|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-22) Bucharest, 26 September – 14 October 2022** |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| PLENARY MEETING | **Document 207-E** |
|  | **2 November 2022** |
|  | **Original: English** |
|  | |
| MINUTES  OF THE  SEVENTEENTH PLENARY MEETING | |
| Thursday, 13 October 2022, at 1440 hours | |
| **Chairman**: Mr S. SĂRMAȘ (Romania) | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Presentation of certificates | - |
| 2 | Twenty-seventh series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee – second reading (continued) | [197](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0197/en) |
| 3 | Twenty-fifth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee for first reading (B25) | [195](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0195/en) |
| 4 | Twenty-fifth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee – second reading | [195](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0195/en) |
| 5 | Oral report from Chairman of Committee 5 on ITRs | [DT/83](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-220926-TD-0083/en) |
| 6 | Time-limit for the deposit of declarations | - |

**1 Presentation of certificates**

* 1. The **Secretary-General** presented Mr Sebastian Burduja, Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitalization of Romania, with a certificate of recognition for his contribution to the development of ICTs in Romania and the successful hosting of the conference.
  2. The **Secretary-General** presented Mr Vlad Stoica, President of the National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications (ANCOM) of Romania, with a certificate of appreciation for his outstanding contribution to the organization of, and facilities provided for, the conference.

1. **Twenty-seventh series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee – second reading (Document** [**197**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0197/en)**) (continued)**

2.1 As indicated at the previous Plenary meeting earlier that day, the **Chairman** invited any further statements or interventions on the adoption of Resolution 139 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) approved in Document 197.

2.2 The **delegate of the United Arab Emirates** expressed her country’s disappointment at the course of discussions on Resolution 139 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), and the distortion of facts during those discussions whereby the views of some regional groups had been taken out of the context of the resolution. It was thought that they did not recognize the digital divide, despite the multiple contributions that had been submitted which emphasized the importance of ensuring inclusion of all individuals, irrespective of their age or needs, including persons with disabilities, persons with specific needs and indigenous peoples. The proposals had addressed all aspects of universal access and sought to bridge the digital divide for everyone through ensuring the accessibility of telecommunications/ICTs in the different regions and countries of the world. Unfortunately, those proposals had not been accepted. The United Arab Emirates had always supported women, youth and girls across all sectors and fields, both domestically and internationally, and continued to do so. Women accounted for 50 per cent of the members of the UAE Federal National Counciland one third of the members of the government’s cabinet, which included a young woman as Minister of State for Youth Affairs, who was leading national efforts to respond to the needs of youth in the country. There was no doubting the rapid steps being taken by her country to empower women, support youth and guarantee equal opportunities for all its citizens and residents. To that end, the government had established a national gender balance council, the aim of which was to achieve a gender balance across all decision-making posts and nationwide and to promote the country as a benchmark in gender balance, through launching pioneering initiatives. The United Arab Emirates therefore stood as an example of efforts to bridge the gender digital divide.

2.3 The **delegate of Tunisia** said that Arab women in general, and Tunisian women in particular, played, and would continue to play, a vital role in the country’s development at all levels, including political, diplomatic, social and economic, and their participation alongside men to that end was abundantly clear. Her country supported women and girls in accessing and enjoying the benefits of modern ICTs. The issue of gender discrimination should not have been mentioned: the Arab States, including Tunisia, did not draw distinctions between men and women.

2.4 The **delegate of the Netherlands** said that her country was a staunch promoter of the values set out in the statements by the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom and the statement made by Denmark on behalf of a number of like-minded countries, and would continue to prioritize them.

2.5 The **delegate of Mexico** expressed regret that it had not been possible to agree on a text aimed at protecting vulnerable peoples. Within the United Nations system,anything that was not explicit did not necessarily lead to action, to the detriment of vulnerable groups, including women, girls, young people, indigenous peoples, older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs. As a global community, the United Nations had already agreed to redouble efforts to reduce the digital divide within and between countries, with particular attention on the poorest, those in vulnerable situations and women and girls. That would be necessary in order to obtain a clearer outcome for vulnerable groups in terms of gender equality at the following plenipotentiary conference.

2.6 The **delegate of Oman** expressed support for the statements delivered by delegations of sister States, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Tunisia, in relation to support for all persons, without discrimination, in accessing telecommunications/ICTs as a means of bridging the digital divide. Her country was convinced that identifying specific categories of person in Resolution 139 risked leading to the exclusion of others. Oman stressed the importance of supporting women to ensure they were on an equal footing with men and enjoyed the same rights. The country’s legislative bases were predicated on Islamic law, in line with the country’s Basic Statute, under which women enjoyed equal rights without any restriction. At the political level, women played an important role in building Omani society, and thus the country sought to solidify women’s position in society and ensure that they continued to enjoy equal rights, as well to promote their important contribution in the service of the country across all sectors. With such rights, enshrined in law, women had assumed significant leadership positions in Oman and abroad.

