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| **Council 2021 Virtual consultation of councillors, 8-18 June 2021** |  |
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|  | **Document C21/91-E** |
| **23 June 2021** |
| **Original: English** |

SUMMARY RECORD

OF THE

SEVENTH MEETING

Wednesday, 16 June 2021, from 1200 to 1515 hours

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

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|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Outcomes of discussions held on 15 June 2021 | [C21/DT/1 (Rev.5)](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0001/en) |
| 2 | Progress report on implementation of the Human Resources strategic plan and of Resolution 48 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) | [C21/54](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0054/en) |
| 3 | Report on ITU’s environmental sustainability | [C21/68](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0068/en) |
| 4 | Draft ITU Accessibility Policy for persons with disabilities | [C21/72](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0072/en) |
| 5 | Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning and activities of ITU | [C21/74](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0074/en) |
| 6 | ITU participation in memoranda of understanding with financial and/or strategic implications | [C21/45](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0045/en) |
| 7 | Report on the hiring of an independent external management consultancy, including recommendations and various strategies | [C21/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0010/en), [C21/79](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0079/en) |
| 8 | ITU Internet activities | [C21/33](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0033/en), [C21/DT/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0008/en) |
| 9 | ITU activities on strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs | [C21/18](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0018/en) |
| 10 | ITU’s activities related to Resolution 70 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) | [C21/6](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0006/en) |
| 11 | Outcome of the informal consultation on 2022 events (continued) | [C21/DT/6, C21/DT/6(Rev.1](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0006/en)) |

**1 Outcomes of discussions held on 15 June 2021 (Document** [**DT/1 (Rev.5)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0001/en)**)**

Document C21/DT/1(Rev.5) was **noted**.

**2 Progress report on implementation of the Human Resources strategic plan and of Resolution 48 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) (Document** [**C21/54**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0054/en)**)**

2.1 The Chief of the Human Resources Management Department (HRMD) introduced Document C21/54 covering the period 2019-2021, and highlighted Annexes 1 to 3, containing decisions for adoption on proposed changes to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. The proposals were to reduce the mandatory advertisement period for vacancies from two months to one; to recognize domestic partnerships by replacing the words “husband and wife” with the word “spouses”, as personal status affected staff entitlements and dependency benefits; and to simplify the wording regarding the periodicity of salary increments for the Professional and higher categories, so as to align ITU and International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) practice.

2.2 One councillor asked whether the proposed reduction of the advertisement period would affect recruitment efforts.

2.3 The councillor from the Russian Federation said that preventing and combating violations of rights should be considered holistically, rather than focusing on each type of violation individually. The secretariat should be asked to prepare a document on the implications of the proposed amendments for the Union and their impact on the ITU budget, so that they could be discussed at the CWG-FHR meeting in September 2021 and the subsequent session of the Council. She also requested the secretariat to make available an up-to-date edition of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules in all official languages on the ITU website, to ensure that the discussion by Member States was based on full understanding. Thus, while her administration did not object to noting the report by correspondence, it could not support employing the same mechanism to adopt the proposed amendments, which needed first to be examined in terms of their impact on the Union and discussed in CWG-FHR.

2.4 Two councillors said that they were pleased with the progress achieved, in particular the proposed amendment recognizing domestic partnerships. Financial reasons did not justify the continuation of discriminatory practices.

2.5 The Chief of HRMD said that one month, as a minimum, was ample for recruitment as demonstrated by the external benchmarking performed by ITU. Furthermore, if ITU wished, depending on the position, it could extend the recruitment time beyond one month as necessary.

2.6 In respect of rights, ITU was making serious efforts to look at violations comprehensively. The specific amendment proposed, which would bring ITU into line with the United Nations and all the other specialized agencies, would yield considerable benefits in terms of reaching talent. There are no budgetary implications identified, but any adjustments could be accommodated under the current biennial budget and the financial plan for 2020-2023.

2.7 The Chairman proposed that the secretariat be requested to present the revised draft decisions contained in Annexes 1 to 3 to Document C21/54 to the next CWG-FHR meeting in September for further discussion.

