



General Secretariat (SG)

Geneva, 5 October 2021

Ref: **CL-21/45**
Contact: Malcolm Johnson
Telephone: +41 22 730 5595
E-mail: dsg@itu.int

To ITU Member States, Sector Members,
Associates and Academia

Subject: **Voluntary donations for a Virtual Events Venue (VEV) platform**

Dear Sir, Madam,

As meetings and gatherings have now taken a digital dimension, the ITU secretariat is committed to best aligning its members' virtual event experience with the new reality.

To that end and as we prepare ITU for the hybrid, physical and virtual, collaborative and flexible work environment of tomorrow, we intend building a Virtual Events Venue (VEV) platform linked to the physical premises. Combined with the construction of the new headquarter building, delegates will be provided with optimal event participation experience either physically or virtually through the VEV. More information of the VEV can be found in **Annex 1**.

I would therefore like to invite voluntary contributions to assist with the development of the VEV platform which will ensure that ITU offers the best conference environment both virtually as well as physically.

Should you have an interest in contributing please contact the secretariat (through the above contact) for further information.

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

Houlin ZHAO
Secretary-General

Annex 1: Call for Voluntary Contributions to Support a new ITU Virtual Events Venue (VEV) platform

Annex 1

Call for Voluntary Contributions to Support a new ITU Virtual Events Venue (VEV) platform 2021

Objectives of the Virtual Events Venue (VEV) project

- (1) To prepare ITU for the hybrid, physical and virtual, collaborative and flexible work environment of tomorrow.
- (2) To provide remote participants with good event experience even when attending ITU events online.
- (3) To further improve the onsite participation experience by allowing participants to interact with remote participants in an interesting manner.
- (4) To provide a new opportunity for funding ITU through sponsorships, by allowing Member States and other interested entities to sponsor specific activities of virtual events in addition to physical events.

Background

ITU has been offering remote participation in ITU events since 2010. While the pandemic resulted in ITU not organizing any physical meetings since 16 March 2020, ITU remained fully operational and organized over 7600 virtual events from 16 March 2020 to 30 June 2021, with a total of more than 10,000 e-meeting sessions and over 280,000 remote/virtual participants.

Whilst virtual events attract more participation and can be more inclusive than physical events, virtual events do not provide participants with the same event experience that participants get from meeting each other at a physical venue. Discussions and negotiation during coffee breaks or participation in social events are difficult to replace with e-meetings.

Furthermore, the associated benefits for Member States hosting the e-meetings need to be increased to attract Member State interest in sponsoring and hosting virtual/hybrid events, where appropriate.

The VEV is intended to change that.

Concept

The idea of the VEV is to create a virtual reality conference experience for remote participants and at the same time, make physical meetings more interesting, as onsite participants can also interact with remote participants in a more natural manner. In line with Resolution 167 (Rev. Dubai 2018) on Strengthening and developing ITU capabilities for electronic meetings and means to advance the work of the Union, the VEV provides a uniform platform for attending events virtually, making it easier for participants to attend virtual sessions that may be running on different web-conference platforms (if for technical reasons, there is a need to use one platform instead of another). The chat function of the e-meeting platforms provides very limited features for participants to interact with each other. The VEV will provide a much **nicer, intuitive, and enjoyable to use interface** for participants to interact or socialize, while respecting their privacy. This will also mean new opportunities for delegates to organize virtual spontaneous or planned private side discussions, one-on-one or in small groups, which will help facilitate coordination and negotiations.

When an event is fully virtual, the imaginary **VEV site could be anywhere**. Consider that as an example, WRC23 will be held physically in host country X, while the preparatory meetings will be held virtually. If the

ITU membership so wishes, the **VEV can be designed to present a virtual event** venue in the host country, including getting out of the venue to see attractions in the host country X, in the form of videos, presentation materials or interactive participation. Similarly, this concept could apply to all events in the future.

When an event is physical with a significant number of remote participants, the VEV site could be a **virtual representation of the physical venue**, e.g. lounge area in between meeting rooms Popov, C and A. 360 degree cameras will transmit live video of the activities in the lounge to the remote participants and remote participants can reserve robots to move around the lounge area, interacting with the onsite participants.

With the expectation that virtual events/remote participation will continue beyond the pandemic – especially during the 4-year ITU relocation period – physical event premises that can integrate with multilingual virtual platforms will be in demand.

Preliminary Project Timeline

Task	Start	End
VEV conceptualization	1 May 21	6 Jul 21
Project funding	Sep 21	31 Jan 22
RFP	15 Feb 22	31 Mar 22
Proof of Concept implementation	16 May 22	19 Jun 22
Beta version of VEV	Aug 22	31 Aug 22
VEV in production	1 Sep 22	

Benefits of the VEV platform

With so many e-meetings organized by ITU per year, Member States can make use of the VEV to showcase their digital preparedness and increase the number of participants to the events they host, as well as improve delegate experience and satisfaction, thus strengthening the outcomes of ITU meetings and reinforcing the effectiveness of ITU’s activities.

In addition, by providing a more engaging and holistic conference/event experience, VEV could help in positioning a Member State as a leading destination for global and regional virtual and hybrid conferences, and thus increase the interest of delegates and organizers to return to the country for their professional events or private travel in the future.

Estimated project cost

One-time implementation cost of 700,000 CHF and yearly operational cost of 300,000 CHF.

Voluntary Contributions

Voluntary Contributions from Member States will be added to the temporary new building fund created by Council 2018 first session, earmarked for the VEV platform. It is proposed that the generosity of VEV contributors will be recognised on the VEV platform and/or at a suitable location in the new building.