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| **Council 2021 Virtual consultation of councillors, 8-18 June 2021** |  |
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|  | **Document C21/85-E** |
| **16 June 2021** |
| **Original: English** |

SUMMARY RECORD

OF THE

FIRST MEETING

Tuesday, 8 June 2021, from 1200 to 1515 hours

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

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|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Opening of the third virtual consultation of councillors | - |
| 2 | Nomination of the chairman of the virtual consultation | - |
| 3 | Opening remarks by the Chairman | - |
| 4 | Approval of the draft agenda of the third virtual consultation | [C21/1(Rev.1](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0001/en)) |
| 5 | Draft time-management plan | [ADM/1](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-ADM-0001/en)(Rev.1) |
| 6 | Organizational matters | - |
| 7 | Compilation of the outcomes of discussions of VCCs and report on RA-19 and WRC-19 | [C21/14](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0014/en), [C21/27](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0027/en) |
| 8 | Report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union for 2019-2021 | [C21/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0035/en) |
| 9 | Draft four-year operational plan for the Union 2022-2025 | [C21/28](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0028/en) |
| 10 | Elaboration of the strategic and financial plans for the Union for 2024-2027 | [C21/64](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0064/en) |
| 11 | List of candidatures for chairmanships and vice-chairmanships of CWGs, EGs and IEGs | [C21/21+Add.1, 2](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0021/en) |
| 12 | Preparations for WTDC-21 | [C21/30(Corr.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0030/en), [C21/76](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0076/en), [C21/83](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0083/en) |
| 13 | Preparations for WTPF-21 | [C21/5](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0005/en) |
| 14 | Preparations for WTSA-20 | [C21/24](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0024/en), [C21/78](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0078/en) |

**1 Opening of the third virtual consultation of councillors**

1.1 The Secretary-General declared the third virtual consultation of councillors (C21/VCC-1) open and welcomed all delegates. He delivered the address available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/2021/VCC1-SG-opening-speech.pdf>

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

2.1 The Secretary-General invited the meeting to approve the nomination of Mr Saif Bin Ghelaita (United Arab Emirates), Vice-Chairman of the Council, as chairman of C21/VCC-1.

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

**3Opening remarks by the Chairman**

3.1 The Chairman delivered the address available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/2021/VCC1-Chair-opening-speech-E.pdf>

**4Approval of the draft agenda of the third virtual consultation (Document**[**C21/1(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0001/en)**)**

4.1 The draft agenda of the virtual consultation (Document C21/1(Rev.1)) was **approved**, subject to upgrading of Document C21/45 from priority Group 2 to Group 1.

**5Draft time-management plan (Document** [**ADM/1(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-ADM-0001/en)**)**

5.1The Secretary of the meeting introduced Document ADM/1(Rev.1), containing a rolling time-management plan that would be updated as the meeting progressed, and which ensured that all documents in Groups 1+ and 1, which were considered urgent, would be discussed; documents in Group 2 could be added according to priority if time permitted. Upgraded Document C21/45 would be added. As at the previous VCC, it was proposed that the reports of Council working groups and expert groups be noted and their recommendations endorsed as a package, without presentation of the documents or opening of the floor for discussion.

5.2 The draft time-management plan (Document ADM/1/Rev.1) was **approved**, with the addition of Document C21/45.

**6 Organizational matters**

6.1 The Secretary of the meeting said that the working hours of C21/VCC-1 would be from 1200 to 1500 hours (Geneva time). 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 C21/VCC-1 was **noted**.

**7 Compilation of the outcomes of discussions of VCCs (Document** [**C21/14**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0014/en)**) and Report on RA-19 and WRC-19 (Document** [**C21/27**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0027/en)**)**

7.1 The Secretary of the meeting introduced documents C21/14 and C21/27 together, as both related to the previous year’s VCCs. It had been agreed in advance that the compilation of outcomes would be submitted to the subsequent physical session of the Council. Document C21/27, originally prepared as C20/27 for submission to the Council in 2020, had been reviewed by VCC-1 in 2020, which had proposed that the subsequent physical meeting of the Council take note of the report. In the absence of a physical meeting, she invited C21/VCC-1 to conclude provisionally that the two items be noted subject to a consultation by correspondence.

