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|  | **Document C23/109-E** |
| **6 September 2023** |
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| SUMMARY RECORD  OF THE  FOURTH PLENARY MEETING | |
| Tuesday, 18 July 2023, from 1435 to 1745 hours  **Chairman:** Mr C. MARTINEZ (Paraguay) | |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** | | 1 | Statement by the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization | - | | 2 | ITU activities on strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs | [C23/38](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0038/en), [C23/93(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0093/en) | | 3 | Twenty-five years of ITU’s work programme on gender equality | [C23/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0006/en), [C23/76](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0076/en), [C23/91+Corr.1](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0091/en) | | 4 | World Telecommunication and Information Society Day | [C23/17](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0017/en), [C23/DT/4](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0004/en) | | 5 | Periodic review of the International Telecommunication Regulations (continued) | [C23/12](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0012/en), [C23/66](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0066/en), [C23/73](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0073/en), [C23/77+Corr.1](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0077/en), [C23/88+Corr.1,2](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0088/en),  [C23/DT/5](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0005/en) | | 6 | Preparation for the 2026 world telecommunication/ICT policy forum (WTPF‑26) | [C23/13](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0013/en) | | 7 | Youth engagement and initiatives at ITU | [C23/63](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0063/en), [C23/67](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0067/en) | | 8 | Statement by Spain | - | | 9 | Gift to ITU from the United Kingdom | - | | |

**1 Statement by the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization**

1.1 The Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, Mr Daren Tang, delivered the following statement:   
<https://council.itu.int/2023/en/news/speeches/speech-director-general-of-wipo-daren-tang/>.

**2 ITU activities on strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs (Documents** [**C23/38**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0038/en) **and** [**C23/93(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0093/en)**)**

2.1 A representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C23/38, which contained a summary of ITU’s activities in relation to Resolution 130 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, its role as sole facilitator for WSIS Action Line C5 and decisions on strengthening its role in building confidence and security in the use of ICTs. The report was structured around the five pillars of the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) and demonstrated the complementary nature of the work of the three Sectors.

2.2 The councillor from Brazil introduced Document C23/93(Rev.1), which contained a draft decision instructing the Secretary-General and the Directors of the Bureaux – in line with WSIS Action Line C5 – to develop and maintain an informational resource for Member States that contained examples of best practices on cybersecurity and cyberresilience, sources of advice, assistance and guidance, and information about capacity-building programmes.

2.3 Numerous councillors and two observers expressed support for the draft decision.

2.4 Several councillors and two observers emphasized the importance of strengthening global cybersecurity and underscored ITU’s capacity-building role in that regard. Some councillors reiterated their countries’ commitment to supporting the work of ITU in the area of cybersecurity and highlighted national efforts to that end.

2.5 One councillor called for the establishment of a legally binding global compact on the peaceful use of ICTs that would prohibit the use of social media for inciting war or violence, close the digital divide, remove obstacles to ICT investment in developing countries, fill the gaps in existing cybersecurity legislation and support international cooperation to address current and future threats, including through capacity building, the exchange of best practices and the standardization of classification systems for cybercrimes. ITU must play a central role in such efforts.

2.6 The representative of the General Secretariat, responding to questions, said that, while ITU had not participated in any meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security, it was working closely with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on related initiatives. ITU participates as an observer in the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies and has organized side events on capacity building. In addition, the secretariat highlighted the two-year review of the GCA, under which it had submitted two reports to the Plenipotentiary Conference. With regard to capacity building, ITU was developing cybersecurity training programmes for staff members and diplomats. Furthermore, pursuant to Resolution 130 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), the secretariat had developed a platform for experience-sharing with regard to cybersecurity activities and was working with the United Nations to map ongoing activities. No single repository of information was available, however. While he agreed that such a resource would be valuable, he cautioned that it would require time and resources to develop.

2.7 A representative of BDT said that, in response to a request from the United Kingdom to the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG), BDT had agreed to carry out a mapping exercise of current and planned cybersecurity capacity-building activities. The results of that exercise could support the development of the proposed information resource. In the light of the difficulties experienced in obtaining data from Member States during the development of the Global Cybersecurity Index, however, he emphasized that any effort to create a new information resource would rely on input from both the secretariat and the Member States.

2.8 The councillor from Brazil said that, in response to comments received from Member States on the first draft of the proposed decision, his delegation had revised the text to remove references to tasks assigned to the Council Working Group on WSIS and the Sustainable Development Goals (CWG-WSIS&SDG) with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts.

2.9 The Council **noted** Document C23/38 and **adopted** the decision contained in Document C23/93(Rev.1).

**3 Twenty-five years of ITU’s work programme on gender equality   
(Documents**[**C23/6**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0006/en)**,** [**C23/76**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0076/en) **and** [**C23/91+Corr.1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0091/en)**)**

3.1 A representative of the General Secretariat, introducing Document C23/6, said that digitalization had become an essential aspect of life, yet women and girls faced disparities in access to and use of digital technologies and the gender digital divide limited their full participation in modern society. Bridging that divide would require sustained commitment from all stakeholders. A better-resourced One ITU approach was necessary to support the priority areas described in the report and the Member States were therefore requested to provide financial and in-kind support to that end. He thanked those Member States that had already contributed to work in that area.