2.8 It was so **agreed**.

2.9 He further 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 note Document C21/54.

2.10 It was so **concluded**.

**3 Report on ITU’s environmental sustainability (Document** [**C21/68**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0068/en)**)**

3.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/68 on progress made and planned activities to advance ITU’s environmental sustainability efforts in line with the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020-2030 and various ITU decisions and resolutions. The document also took into account the Joint Inspection Unit’s review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2020/8).

3.2 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 endorse the report contained in Document C21/68.

3.3 It was so **concluded**.

**4 Draft ITU Accessibility Policy for persons with disabilities (Document** [**C21/72**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0072/en)**)**

4.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/72, updating the ITU Accessibility Policy endorsed by Council-13. The updated policy took new developments into account and, beyond simply making ITU more accessible, aimed to make ICTs more accessible and promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities through the use of ICTs worldwide. It set out goals and objectives for implementation through an accessibility strategy, to be elaborated before the end of 2021, including making ITU facilities and events accessible by various means; enhancing staff and management awareness; ensuring that ITU information was digitally accessible; and mainstreaming accessibility by ensuring appropriate resources to support related activities. Member States were invited to contribute to the implementation of the policy through the ITU Accessibility Trust Fund, not replenished since 2018.

4.2 Two councillors said that the document should refer both to persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, consistent with PP Resolution 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018).

4.3 One councillor said that in line with its overall strategy, it was important that ITU seek to attract the participation of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs; that aspect should be an element of its policy. Referring to the annex, she asked what budgetary funds would be allocated to specific programmatic activities for such persons and requested clarification concerning the reference to a budget line to be secured.

4.4 The representative of the General Secretariat said that the terminology used in the policy would be updated to take into account the concerns raised. All persons, including those with disabilities and with specific needs, were invited to ITU meetings, and a task force in the secretariat was working on ways of improving accessibility. The unfunded mandatory activities budget included activities to make ITU meetings more accessible for persons with disabilities, supplementing other activities financed in all the Sectors and the General Secretariat.

4.5 The Chairman, noting that the title of the draft policy would be updated to include persons with specific needs, said he 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 endorse the draft policy contained in the annex to Document C21/72, with that modification.

4.6 It was so **concluded**.

**5 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning and activities of ITU (Document** [**C21/74**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0074/en))

5.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/74, which summarized a preliminary analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on some areas of activity and functioning of the Union, presenting facts, underlining lessons learned and highlighting some aspects that could make ITU more resilient and sustainable in the future.

5.2 During the ensuing discussion, councillors expressed appreciation for the role played by the Union during the pandemic; ITU’s leadership role in preparing for and providing support in future emergencies should be strengthened. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of ICTs in all aspects of life, but it had also revealed digital inequalities worldwide. Global efforts were needed to bridge the digital divide and achieve sustainable growth post-pandemic. ITU might explore the establishment of a multilateral cooperation mechanism to make progress on digital inclusion.

5.3 One councillor said that attention needed to be given to ensuring equal participation in virtual meetings, while another observed that in some cases they in fact enabled participation. One councillor proposed that ITU consider allocating unused budget from the pandemic period to a fellowship for developing countries, to connect the unconnected. Another underscored that the number and frequency of virtual meetings must remain reasonable, as they were a burden on the secretariat. One councillor proposed that ITU consider how to take advantage of different meeting formats, including hybrid meetings, while another considered that physical meetings should be the preferred option. One councillor noted that if the pandemic continued, hygiene measures at physical meetings should be carefully considered; for virtual or hybrid meetings, ITU should ensure a good-quality communication platform with sound logistics to accommodate participants unable to travel. It should also consider contingency plans for the PP-22 electoral process.

5.4 Three councillors concurred that meeting rules relating to decision-making should be relaxed in some meetings, without undermining the importance of physical meetings where crucial decisions were to be taken. Another cautioned that care should be exercised when developing ITU decisional processes; those provided for under the current rules, such as consultations by correspondence, should be given priority.

5.5 One councillor, supported by two others, proposed that all of the recommendations made should be taken into account in the ITU strategic and financial plans.

5.6 Another councillor, again supported by two others, proposed that the updated report should be sent to CWG-FHR for detailed discussion and the formulation of recommendations for consideration by the Council in 2022 and, if necessary, at PP-22. The headquarters project should be reviewed to ensure that due attention was given to health security issues, such as social distancing and ventilation in buildings.