7.2 The Chair took it that, in the absence of a physical meeting and in order to close the items, councillors agreed that a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to note the outcomes of discussions of VCCs contained in Document C21/14 and to note Document C21/27.

7.3 It was so **concluded**.

**8 Report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union for 2019-2021 (Document** [**C21/35**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0035/en)**)**

8.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/35, which combined the annual activities report and the report on implementation of the strategic plan mandated by Nos. 102 and 61 of the Convention, respectively.

8.2 One councillor said that it would be useful for future reports to mention obstacles encountered in organizing activities in ITU in order to be able to consider ways of overcoming them. Another councillor asked whether the decline in ITU‑D Sector Membership between 2010 and 2020 had been analysed, and whether the increase in off-track targets in 2020 was related to the pandemic. Another councillor proposed that future reports include more detail on ITU’s various activities relating to Internet governance.

8.3 The representative of the General Secretariat said that Sector Membership had declined in 2019-2020 for various reasons, including industry consolidation and migration to the other Sectors. However, the trend was towards recovery: since January 2021, 12 new members had returned and a further 12 were anticipated in the second quarter. Academia membership (shared by the three Sectors) was on a growth path. Moreover, membership campaigns were being undertaken, including initiatives launched by ITU to meet with members individually and interact regularly with industry, which were mutually beneficial to the Union and its members.

8.4 The secretariat took note of the comments from councillors to improve the report in future.

8.5 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind that the item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to approve the report contained in Document C21/35.

8.6 It was so **concluded**.

**9** **Draft four-year operational plan for the Union for 2022-2025 (Document**[**C21/28**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0028/en)**)**

9.1 The Chief of the Financial Resources Management Department (FRMD) introduced Document C21/28, which superseded Document C20/28 prepared for but not reviewed at the 2020 session. The document reflected the comments of the three advisory groups. The plan was a comprehensive tool covering the three Sectors and the General Secretariat that would link information, resources, strategic goals, strategic objectives and outputs; help ITU adapt strategies and financing; and enable it to follow up on outputs and improve collaboration throughout the Union. Furthermore, it provided information on the implementation of the 18 strategic objectives.

9.2 The councillor from the Russian Federation recalled that the Union’s activities to 2025 should only be carried out based on approved budgets. Noting the distribution of resources among the Sectors, he also asked whether ITU-T was allocated sufficient resources to achieve its goals to 2025. He proposed that the preambular part of the draft resolution in Annex B should recall Decision 5 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), and that account be taken of the financial restrictions that could arise in 2024-2025 following the plenipotentiary conference in 2022. One councillor asked why there was a 40 per cent increase in documentation costs for 2024.

9.3 The Chief of FRMD clarified that the draft plan reflected approved and draft budgets and was based on the financial and strategic plans approved at the most recent plenipotentiary conference, with the addition of 2025. The plan would be submitted to the Council for approval annually and would always reflect the approved budget and associated activities. Resource distribution between Sectors also corresponded to the financial plan approved by PP. Lastly, increased documentation costs in 2024 reflected the greater number of conferences planned.

9.4 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind that the item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to approve the draft four-year rolling Operational Plan for the Union for 2022-2025 and to adopt the draft resolution presented in Annex B to Document C21/28 by correspondence, as revised in Document [C21/DT/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0002/en) taking into consideration the comments from one Member State.

