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| **Council 2021Virtual consultation of councillors, 8-18 June 2021** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 2.3** | **Document C21/13-E** |
| **22 February 2021** |
| **Original: English** |
| Report by the Secretary-General |
| Proposed Improvements for the Plenipotentiary conference |

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| SummaryAt its 2019 session, the Council requested the secretariat to continue to look at measures to improve the work of the plenipotentiary conference (PP) and possible reduction of its duration, taking into account in its preparation possible legal and financial consequences, and prepare a report to the next Council. The secretariat held a consultation with Member States via [CL-19/57](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-SG-CIR-0057/en), and based on responses to this consultation, the secretariat proposes a number of actions to improve the PP process. This document was originally prepared as [C20/13](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0013/en) for submission to the 2020 session of the Council but was not reviewed.Action requiredThe Council is requested to consider and endorse the proposed improvements.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_References[C19/4](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0004/en), [C19/101](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0101/en), [C19/112](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0112/en), [CL-19/57](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-SG-CIR-0057/en), [C20/INF/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-INF-0008/en), [CL-20/13](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-SG-CIR-0013/en), [C21/INF/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-INF-0008/en) |

**I. Background**

At its 2019 session, the Council noted the report of the secretariat on the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference ([C19/4](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0004/en)) highlighting the improvements accomplished and a contribution from the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ([C19/101](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0101/en)) on the suggested improvements to the work of the Plenipotentiary Conference.

The Council further requested the secretariat to continue to look at measures to improve the work of the plenipotentiary conference (PP) and possible reduction of its duration, taking into account in its preparation possible legal and financial consequences, and prepare a report to the next Council ([C19/112](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0112/en)).

In Circular Letter [CL-19/57](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-SG-CIR-0057/en), the secretariat conducted a consultation on further improvements of the PP, based on the three areas and suggested issues for consideration. The compilation of all Member State responses is available in [C21/INF/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-INF-0008/en).

**II. Strengthening Inter-regional preparations**

The first area is strengthening inter-regional preparations. The following questions were proposed:

* How to facilitate inter-regional negotiation before the conference?
* Should the inter-regional preparatory process be regularized and, if so, how?
* Could it be a step towards reducing the duration of the conference?
* Should the secretariat support the inter-regional preparatory process further and, if so, how?
* Should cooperation with the regional telecommunication organizations (RTOs) and the secretariat be strengthened on the occasion of a regional preparatory meeting?

Based on the replies from Member States, it is proposed that the preparatory process be strengthened so as to have:

1. Strengthened exchanges of information and views between regions in the run-up to the PP; and
2. A stronger involvement of the Council in the preparation process.

A. Regarding the inter-regional process:

It can be agreed that the following elements are clear:

* The ultimate objective of strengthening the inter-regional preparation is:

o To reduce the duration of the conference

o To allow the conference to focus more on strategic issues

* The preparatory process should recognize the specificities of each regional preparatory process. Each region is responsible for its preparatory process and to coordinate with other regions to best serve its needs.
* It should be borne in mind that unlike ITU-R’s WRC preparatory process, the PP does not have a fixed agenda that is ripe for negotiation at the regional and inter-regional level.
* A legal basis for inter-regional preparations has already been established in Resolution 58 (Rev. Busan, 2014).

Building on the successful experience of PP-18 during which three informal inter-regional meetings were organized with the support of the secretariat, it is proposed:

1. To improve the scheduling of the preparatory meetings, both regional and inter-regional:

* Considering that regions prepare for the PP 1.5 years in advance of the conference and hold an average of four to five preparatory meetings, there should be a better consultation between the RTOs and the secretariat in advance of PPs (1.5-2 years before) to synchronize/coordinate as much as possible the regional preparatory meetings and schedule at least two inter-regional preparatory meetings.
* The preliminary schedule of inter-regional meetings should be presented at the Council session one year before the PP.
* The Secretary-General should create and regularly update a dedicated website on regional preparations for the PP, including documents submitted by organizations and other useful information.
* Reciprocal participation of representatives of regional organizations in the preparatory meetings of other regional organizations should be encouraged.