2.7 The **delegate of Vanuatu** delivered the following statement:

“Vanuatu wishes this statement to be entered into the records of this meeting. Vanuatu expresses its support for the remarks made by Denmark and all Member States who have taken the floor to express their utmost disappointment. Vanuatu recognizes our vulnerable groups and gender equality, including our indigenous group, in our work. The way that this august meeting has been unable to reach consensus on advancing gender equality is concerning to us. Vanuatu is striving to progress towards achieving gender equality; and therefore we need support from all Member States for smaller island nations where we need to narrow the gap and ensure equality in all our work.”

2.8 The **delegate of Brazil**, endorsing the joint statement made by Denmark, said that he was deeply concerned by the lack of consensus on the promotion of gender equality, which was a crucial point on the Brazilian agenda for the conference. He nevertheless remained optimistic because voices were being raised to bridge the gender digital divide. More efforts were required and, while his country was frustrated at the outcome, it was also determined and had a vision for the future. It would continue to drive ITU forward by emphasizing diversity and inclusion, in order to ensure that no one was left behind.

2.9 The **delegate of** **Kuwait** said that her country accorded great importance to women and had established an association for Kuwaiti women and girls. Women occupied a number of ministerial posts in Kuwait, and her country had been one of the first in the region to have women in government. In addition, the country had a public authority for youth tasked with consolidating the role of youth in society and preparing young people to take up important roles in society.

2.10 The **delegate of Iraq** said that her delegation believed ITU to be a specialized international organization that sought to promote telecommunications for all, without exception. Iraq fully supported all efforts to empower all categories of person in society, including women and girls, persons with disabilities and older persons, and subscribed to the principles of universal connectivity and access to telecommunication/ICT services, on the premise that no one should be left behind. Women in Iraq were represented across all sectors; for example, more than one third of Iraqi members of parliament were women, and women had served in multiple successive governments. Her delegation likewise believed ITU to be a neutral organization that took into account the views of all countries in the world; thus, none of its instruments, documents or conference outcomes should include wording that ran counter to the cultures, religions and laws of its Member States. Her delegation looked forward to ITU continuing in that vein in the future.

2.11 The **delegate of Israel**, also supporting the statement by Denmark and other delegations holding the same views, said that the decisions taken, documents produced and standards set at the plenipotentiary conferencewould shape the work of ITU and in individual countries, and would consequently influence societies. It could not be overlooked that women’s rights were being trampled worldwide. He wondered what message was being sent to the courageous women who were risking their lives while fighting for their rights. Discussion of the resolution had been closed, but he questioned what the cost would be to those at risk of being left behind and what message was being sent by the conference.

2.12 The **delegate of Qatar** said that her country was committed to reinforcing women’s participation in the building of society. It sought to protect women’s rights to education and equal opportunities in terms of employment, convinced of the importance of empowering women for promoting peace, stability and economic growth and overcoming socio-economic challenges. Overall, her country sought to ensure that women in Qatar played a prominent role in society and public life. Women were now competing closely with men on the labour market. Qatar supported gender equality in terms of opportunities for education and training, in order to promote management and leadership skills among women, and emphasized the importance of empowering women and girls, persons with disabilities and all people without exception and ensuring universal access.

2.13 The **delegate of Sweden,** supporting the statements made by Denmark and others, called on all countries to recognize the importance of achieving gender equality, in order to leave no one behind. The fight for gender equality was and should be a top priority for ITU, in order to bridge the gender digital divide. It should also be stressed that vulnerable people were not dangerous people; they might be ordinary or extraordinary, but should not be considered dangerous.

2.14 The **delegate of Egypt** said that her country was making great efforts to support and empower women and girls. It sought to achieve inclusion of all categories of person, whether men, women, youth, older persons or persons with specific needs, in order to bridge the digital divide. Egyptian society comprised all such persons, and the State was endeavouring to meet their needs. Her delegation was there, under the aegis of the Union, to work in the interests of people, particularly those of developing countries, and would always seek consensus to that end. It would have wished to find common ground acceptable to all stakeholders on the matter at hand, but flexibility had been lacking. Rather than arriving at consensus on connecting the unconnected and bridging the digital divide as overarching concepts that applied to all categories of person, others had wished to refer to specific categories of person. The lack of consensus was disappointing for all, but it had been a multilateral failure and should not be attributed certain parties and not others. Women, youth and older persons were a clear priority for Arab States. In that regard, Egypt was striving to bridge the divide between the connected and the unconnected and was taking every measure to connect the unconnected in remote areas, inclusive of all categories of person that made up society. She also stressed the important role that the Union had to play in bridging the digital divide through its resolutions and actions arising therefrom.