9.5 It was so **concluded**.

**10 Elaboration of the strategic and financial plans for the Union for 2024-2027 (Document**[**C21/64**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0064/en)**)**

10.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/64 and described the process by which the Council had drawn up the strategic and financial plans for 2020-2023. As per that process, the Council might wish to consider establishing a Council working group to draw up the draft plans for 2024-2027, which had to be submitted four months before the plenipotentiary conference. To that end, the Council was invited to approve the establishment of the CWG for the elaboration of draft Strategic and Financial Plans and to adopt the draft resolution set out in the Annex to Document C21/64.

10.2 One councillor stressed that all interested parties should have the opportunity to take part in the Council working group. Furthermore, the strategic plan should reflect the importance of the regional presence, in line with the “One ITU” concept.

10.3 Another councillor said that arrangements should be made to optimize the deliberations of the Council working group in the coming six months, in view of the time constraints in the 2022 calendar.

10.4 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind the fact that the item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to approve the establishment of a Council working group for the elaboration of the draft strategic and financial plans for 2024-2027, as per the process established for the 2020-2023 planning cycle, and to adopt the relevant draft resolution in the annex to Document C21/64. The group would meet for the first time during the CWG cluster in September 2021.

10.5 It was so **concluded**.

**11 List of candidatures for chairmanships and vice-chairmanships of CWGs, EGs and IEGs (Document**[**C21/21 + Addenda 1 and 2**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0021/en)**)**

11.1 The Secretary of the meeting said that the new candidatures received for chairman and vice-chairman positions since the second VCC were indicated in Document C21/21 and the addenda thereto, including the candidatures received for the position of Chinese language representative on the Council Working Group on the use of the six official languages (CWG-Lang) and for positions on the Council working group for the elaboration of the draft strategic and financial plans for 2024–2027 (CWG-SFP) to be established by the Council.

11.2 One councillor endorsed the candidate for vice-chairman of CWG-SFP submitted by CITEL.

11.3 A second councillor endorsed the candidates for chairman and vice-chairman of CWG-SFP submitted by CEPT, adding that the schedule of CWG-SFP meetings should be adapted in the light of the busy calendar of events for 2022.

11.4 The councillor from China endorsed his country’s candidates for vice-chairman of CWG-Lang and vice-chairman of CWG-SFP.

11.5 One councillor said that the Asia-Pacific region would conduct consultations with a view to reaching a consensus on its candidates for chairman and vice-chairman of CWG-SFP.

11.6 Another councillor announced that the Arab group wished to nominate Ms Sameera Belal (Kuwait) as vice-chairman of CWG-SFP, and that an official communication was being prepared to that effect.

11.7 The councillors **agreed** that the regional coordinators would consult each other regarding the chairman of CWG-SFP and bring the issue back by Monday, 14 June 2021. Regions that had not officially submitted a candidature to the Secretary-General should do so by Monday, 14 June 2021.

**12 Preparations for WTDC-21 (Documents** [**C21/30(Corr.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0030/en)**,** [**C21/76**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0076/en) **and** [**C21/83**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0083/en)**)**

12.1 H.E. Mr Ahmedin Mohammed, State Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia, introduced Document C21/76 and delivered the address available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/2021/VCC1-Ethiopia.pdf>

12.2 The Director of BDT thanked the Government of Ethiopia for its unwavering commitment to make the next world telecommunication development conference a truly landmark event at what was a particularly challenging time. The conference would be the most inclusive WTDC ever, the first to be held in Africa, and would have a laser focus on achievable and meaningful outputs.