5.7 One councillor asked whether the many meetings delayed could be postponed or held virtually; and that six months’ notice be given for physical meetings, in view of travel restrictions.

5.8 The Chairman proposed that councillors note the points raised in the discussion and that the document be presented to CWG-FHR and CWG-SFP for their consideration and recommendations for the next session of the Council and, if necessary, PP-22.

5.9 It was so **agreed**.

5.10 He further 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 note Document C21/74.

5.9 It was so **concluded**.

**6 ITU participation in memoranda of understanding with financial and/or strategic implications (Document** [**C21/45**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0045/en)**)**

6.1 The ITU Legal Adviser, introducing Document C21/45, said that it listed the 10 memoranda of understanding/agreements having potential financial and/or strategic implications for the Union signed by ITU since Council-19. The document indicated the Bureaux/GS departments responsible for each MoU/agreement. In addition, the full texts of the different MoUs/agreements were reproduced in the annex to the document.

6.2 Several councillors, referring to a clause that appeared in almost all the MoUs, suggested that accountability and transparency would be improved if Member States were able to use a tool like the online BDT dashboard to ascertain the status of active memoranda, in particular those having strategic or financial implications and in respect of which one or more legally binding written agreements, project documents and/or other instruments had been separately negotiated and signed.

6.3 A number of councillors asked for clarification about other aspects of memoranda of understanding, specifically the criteria to be met before an MoU was signed; agreements on secondments; the absence of a standardized MoU format; and the failure to specify a clear date of termination.

6.4 The Secretary-General said he noted the desire for transparency in regard to MoUs/agreements, and the secretariat was working hard to provide councillors with full and transparent information. He also took note of the desire for a standard format, although it was difficult in practice to envisage a standardized format, in view of the range of different partners and situations involved. In regard to staff secondments from administrations and United Nations agencies, that type of arrangement was highly beneficial, as it helped the Union cope with its steadily increasing workload; for the sake of efficiency and transparency, the relevant policies on secondments might be incorporated into the ITU Human Resources strategic plan.

6.5 The ITU Legal Adviser, confirming that while many MoUs simply constituted a cooperation framework entailing no obligations for the parties, they might in some cases be implemented through agreements that were binding and that could have financial/strategic implications, said that work would start immediately after the VCC on the most appropriate tool to provide councillors with complete and transparent information on MoUs/agreements concluded by the Union and having significant financial or strategic implications, including, as appropriate, their terms and conditions. The criteria for entering into a memorandum of understanding were specific to each MoU; however, they were always fully in line with the provisions adopted by PP-18 (PP-18 Document 100: Report by the Chairman of Committee 6 to the plenary meeting).

6.6 The Chairman took it that the 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 contained in Document C21/45.

6.7 It was so **concluded**.

6.8 The councillors further **instructed** the secretariat to identify the most appropriate tool to improve transparency and accountability; to clarify the criteria applied by the secretariat when signing memoranda of understanding; and to improve the format of such memoranda to better identify the financial and strategic implications.

**7 Report on the hiring of an independent external management consultancy, including recommendations and various strategies (Documents** [**C21/10**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0010/en) **and** [**C21/79**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0079/en)**)**

7.1 The representative of Dalberg reviewed the main elements of the report submitted to VCC-2 (Document C20/10), in which Dalberg had presented an assessment of ITU Telecom events and various options for the way forward, notably the organization of “Digital for Good” exhibition and forum sessions as part of an annual global ITU-level event that incorporated WSIS forums and/or the AI for Good Global Summit. The events of the past twelve months had reinforced interest in such an event, further investigation of which would constitute Phase 2 of the external consultancy.

7.2 The councillor from Japan, introducing Document C21/79, said that it proposed a series of steps aimed at addressing the need to ensure the profitability of large-scale events in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.3 Two councillors endorsed the approach laid out in Document C21/79, given the urgent need to reform ITU Telecom events, avoid further deficits and assess the situation in the light of the new, post-COVID “normal”.

7.4 Two other councillors said that the Council should consider all the options outlined in the Dalberg report and that Member States should have the opportunity to submit other options.