2.15 The **delegate of Ireland** said that statistics showed that the demographic cohorts discussed in relation to Resolution 139 (for example, youth, women, girls, persons with disabilities, persons with specific needs, older persons and vulnerable groups) needed special attention and a focused approach from ITU to ensure that they were connected. The digital divide was not just geographic, it was also demographic, and the failure to reach a consensus on elements of Resolution 139 was regrettable. Ireland stood firmly with such values and believed that a unified effort was required to tackle the digital divide globally and to include the gender digital divide, which had a direct, negative impact on women and girls. Ireland would continue to promote and advocate for such values at ITU and other multilateral United Nations forums.

2.16 The **delegate of Kenya** expressed support for recognition of the vital role of complementary access networks, including community-based networks, in closing the digital divide. He welcomed the invitation to share information on open and interoperable network technologies and their essential role in promoting reliable, resilient broadband access systems and solutions. Enhancing the role of ITU in supporting enabling environments for affordable ICTs would significantly aid in closing access and usage gaps, especially in developing countries. Efforts to connect women, girls, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs should be the object of continued and determined efforts, taking into account the diversity of all peoples.

2.17 The **delegate of Saudi Arabia** said that there appeared to be no disagreement among delegations on the importance of empowering youth and women. In Saudi Arabia, youth comprised 40 per cent of the population and most of its delegation to the plenipotentiary conference. Women represented approximately 30 per cent of the ICT-sector workforce in Saudi Arabia, which was a higher percentage than in the European Union or among the Group of 20 (G20). There was no doubting that the Arab group and all those present at the meeting would work to make progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by empowering youth and women, combating poverty and ensuring a decent life for all.

2.18 The **delegate of Papua New Guinea** delivered the following statement:

“Papua New Guinea joins the other Member States to express its disappointment on the exclusion of women, girls, persons with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous and other vulnerable groups and those persons with specific needs in Resolution 139 on bridging digital divide. We were in favour of the proposed text to specifically include women, girls, persons with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous, other vulnerable groups and persons with specific needs which reflects the national policies of the countries working to address the widening digital divide and digital inclusion gap that is more prevalent within these groups of people. It is really saddening that this aspect of ending the digital divide could not be included in Resolution 139 and could not be acknowledged at the highest conference of ITU. This is contrary to the greater call by ITU on ‘Leaving No One Behind’. Papua New Guinea will continue to work closely with those Member States that recognize the widening digital divide for these groups of people and appeal that our work on addressing this issue is given recognition by ITU in the near future.”

2.19 The **delegate of Thailand**, expressing his country’s support for the statement by Denmark, reiterated the importance of gender issues, which extended to other vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities. While Thailand respected different opinions and accepted the consensus decision, it was hopeful that future conferences would achieve a better outcome. If the issues of bridging the digital divide and building an inclusive information society were not addressed at such meetings by the representatives present, then he questioned when they would be and by whom.

2.20 The **delegate of China** said that ITU had carried out many effective activities to bridge the digital divide. A high-level consensus had been reached on other key relevant resolutions, so although a consensus had not been reached on elements of Resolution 139, that did not mean that Member States of ITU had different opinions on bridging the digital divide. China called for all countries to join the efforts to promote connectivity for all people.

2.21 The **delegate of the Russian Federation** said that her country supported bridging the digital divide for all men and women, in order to increase access to telecommunication/ICT services and to improve and develop the digital skills and competence of experts. The Russian Federation, where gender equality had been enshrined in the Constitution for more than a century, considered such equality to be an essential developmental factor for ITU. It should not be forgotten that PP-18 had delivered specific instructions to avoid duplication in resolutions of the plenipotentiary conference and the Sectors. The delegation of the Russian Federation, in which women, young women, youth, older persons and the country’s various ethnic groups were significantly represented, welcomed the Union’s efforts in relation to Resolutions 70 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), 184 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and 30 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022).

2.22 The **delegate of Algeria** said that her country aligned itself with the comments made by other delegations in support of equality for all categories of person in society without any distinction. For Algeria, all individuals had the same status irrespective of sex or age. Thus, it had sought a global, comprehensive concept of digital inclusion, without distinction, since identifying specific groups risked omitting others.

