TSB  |
|             | Report of the internal group on fraud case   |
| ADM 20      | Summary report on the work of the Member States Advisory Group on the Union's Headquarters premises project ( <i>Res. 212</i> )  |
| ADM 20      | Staff Working Conditions Strategy and Implementation Plan ( <i>D 619</i> )   |
| ADM 29      | Progress report on the implementation of the Human Resources strategic plan and of Resolution 48 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)  |
| ADM 34      | Measures taken by ITU on conditions for on-site emergency medical support at ITU conferences and meetings held away from Geneva  |

**ADM 2: Friday, 12 June, 12:00-15:00**

| Agenda item | Subject   |
|-------------|---|
| ADM 5       | Status Report on Implementation of Council Decision 600 and 601 (UIFN, IIN) |
| ADM 6       | Organization Resilience Management System (ORMS)                            |
| ADM 27      | New investigation function and process                                      |
| ADM 26      | Outcome of WRC-19 with financial implications                               |
| ADM 33      | Business continuity: business case for information management               |

**ADM 3: Monday, 15 June, 12:00-15:00**

| Agenda item | Subject   |
|-------------|---|
| ADM 10      | Arrears and special arrears accounts ( <i>Res. 41</i> )   |
| ADM 13      | Report of the Independent Management Advisory Committee (IMAC) ( <i>Res. 162</i> ) ( <i>D 565</i> ) |
| ADM 14      | Appointment of a new External auditor ( <i>Res 94, D 614</i> )                                      |
| ADM 15      | Audited accounts: Audited Financial operating report for 2019                                       |
| ADM 16      | External Auditor report: Union's accounts 2019  |
| ADM 16      | External Auditor report: Union's account of ITU TELECOM World 2019                                  |

**ADM 4: Tuesday, 16 June, 12:00-15:00**

| Agenda item | Subject   |
|-------------|---|
| ADM 18      | Report of the Internal Auditor on internal audit activities   |
| ADM 22      | ITU Accountability Framework  |
| ADM 24      | Report on overall review, including suggesting appropriate measures to ensure continued effectiveness and efficiency of the ITU regional presence, including recommendations of the external consultant study (Res.25, D 616) |

**PL 3: Wednesday, 17 June, 12:00-15:00**

| Agenda item | Subject   |
|-------------|---|
| PL-1.8      | List of candidature for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of CWGs  |
| PL-2.6      | Proposed dates and duration of the 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026 sessions of the Council and the CWG clusters for 2020 and 2021 ( <i>Res. 77, 111, D 612</i> ) ( <i>support doc 37</i> ) |
| PL-3.2      | Report on the Standing Committee on Administration and Management   |

**REGISTRATION AND VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION OF DELEGATIONS**

Registration is mandatory to be able to participate online. Registration opened on 10 March. It is presently open and will be continued.

Registered participants will receive guidelines and links to join the sessions in due course.

Considering that the platform can accommodate active participation of 300 delegates – similar to the situation in Popov Room – in order to ensure the smooth running of the platform, it is proposed to limit the number of active participants to 3 per Member State of the Council at the same time per meeting. All other delegates can follow through the webcast.

**WEBCAST AND CAPTIONING**

ITU webcast will be available as usual. Delegates who do not intend to intervene are invited to follow the session through the webcast, which is also available in 6 languages.

Captioning will be made available through Caption First for PL and ADM. ITU webcast will be available.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT DURING THE SESSION**

In case of a loss of an interpretation channel or connection, a phone number or email contact will be made available at the beginning of each meeting so that a delegate can indicate that if there is a problem.

At the opening of each meeting, the Chair will give a summary of the previous meeting and will give Councillors the opportunity to return to any issue discussed the previous day that they were unable to contribute to for technical reasons.

### **REHEARSAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT IN ADVANCE OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING**

A rehearsal session will be organized on 8 May for delegates to test the Interprefy platform in 6 languages. Detailed information will be sent in due course.

In advance of the meeting the secretariat will contact each delegation to ensure their technical and connectivity concerns are addressed.

### **INFORMAL MEETING OF COUNCILLORS**

As the deadline for contributions from Member States is on 26 May, the informal meeting of Councillors will be held two weeks before the start of the Council, on 29 May at 12:00 Geneva time, in order to:

- fine-tune the preparation and the format of the virtual meeting
- update the list of documents to be placed on the draft agenda
- update the Time Management Plan if need be
- test the platform



## ANNEX 3

### Detailed information on the functionalities offered by the Interprefy Platform

#### Introduction

ITU started using the Interprefy platform lightly towards the end of 2019 and began using it on a large scale in February 2020, replacing Adobe Connect which the multilingual component has reached end-of-life and end-of-support. The Interprefy platform suffered some stability and audio-visual quality issues back in February 2020 (e.g. TSAG), but all the main problems have been resolved. The platform supported several multilingual meetings in March and April (ITU-R study groups, RRB) without any major issues. ITU-R SG7 was the latest event (20 April 2020) using Interprefy platform in 6 languages successfully.