2. To clarify the objectives of the inter-regional preparatory meetings:

* Meetings are intended to exchange views and information. They should not lead to a “regulated regional preparatory process”. The intention of these meetings is not formal negotiations.
* The invitation should be sent by the ITU Secretary-General.
* Prior to each inter-regional preparatory meeting the secretariat should be asked to prepare an input document on the state of contributions to date, grouping contributions by subject or issue, to assist member states in identifying areas of common interest and areas of disagreement.
* Items to be discussed could include procedural matters such as conference structure, chairs and vice-chairs for the conference and the committees, document allocation, regional focal point per resolution/issue, etc.
* The secretariat could be requested to undertake additional preparatory work on documents, such as preparing a DT for each substantive committee presenting all proposals received for each agenda item or a merge of proposals on a specific agenda item using DPM.
* The support of the ITU secretariat should not replicate and compete with the work of the regional telecommunication organizations’ preparatory work.

3. To clarify the format of these inter-regional preparatory meetings:

* Hold a first inter-regional preparatory meeting immediately before the Council session in the year of a PP.
* Hold the final inter-regional meeting in August/September (no later than 60 days) before the beginning of a PP.
* Additionally, a last inter-regional preparatory meeting could be held virtually before the conference to advance some issues if necessary.
* One-day meeting with remote participation.
* No summary records will be prepared.
* Should be done within the existing budget.

B. Regarding the involvement of the Council in the preparation:

Since the Council is already involved in the preparation of the PP by drafting modifications to the Strategic Plan for the Union (Resolution 71), some Member States proposed that its involvement could be broadened to other strategic PP topics, but also to more editorial work.

For the sake of optimizing the time during the PP, it is proposed that an existing Council Working Group or a dedicated group be tasked to facilitate preliminary discussions of draft resolutions (similar to the corresponding groups under the TSAG and TDAG) and Member States could be invited to submit the following for the consideration of this group (with a subsequent short report for the 2021-2022 sessions of the Council):

* a list of the most pressing issues and corresponding resolutions which are to be discussed at the PP;
* preliminary drafts of revised and new resolutions for information; and
* proposals for streamlining resolutions and decisions.

This group could also request the secretariat to make proposals to simplify and improve the format and reduce the length of resolutions and decisions, drawing from other international organizations’ practices.

If the Council supports this idea, the secretariat could be invited to propose draft ToRs for such a group for discussion to the next Council session.

**III. Preparation and training of delegates**

The second area is the preparation and training of delegates. The following questions were proposed:

* What are the training needs of delegations: on subjects such as elections, techniques of chairing meeting, the Rules of Procedures, overall training for new delegates?
* What kind of support do delegates expect from the secretariat?
* Would RTOs and Member States be interested to host and co-organize training of delegates?
* Should these trainings be held during the regional or inter-regional preparatory meetings?

In their replies, Member States generally supported strengthening training to improve the conference.

Based on the replies, training for PP-22 could address topics such as: introduction to the basic texts of the ITU (CS/CV; Administrative Regulations; General Rules of Conferences, Assemblies and Meetings; full text of all decisions, resolutions and recommendations in force; FINREGs; Rules of Procedure of Council and Staff Regulations and Staff Rules); overall roll-out of the conference; negotiations skills and presentations skills; chairing of meetings; Rules of Procedure; how to prepare a contribution and present a contribution; how to draft concise resolutions and decisions; elections; voting rights; and practical information about the conference (daily schedule, how the committees and ad hoc groups function, how the conference operates day-to-day) and Host Country information (hotel booking, transport, visas, etc.).

It is therefore proposed that:

* A user-friendly training package be developed as much as possible with the RTOs and presented at RTO preparatory meetings or prior to or during the inter-regional preparatory meetings. Remote participation should be made available to allow delegates who are not able to participate in regional meetings to attend.
* The ITU secretariat, in particular the regional offices, could support the trainings.
* The trainings should involve experienced delegates from the region, and a mentorship programme could be explored.
* The training package which could include educational videos/recordings could be circulated among the membership and posted on the PP website.
* All Member States should be informed about the availability of the training package through a circular letter.
* The new delegate briefing onsite at the PP will be continued.