2.23 The **Chairman**, noting that all the statements and interventions made would be reflected in the minutes, said that he wished to make a clarification on the working methods of the conference. Any representative of a Member State had the right to raise questions and make proposals on topics emanating from the Working Group of the Plenary or a committee. However, it had been agreed by the Plenary not to re-open for discussion any issues on which consensus had been reached. That policy in no way constituted a rule, but rather an agreed approach that had allowed the conference to be successful thus far.

**3 Twenty-fifth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee for first reading (B25) (Document** [**195**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0195/en)**)**

3.1 The **Chairman of the Editorial Committee** drew attention to the fact that both draft Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and draft Resolution 77 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) contained text in square brackets, in *resolves* 1 and *resolves* 5.4, respectively; the texts were therefore being submitted for consideration by the Plenary.

3.2 The **Chairman** said that informal consultations had resulted in agreement that the text in square brackets would be deleted from the two draft resolutions, on the understanding that the minutes of the Plenary would include the following instruction:

“The Plenipotentiary Conference instructs the ITU Council to schedule a WTPF in 2026.”

3.3 He took it that the conference agreed to that course of action.

3.4 It was so **agreed**.

**Draft Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) - World telecommunication/information and communication technology policy forum**

3.5 On the understanding set out in § 3.2 above, draft Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), on the world telecommunication/information and communication technology policy forum (WTPF), as amended, was **adopted**.

**Draft Resolution 77 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) - Scheduling and duration of conferences, forums, assemblies and Council sessions of the Union (2023-2027)**

3.6 On the same understanding, draft Resolution 77 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), on the scheduling and duration of conferences, forums, assemblies and Council sessions of the Union (2023-2027), as amended, was **adopted**.

3.7 The twenty-fifth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee for first reading (B25), as amended, was **approved**.

**4 Twenty-fifth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee – second reading (Document** [**195**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0195/en)**)**

4.1 The twenty-fifth series of texts submitted by the Editorial Committee (Document 195), as amended on first reading, was **approved** on second reading.

**5 Oral report from Chairman of Committee 5 on ITRs (Document** [**DT/83**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-220926-TD-0083/en)**)**

5.1 The **Chairman** said that there was no longer any need for an oral report from the Chairman of Committee 5 on the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs), as agreement had been reached in the meantime on how to proceed. A proposed draft revision of Resolution 146 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), on the periodic review of the ITRs, was contained in Document DT/83, which was being submitted to the Plenary by all regions as a common proposal for adoption. He welcomed the significant efforts made by Member States to achieve consensus.

5.2 The **delegate of** **Jordan** asked whether the document had been published in all six official languages of the Union and, if not, whether it was appropriate to approve it in English only.

5.3 The **Chairman** said that, as with Document 78(Add.9)(Rev.1) approved at the 12th plenary meeting, the intention was to consider the text in English and subsequently forward it to Committee 4 for linguistic alignment if necessary.

5.4 The **delegate of** **Jordan**, observing that the proposed revisions to Resolution 125 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) had been available in all six official languages when Document 78(Add.9)(Rev.1) had been submitted to the Plenary, sought clarification from the Legal Adviser as to the acceptability of the proposed way forward.

5.5 The **delegate of** **Canada**, welcoming the fact that consensus had been reached, suggested that any concerns regarding the Arabic version of the text could be addressed in consultation with those Arabic-speaking delegations that had been closely involved in the negotiations.

5.6 The **Legal Adviser** confirmed that there was no legal obstacle to approving Document DT/83 in one language, as proposed by the Chairman.

5.7 The draft revised resolution submitted to the Plenary was **adopted**, and Document DT/83 was **approved** on first and second readings.

5.8 The **delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran** said that reaching consensus on all issues before the conference, including the resolution on the ITRs, was a great achievement, attributable in large part to the outstanding work of the Chairman.

**6 Time-limit for the deposit of declarations**

6.1 The **Chairman** announced that declarations would be accepted until three hours after the close of the meeting, i.e. 1940 hours on Thursday, 13 October, and that the Plenary would convene at 0830 hours on Friday, 14 October, to take note of those declarations. The deadline for the deposit of additional declarations would be two hours after the close of that meeting; the final acts would be prepared and distributed as soon as possible thereafter, and the signing ceremony would take place at 1430 hours the same day.

**The meeting rose at 1640 hours.**

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:  
H. ZHAO S. SĂRMAŞ

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_