12.3 The Deputy Director of BDT, introducing Document C21/30(Corr.1), said that preparations for WTDC-21 were progressing well. The most pressing issue was the Ethiopian Government’s request to postpone the conference to June 2022 in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The secretariat had launched a consultation of Member States on the matter and 92 Member States had so far indicated their agreement. Should the postponement be agreed, TDAG would hold an additional meeting in November 2021. The ITU-D study groups would meet in October 2021 and continue working under the management teams appointed by WTDC-17, promoting work already done and considering new mandates and Questions based on that work. The TDAG Working Group on WTDC resolutions, declaration and thematic priorities would continue working on its mandated items and present its report to TDAG in November 2021. The TDAG Working Group on strategic and operational plans would pursue its work on the ITU-D input to the plans, for submission to CWG-SFP, and on development of the draft Addis Ababa Declaration. TDAG had furthermore decided that there would be no proposal from TDAG for changes to WTDC Resolution 1 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) in regard to WTDC’s role in preparing the contribution to the ITU-D strategic and operational plans. BDT was carefully considering the calendar of events for the coming year, with a view to ensuring that Member States had enough time to prepare for all of the world conferences scheduled for 2022.

12.4 Two councillors expressed appreciation to the Ethiopian Government and BDT for their efforts to accommodate the situation and organize WTDC-21.

12.5 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude, keeping in mind the fact that the item was urgent, that a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to note the work done so far and the ongoing preparations for WTDC-21 by noting Document C21/30(Corr.1).

12.6 It was so **concluded.**

12.7 The councillor from the Russian Federation introduced Document C21/83, in which it was suggested that it would be advisable for C21/VCC-1 to discuss the organization of ITU’s work for the coming year in greater detail, so as not to compromise the consideration of major issues.

12.8 One councillor, referring to the long list of ITU and other conferences scheduled to take place in 2022, asked what form the conferences would take and whether contingency plans had been drawn up for virtual meetings.

12.9 Another councillor, expressing a preference for physical meetings, said that the most efficient way had to be found of ensuring that all members could participate in all conferences. Travel restrictions and quarantine/vaccination requirements were of particular concern in that regard. A contingency plan should perhaps be drawn up for members unable to attend physical meetings.

12.10 Several councillors said that they would welcome an overview of the preparatory activities planned for all three major ITU conferences to be held in 2022, for planning purposes. The possibility should be considered of holding those activities online or in hybrid format.

12.11 The Secretary-General said that, before asking the secretariat to draw up such an overview, he would like to know the Member States’ proposals for contingency plans, notably in terms of streamlining any of the conferences to be held in 2022 and in the light of their desire to have the CWG cluster, the WSIS process and ITU Telecom proceed as usual. In order not to overload the membership, priority would have to be given to major events.

12.12 In reply to a question from one councillor, he confirmed that the fact of postponing WTDC and WTSA to 2022 would have no financial implications for the secretariat, as the relevant budget allocations had simply been carried forward.

12.13 The councillors **agreed** to consider the overall calendar of ITU events in 2022 and requested that the secretariat consider the extent to which events other than the three world conferences could be adjusted to avoid the period from January to October 2022, thereby maximizing calendar availability for preparatory events and minimizing other obligations for the secretariat and Member States.

12.14 The Chairman **invited** the councillors and regional coordinators to send their ideas to the secretariat by Friday, 11 June 2021, so that the matter could be revisited the following week.

**13 Preparations for WTPF-21 (Document** [**C21/5**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0005/en)**)**

13.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/5, providing an update on the preparations for WTPF-21. Recalling that the timetable for the elaboration of the Secretary-General’s report was based on Annex 2 to Council Decision 611 (Modified 2020), he said that since the last virtual consultation of councillors, the Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 (IEG-WTPF-21) had held three virtual meetings and the fifth draft of the Secretary-General’s report was available online. The virtual consultation was invited to note the report.

13.2 The Chairman of IEG-WTPF-21 said that encouraging progress had been made at the IEG’s fifth virtual meeting. The 10 proposed draft opinions had been narrowed down to six, which were under discussion, and he hoped that outstanding terminology issues in the Secretary-General’s report would be resolved shortly. Given the limitations of virtual meetings and the amount of work still to be completed, an additional meeting of the IEG in October or November would be useful to finalize all the documents before WTPF in December 2021.