#### SECURITY and ACCESS CONTROL:

Based on the documents received from Interprefy, the tool is built on top of a secure and robust platform with several layers of built-in security to maintain a certain level of security assurance.

This security assurance is corroborated by three main pillars:

- a) **Application security:** Interprefy uses proven industry standards and protocols for encryption. TLS 1.2 (Transport Layer security) is used by the platform and is designed to provide communication security over a computer network, with a focus on privacy and data integrity.
- b) **Transmission security:** Media streams sent through Interprefy are encrypted, during their transmission to ensure the confidentiality of the audio and video streaming. The platform uses an encryption protocol, AES-128. Stronger algorithms like AES-256 could affect the quality of the audio and video as more computer resources will be needed to decrypt the traffic.
- c) **User management and access controls:** It should be noted that Interpreters and tech support personnel who have access to the event audio and video streams need to sign NDAs to prevent sensitive information disclosure.

User management and access control is an important aspect for online meetings. Interprefy has robust and fine-grained controls on granting access to participants. It is possible, through a monitoring platform to check at any time who is present in the e-meeting room. The administrator has a wide range of capabilities to manage the audio and video channels and chats, whether the streams are recorded etc. A Two-Factor authentication can be used to a) limit access only to users with known phones and email addresses and b) to reduce brute force attacks against the platform.

Interprefy privacy policy states that personal Identifiable Information is only collected for the admin users. It resides on a secure server that only selected personnel have access to. Communication is encrypted using Secure Socket Layer (SSL). Interprefy platform is GDPR compliant

Regular security scans and penetration tests are conducted by independent security firms to maintain good security posture of the platform. The whole platform is on Amazon Cloud services.

#### FEATURES:

- a) **Multilingual:** The platform has been integrated with the ITU meeting rooms and interpreters can provide their service in ISO standard booths at ITU without the need to know the web-conference platform. The platform also allows interpreters to provide their service from anywhere with good

Internet connectivity, using their own equipment running the interpreter interface of the web conference platform.

- b) Active participation, passive participation, or both:** Supports up to 300 active participants and 2000 passive participants (similar to a webcast).
- c) Authentication and authorization and displaying entity of participants:** Only users with valid ITU user account created in CRM are allowed to access the meeting. Currently all users can connect using either their ITU username or email address registered in ITU CRM registration system. The addition checking that only users who are registered to this specific event can access will be implemented by 30 April 2020. The feature to display the entity of the remote participant is planned for roll-out in early June 2020.
- d) Moderation:** The platform provides 'raise hand', 'mute all', 'unmute all', screen sharing, 'chat to all', and 'private chat' allowing the moderator and secretary to assist the chairman to manage the virtual meeting and remote participants.
- e) Captioning:** The platform has been integrated with the captioning service provided by our current captioning provider (Caption First).
- f) Accessible from all countries or Member States:** The platform is accessible from all ITU member states.
- g) Universal design: Cater for persons with disabilities (PwD):** Not very PwD friendly for the time being. Interprefy is aware of that and has promised to improve it in future releases.

## ANNEX 4

### **List of provisions of the legal corpus of the Union that it is suggested should not be used in the event of a virtual meeting of the Council**

**It is recalled that all the provisions of the Union's legal corpus remain applicable. Nevertheless, the provisions indicated below should not be applied/used on an exceptional basis.**

**CV 51:** The Council shall hold an ordinary session annually at the seat of the Union.

**CV 57:** travelling, subsistence and insurance expenses (not applicable).

**GR 48:** Order of seating (not applicable)

**SECTION 21 GR & RoP ARTICLES 17, 18, & 19:** As it is suggested that the virtual meeting of the 2020 Council session will only draw proposed conclusions, before drawing proposed conclusions, the chairman should ensure that no Council Member State has a formal and absolute objection to it. Failing this, the chair should declare that the matter will be considered at the next meeting at which the representatives of the Member States of the Council are physically present.

**GR 96 to GR 107 and GR 114 .** It would appear to be difficult to raise motion of order and point of order during a virtual meeting as it would require using physical signs.

**RoP 8:** (Meetings reserved for councillors only) With remote participation it would appear to be impossible not to have some technicians, at least from the secretariat, attending the meeting. De facto, it will therefore not be possible for meetings to be reserved for councillors only and to hold closed meetings.

CV : Convention;

GR : General Rules of conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union

RoP: Rules of Procedure of the Council