7.5 Several councillors observed that Document C21/10 contained no information on the cost or financing of Phase 2 of the consultancy, or on the methodology or time-frame for its implementation. Given that ITU Telecom exhibitions appeared to have been superseded by other events and that stakeholders had a limited capacity to participate, they suggested that the Council defer its decision to its 2022 session and that Phase 2 of the consultancy be aligned with the normalization of international travel.

7.6 One councillor, observing that the AI for Good Global Summit and WSIS forums were successful events in which many large international, private-sector and civil-society organizations participated, said that the views of those organizations should be obtained as well. It was not in the Union’s interest to undermine them by introducing a new model of event.

7.7 The Secretary-General pointed out that the AI for Good Global Summit did not have the same participants as ITU Telecom exhibitions and that the WSIS forums were United Nations events.

7.8 The councillor from Spain said that her administration stood willing to share financial information pertaining to the organization of the 2021 Mobile World Congress, which would be held in Barcelona from 28 June to 1 July.

7.9 The Chief of the Financial Resources Management Department said that, under the terms of *resolves* 4 of Resolution 11 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), the hiring of the independent external management consultancy for Phase 1 had been covered by the Exhibition Working Capital Fund (EWCF). Should the Council decide to go ahead with Phase 2, it would have to authorize the Secretary-General to draw the necessary funds from the EWCF; neither the ITU nor the ITU Telecom secretariat budget contained allocations for Phase 2. It was further stipulated in Resolution 11 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) that the EWCF had to have a minimum reserve of CHF 5 million. Although ITU Telecom 2020 had not taken place, the costs of the ITU Telecom secretariat had been covered by the EWCF, which showed a balance of CHF 6.6 million as at 31 December 2020. Should ITU Telecom 2021 also not take place physically, the resulting deficit would be charged to the EWCF.

7.10 The representative of Dalberg agreed that the current global landscape of IT-related events was increasingly competitive and that it would be unwise to undermine existing successful events or add to the financial burden of organizers. The aim was, on the contrary, to engage with stakeholders and events so as to produce an integrated and coordinated portfolio of events. Dalberg had not yet been asked to provide either a methodology or a time-frame for Phase 2, but stood ready to do so. It was also willing to adapt its proposal in the light of the needs and concerns of Member States and to consider all three options outlined in its report or indeed any other options formulated by Member States.

7.11 The councillors **thanked** Dalberg for its presentation and work, **noted** Documents C21/10 and C21/79, and **agreed** to defer the decision on the issue to the 2022 session of the Council.

**8 ITU Internet activities (Documents** [**C21/33**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0033/en) **and** [**DT/8**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0008/en)**)**

8.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/33, which summarized ITU Internet activities under Resolutions 101 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), 102 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), 133 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), 180 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and 206 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. The 2020 version of the report (Document C20/33) had been prepared for submission to the 2020 session of the Council but not reviewed.

8.2 Responding to a question from one councillor, the Chairman said that the content of the report in Document C21/33 had already been presented to Council Working Group on Internet and that, pursuant to Resolution 102 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), such reports were submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General after endorsement.

8.3 Following the same process as had been used in the past, the Chairman proposed that Council Member States be invited to submit their views, if any, on the reports in Documents C21/33 and C20/33 by 1700 hours Geneva time on Thursday, 17 June, by e-mail and as succinctly as possible, and that a compilation of the views submitted by Council Member States, if any, as received (without edits), be included in a separate document. Thereafter, keeping in mind the fact that the item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to note Documents C21/33 and C20/33 and to endorse the transmission of those reports to the United Nations Secretary-General, along with the document containing the compilation of the views submitted by Council Member States, if any, and the relevant summary record, as a package, with a covering letter clearly stating that: the reports had been noted by ITU Council Member States; the reports, the attached document, if any, and the summary records should be considered as a package; and the inclusion of hyperlinks did not imply approval of the content of the hyperlink's target, as per PP Decision 14 (Busan, 2014).

8.4 It was so **concluded**.

8.5 The Chairman added that the covering letter and the compilation of Council Member States' views, if any, would be published as Document DT/8. The summary record would be included after review under the normal Council procedure.

**9 ITU activities on strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs (Document** [**C21/18**](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0018/en)**)**

9.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/18, which summarized ITU’s activities in relation to Resolution 130 (Rev. Dubai, 2018); ITU’s role as sole facilitator for WSIS Action Line C5; and other decisions by the membership on strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs. Councillors were invited to note the document, as well as the 2020 version of the report (Document C20/18), which had been prepared for submission to Council but not reviewed.