13.3 Councillors praised the efforts of the Chairman of IEG-WTPF-21 and the two coordinators. One councillor was of the view that the meeting schedule in the last quarter of 2021 was already very heavy and said that he could not support the convening of an additional meeting of IEG-WTPF-21. Other councillors considered that, notwithstanding the challenging schedule, an additional meeting would be beneficial in helping to ensure the success of WTPF-21, which takes its decisions by consensus.

13.4 The ITU Legal Adviser, responding to a question from a councillor, said that in his opinion, it would not be necessary to modify further Decision 611 (Modified 2020) in order to hold an additional IEG meeting. As the VCC has no formal decision-making powers, however, agreement on such a meeting would have to be reached on the basis of a consultation by correspondence.

13.5 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind the fact that the item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken: to note the report in Document C21/5; to agree to hold an additional meeting of the IEG at the end of October or early November; and to instruct the secretariat to prepare the WTPF for a physical meeting in Geneva with remote participation.

13.6 It was so **concluded**.

**14 Preparations for WTSA-20 (Documents** [**C21/24**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0024/en) **and** [**C21/78**](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0078/en)**)**

14.1 The representative of TSB introduced Document C21/24, which provided an update on the status of preparations for WTSA-20 to be held in Hyderabad from 1 to 9 March 2022, preceded by GSS-20, subject to the restoration of normal work and travel conditions in India and other Member States. The secretariat had been in close consultation with India: a proposed chairman had been nominated and the host-country agreement and logo were being finalized. By way of contingency, the CICG in Geneva had been reserved from 28 February to 9 March 2022. The virtual consultation was invited to note the report.

14.2 The Chairman praised the efforts of TSAG in implementing the ITU-T work continuity plan and ensuring the stability of ITU-T pending WTSA-20.

14.3 The councillor from India introduced Document C21/78, which presented two possible scenarios to ensure that WTSA-20 took place. Under scenario 1, WTSA-20 would be held in Hyderabad from 1 to 9 March 2022. Under scenario 2, the situation would be reviewed by India and ITU six months before the assembly and, if circumstances were not favourable for holding the event in India, WTSA‑20 would be held in Geneva on the dates envisaged. In that case, and should the situation permit, India might host WTSA-24.

14.4 Wide appreciation was expressed to the Administration of India for its flexibility and commitment to ensuring the continuity of ITU’s work. One councillor, recalling discussions earlier in the meeting, the likelihood of continued uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the already heavy meeting schedule for 2022, said that if WTSA-20 and WTDC-21 took place in 2022, they should be held in Geneva for a duration of one week; priority should be given to the most pressing topics; and the host countries should hold the events in a future cycle. Some councillors pointed out that WTSA had already been postponed twice and stressed that every effort must be made to ensure continuity of the Sector’s activities. Although some Questions had been endorsed by TSAG, there were a number of items to be addressed at WTSA-20, and the length of the assembly should not be shortened once again. The holding of events back-to-back should not adversely affect their duration. Councillors requested further information in connection with scenario 2, including on whether Council and ITU Member States would be consulted on the six-month review and involved in the decision; whether six months was long enough for the secretariat to prepare for the assembly; and whether actual provisions were already being made to hold WTSA-20 in Geneva. One councillor said that it would be preferable to hold a physical WTSA with the requisite technical experts rather than involving the diplomatic staff of the respective Member States in Geneva.

14.5 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude as follows:

* The councillors thanked India for its document.
* The councillors noted Document C21/24 and the contribution from India contained in Document C21/78. If by the end of August 2021, India, in consultation with the secretariat, felt that hosting in Hyderabad was risky, then India would withdraw its offer to host WTSA-20 and could opt for hosting WTSA-24 instead. In that case, WTSA-20 would take place in Geneva from 1 to 9 March 2022.
* Keeping in mind the fact that this item is urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to note Document C21/24 on the ongoing preparations for WTSA-20.

14.6 It was so **concluded**.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:

H. ZHAO S. BIN GHELAITA

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