**IV. Green conference**

The third area is how to make the conference as green as possible. The following questions were proposed:

* How could the [UN Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030](https://www.unsystem.org/content/addendum-strategy-sustainability-management-united-nations-system-2020-2030) be further implemented in the context of the PP? For example, the Strategy calls for all large UN events (over 300 attendees) to be sustainable and climate neutral. As such, how can GHG emissions be reduced (and offset) for PP?
* How could sustainability requirements be integrated into the host country agreement and negotiations, while also considering the local context?

Member States welcomed the measures taken for PP-18 and support the implementation of the UN Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030 in the context of the next PP. The proposed measures would also support ITU’s commitment to continuously improve its environmental performance, as found in the ITU Environmental Sustainability Statement found in document [C20/INF/5](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-INF-0005/en).

Based on the replies, it is therefore proposed:

* To consider organizing a fully paperless conference, including for interpreters, if possible.
* To include in the Host Country Agreement (HCA) a section related to “Green Conference”. This section will specify what the host country can do to help achieve the UN Sustainability Strategy 2030. The Host Country could offset event emissions or consider engaging in a certification programme (such as ISO 20121 standard) for the conference.
* To measure GHG emissions of PP-22 compared to PP-18, if possible, compensate the emissions if possible (dependent on sponsorship), and establish KPIs to reduce the emissions of future PPs.
* The HCA could include some measures/principles to reduce the environmental footprint of the event as much as possible such as: a full paperless conference; reduction of single use plastics, including during all the receptions; waste separation and recycling for the whole duration of the event from construction to dismantling, including recycling of the promotional material left after the event; water reduction measures; energy efficiency measures, in particular in relation to the air conditioning system; choice of eco-friendly transports; selection of affordable hotels that are at walking distance to the conference venue or to means of public transport and that pursue sustainable management practices (environmentally responsible hotels); sustainable procurement including catering; and green measures concerning badging (re-use of the blue ITU lanyards received from previous events; e-badging or permanent badge solutions (such as in events like GSMA)).

The Host Country should report to ITU which measures can be implemented based on local specifications and could include further activities to address key sustainability challenges of the locality. Measures taken to organize a greener PP should be explained clearly on the PP and Host Country website, and highlight what the participants can do for a greener event.

Emissions from travel could be reduced if participants choose appropriate and modern means of travel (such as opting for the shortest routes to the conference).

**V. Other proposals:**

PP-22 should take further steps to advance the gender-equality agenda, taking into account the work already undertaken by ITU as part of the International Gender Champions, to ensure a full, gender-responsive conference. Labels such as the G7 equality label designed specifically for large events and aimed at ensuring full inclusion of gender equality, not only in the content of the event but also in its organization could also be considered. Additionally, following the experience at WRC-19, a [mentorship programme](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-R/conferences/wrc/2019/now/Pages/default.aspx) could be created to encourage the participation of women.

The secretariat also took note of the following proposals from Member States to improve and shorten the conference such as:

* A ministerial week should be organized on the sidelines of the conference, and its outcomes should be reported to plenary and included on the official agenda of the conference.
* Services should be improved to make the event more attractive for ministers: rooms for bilaterals, media opportunities, announcements of projects, meeting with young policy leaders, speaking opportunities in selected side events, etc.
* The two days of sessions allocated to speeches and statements should be eliminated. Texts could be sent electronically and posted to the ITU PP website for careful and timely reading.
* Online room booking for delegates should be made available.
* A more expedient election/voting process should be established, possibly through electronic means while maintaining the secrecy of the vote.
* Funding support to participate in regional preparatory meetings.

Some of these proposals have been considered deeply in the previous cycle and had garnered neither support nor reached consensus (see documents [C17/4(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0004/en), [C17/70](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0070/en), [C17/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0006/en)).

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