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| **Agenda item: PL 3** | **Document C23/32-E** |
| **12 June 2023** |
| **Original: English** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT | |
| **Purpose**  Based on the steps taken in the preparation for the 2023 session, this document proposes further improvements to Council preparations and deliberations to strengthen its strategic role and effectiveness.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **consider** the proposed improvements to the Council in light of the steps taken in preparation for the 2023 session and **provide guidance** for future sessions.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Organization effectiveness  **Financial implications**  Within current budget of the Council  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*Resolution 71*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-071-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference*; [C23/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0002/en); [C23/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0035/en); [C23/36](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0036/en); | |

# 1. Background

1.1 As part of the wide visioning process undertaken by the new leadership to improve ITU’s capacity to deliver on its priorities ([C23/36](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0036/en)) and in response to some Member States’ views, the secretariat has studied and analysed opportunities to improve the processes and working methods of the governing bodies of the Union.

1.2 The Council is a key pillar of ITU governance, acting as the Union’s governing body in the interval between Plenipotentiary Conferences. It was therefore considered important to consider how Council processes could be improved to achieve greater effectiveness.

1.3 Some steps proposed in this document have already been taken in the context of the preparation of the 2023 session. They were presented during the first informal virtual introductory meeting with councillors held on 13 February 2023, further shared with Member States of the Council via circular [DM-23/1003](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-DM-CIR-01003/en), and presented and discussed at the virtual thematic briefings. Feedback and inputs received from the Members States of the Council were taken into account.

# 2. Proposed steps towards a result-focused Council

2.1. Three main areas of potential improvements have been identified by the secretariat: (a) reinforcing the strategic role of the Council; (b) strengthening high-level engagement and dialogue with Member States of the Council; and (c) enhancing the preparatory process and facilitating decision-making.

2.2. The following proposals have emerged to address those items.

1. **Reinforcing the strategic of role of the Council**:

* ***1.*** As a new four-year cycle is starting between two plenipotentiary conferences, this is an appropriate time to strengthen the strategic role of the newly elected Member States of the Council in providing guidance to the new management team. Furthermore, identifying clearly the councillors appointed to serve on the Council was also perceived as essential to ensure a closer relationship during the four years of the mandate. The secretariat therefore issued circular DM-23/1000 inviting each Member State of the Council to appoint a councillor at senior decision-making level. The councillor would be the main contact for the secretariat and would be invited to consultations and meetings with the management team.
* ***2.*** The preparation of the agenda for the annual session should define and prioritize essential items for which the Council’s action and/or guidance is needed. The number of agenda items could be reduced to improve the overall management of the sessions by focusing on key discussions that would advance the implementation of the Union’s strategic plan.
* ***3.*** At the discretion of the Chairman of the Council, an annual theme for the session could be identified, making it possible to mobilize Members States on a specific topic linked to the implementation of the strategic plan. Side events could be held on that theme, with initiatives from Member States.
* ***4.*** To improve time management during the session and maximize the time for effective debate, certain documents not requiring discussion could be noted and/or adopted without being presented. The list of such documents could be developed in advance of the sessions in consultation with the Member States of the Council and approved at the inaugural plenary.
* ***5.*** With an enhanced preparatory process and a more focused agenda, the secretariat would suggest consideration be given to reducing the duration of the Council (e.g. six days) (see doc [C23/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0002/en)).
* ***6.*** To advance the implementation of the two strategic goals of the Union, advancing universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation ([Resolution 71](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-071-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference), the secretariat would encourage the Council to continue embracing inclusiveness by bringing a gender perspective to its work and supporting youth participation.

1. **Strengthening high-level engagement and dialogue with Member States of the Council**

* ***1.*** To provide the Council with an opportunity to frame its work in an overall international context and with a view to the agenda of the United Nations, as well as receive the guidance of high-level policy makers, the secretariat proposes the organization of a high-level segment on the first day of the Council. This high-level segment, which could be an integral part of the Council but with no formal outcomes, would give the opportunity for ministers or high-level officials of the Member States of the Council to provide their views on key priorities set by the Plenipotentiary Conference.
* ***2.*** To create a venue for less formal engagement and discussion under Chatham House Rules in advance of the 2023 session the secretariat proposed the organization of a retreat with councillors to explore opportunities, including for upscaling ITU governance, processes and systems.

1. **Enhancing the preparatory process and facilitating decision-making**

* ***1.*** The secretariat suggests enhancing the preparatory process of the annual session through a series of virtual thematic briefings for Member States of the Council. An informal virtual meeting with Councillors (13 February) and four virtual thematic briefings (19 April, 9 May, 31 May and 22 June) have been organized in advance of the 2023 sessions. These virtual thematic briefings aim at providing an overview of the items on the provisional agenda, highlighting specific actions requested by the Council, facilitating an early exchange of views, and replying to any concerns to facilitate informed decision-making at the Council session. They are designed to be informative, and non-decisional. Presentations given during these briefings would be made available on the Council website, with TIES access. The majority of the virtual thematic briefings was initially conducted in English. Future briefings could be provided with interpretation upon request, pending budgetary availability.
* ***2.*** The nomination of a regional focal point from among the Member States of the Council for each region could facilitate interaction between the secretariat and the regions in preparing for the sessions. Regional focal points could also be involved in pre-session consultations requiring regional positions.
* ***3.*** To facilitate the preparation of Council discussions, the secretariat will ensure that the documents are more focused, less descriptive and more decision-oriented. The template has been revamped. The documents now clearly highlight the linkage between the proposal and the strategic plan as well as possible financial implications. The secretariat will consider developing a methodology for the assessment of financial implications to ensure consistency of such information.
* ***4.*** The format of the annual report of activities and implementation of the strategic plan ([C23/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0035/en)) has been refreshed. The main body of the report is structured around themes of work and was reduced in length. A web-based platform has been created to present the implementation of Resolutions of the Plenipotentiary Conference requiring regular reporting to the Council, with the aim of limiting the number of standalone reports. The platform could be further developed to ensure ongoing reporting on the Resolutions.
* ***5*.** An annotated agenda for each annual session could be developed to promote better understanding of the different items in advance of the session.
* ***6*.** The new Council website will facilitate access to specific information for councillors, including dashboards on human resources and financial matters.

# 3. Way forward

The Council is invited to consider the proposed improvements to the Council in light of the steps taken in preparation for the 2023 session and provide guidance for future sessions.

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