9.2 One councillor thanked ITU for its efforts on the Global Cybersecurity Agenda and the Global Cybersecurity Index. The involvement of Member States at all stages could serve as an example for future work.

9.3 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 Document C21/18 as well as Document C20/18.

9.4 It was so **concluded**.

**10 ITU's activities related to Resolution 70 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) (Document** [**C21/6**](http://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0006/en)**)**

10.1 The representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C21/6, which outlined ITU’s activities related to Resolution 70 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). Further information relating to gender and ICTs could be found on ITU’s gender webpage. Councillors were invited to note the document, as well as the 2020 version of the report (Document C20/6), which had been prepared for submission to the Council but not reviewed.

10.2 Councillors welcomed the report and ITU’s efforts to promote gender equality and female empowerment through ICTs, and one councillor drew attention to actions being taken by BR to achieve the objectives of Resolution 70 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). It was suggested that a network of women for PP-22 should be launched, as had been done for other conferences, and one councillor outlined the efforts made in his country to mark the tenth anniversary of the Girls in ICT Day.

10.3 The Chairman said that consideration might be given to establishing a network of women for all major ITU events. He 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 Document C21/6 as well as Document C20/6.

10.4 It was so **concluded**.

**11 Outcome of the informal consultation on 2022 events (continued)   
(Documents** [**C21/DT/6** **and C21/DT/6(Rev.1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-210608-TD-GEN-0006/en)**))**

11.1 The Chairman invited councillors to consider Document C21/DT/6, which presented the results of the informal consultation on streamlining ITU events in 2022. He thanked councillors for their support and suggestions, and CITEL for its detailed proposal. Agreement still had to be reached regarding the CWG cluster in January 2022, events in partnership with other entities and certain other non-decision-making meetings.

11.2 The councillor from Argentina, speaking on behalf of CITEL, said that the immense workload for 2022 would not be reduced significantly by virtual meetings, the working hours of which were not convenient for those in certain time zones. CITEL was proposing a reduction in the number of meeting days for the CWG cluster in January 2022 and that the two annual events held in partnership with other entities should be postponed until 2023. It was also proposing that certain non-decision-making meetings (GET, GCBI, WTIS, and ITU Telecom), often held annually, should be postponed until 2023 rather than held virtually, and suggested that administrations should be consulted by correspondence to indicate their preferred alternative. Further information on fellowships for WTSA-20 and WTDC-21 should also be provided. CITEL’s comments and proposals were set out in Document C21/DT/6 (Rev.1).

11.3 One councillor reiterated the RCC administrations’ view that WTSA-20 should take priority over WTDC-21 and understood that CITEL’s comments regarding priority pertained to fellowships for WTSA-20 and WTDC-21 rather than to the events themselves. Councillors said that they could go along with a reduction in the number of meeting days for the CWG cluster in January 2022, with one councillor noting that it would be useful to be able to conduct more extensive work not possible in virtual meetings. It was important to consult the international organizations concerned before agreeing to postpone any events held in partnership with other entities. One councillor said that the proposed postponement of certain non-decision-making meetings until 2023 would be difficult given the preparations for WRC-23, and expressed a preference for virtual meetings. Another councillor suggested rotating the timing of virtual meetings to ensure that all time zones were treated equally.

11.4 The Chairman said that the intention was to hold WTSA-20, WTDC-21 and PP-22 physically in 2022, as planned, unless the global situation changed, in which case Council-22 would have to decide on action to be taken given that the subsequent WTSA and WTDC were scheduled for 2024 and 2025, respectively.

11.5 The Secretary-General, referring to the proposed postponement of ITU Telecom, said that following consultation with the host country candidates, he would inform Member States in early 2022 if the meeting would be hosted in December 2022 or postponed to 2023.

11.6 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to request the secretariat to come back the following day with a proposal on the reduction of the duration of the CWG cluster in January 2022 and on postponing four events (GET, GCBI, WTIS and ITU Telecom). Regarding those four events, he took it that councillors wished to request the secretariat to propose new dates and format.

11.7 It was so **agreed**.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:

H. ZHAO S. BIN GHELAITA

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