3.2 The councillor from Spain introduced Document C23/91+Corr.1, a multicountry contribution sponsored by 48 Member States containing a draft resolution to mark the 25th anniversary of Resolution 70 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), itself based on WTDC Resolution 7 (Valletta, 1998), which had added a gender perspective to ITU’s work for the first time. The draft resolution requested ITU to elaborate a gender action plan, to be submitted to the Council for approval in 2024, with a reporting and coordination mechanism for all three Sectors. It further requested the creation, within existing budgetary resources, of a unit on gender equality within the executive office of the Secretary-General. Informal consultations on the wording of the draft resolution were ongoing.

3.3 The councillor from Egypt, introducing the multicountry proposal sponsored by eight Member States contained in Document C23/76, and noting that ITU had launched a number of initiatives in recent years, including the Network of Women for WTDC (NoW4WTDC) and the ITU Women in Standardization Expert Group (WISE), requested the establishment of one unified overarching body that encompassed all ITU initiatives for women while saving and leveraging resources in a One ITU approach. Progress towards establishing such a body should be presented to Council-24.

3.4 Councillors commended ITU for its work on gender equality and its commitment to closing the gender digital divide. They supported the scaling of capacity for women both within ITU and in the ICT sector at large, including targeted capacity-building programmes. One councillor called for more research to identify the root causes of gender disparities in ICT access and participation. Some councillors expressed disappointment that ITU had not performed as well as other organizations within the United Nations system, particularly in terms of appointing women to senior management positions.

3.5 Endorsing the One ITU approach, two councillors expressed support for the establishment of a new overarching body as described in Document C23/76. Two others indicated their support for Document C23/91.

3.6 Several councillors welcomed Document C23/6. They underlined the value of International Girls in ICT Day and commended the Digital Innovation Challenge launched by ITU in collaboration with The Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA), calling for more resources to boost women’s participation in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. One councillor requested that ITU should give more consideration to protection of women and girls, including women journalists, from harassment online.

3.7 The representative of the General Secretariat thanked Member States for their comments and confirmed that proposals for capacity building and research on the root causes of gender disparities in ICT would be taken on board. Training programmes on digital entrepreneurship and on management skills for women were already in place and available through the ITU Academy; others on mainstreaming gender in digital policies would be available later in the year. Member States’ continued support regarding United Nations system-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) reporting and in all areas of ITU’s work on gender equality in ICT would be highly appreciated.

3.8 The Director of TSB said that ITU-T and TSB actively promoted gender equality, including in NoW4WTDC. He fully subscribed to the One ITU approach and assured councillors that ITU would pursue its efforts to bridge the digital gap and increase participation by women at its meetings.

3.9 The Chairman invited the Council to note the report in Document C23/6; to continue informal discussions on Documents C23/76 and C23/91+Corr.1; and to report on the outcome of those discussions to a subsequent plenary meeting.

3.10 It was so **agreed**.

**4 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (Documents**[**C23/17**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0017/en) **and** [**C23/DT/4**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0004/en)**)**

4.1 A representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C23/17 containing a report on World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) celebrated on 17 May 2023 under the theme “Empowering the least developed countries through information and communication technologies”. The report recorded ITU’s call for the value of pledges for digitalizing the world to increase to USD 100 billion by 2026 and further invited councillors to present proposals for WTISD‑2024. One proposal had been received from China and one from the United Kingdom.

4.2 The Chairman confirmed that, following informal consultations, the theme of “Digital innovation for sustainable development”, proposed by China, would be adopted for WTISD-24 and the theme of “Gender equality in digital transformation”, proposed by the United Kingdom, would be adopted for WTISD-25, as reflected in the draft new resolution contained in Document C23/DT/4.

4.3 The Council **noted** the report in Document C23/17 and **adopted** the resolution set out in Document C23/DT/4.

**5 Periodic review of the International** **Telecommunication Regulations (continued) (Documents** [**C23/12**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0012/en)**,** [**C23/66**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0066/en)**,** [**C23/73**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0073/en)**,** [**C23/77+Corr.1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0077/en)**,** [**C23/88+Corr.1,2**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0088/en) **and** [**C23/DT/5**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0005/en)**)**

5.1 The councillor from the Bahamas, reporting on the successful outcome of informal consultations with Member States, regional coordinators and interested parties, said that, as required by Resolution 146 (Rev. Bucharest 2022), terms of reference for the periodic review of the International Telecommunication Regulations by the expert group on ITRs had been agreed. The consensus text, contained in a draft revision to Resolution 1379 (C16, last amended C19) set out in Document C23/DT/5, represented a delicate balance between contributions submitted by Member States in Documents C23/66, C23/73, C23/77+Corr.1 and C23/88+Corr.1 and 2.

5.2 The Council **adopted** the revision to Resolution 1379 (C16, last amended C19) set out in Document C23/DT/5.

**6 Preparation for the 2026 world telecommunication/ICT policy forum (Document**[**C23/13**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0013/en)**)**

6.1 A representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C23/13, which reflected the requirement under Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) for the Council to determine the duration, date, venue, agenda and themes for the world telecommunication/ICT policy forum to be held in 2026 (WTPF-26).

6.2 One councillor suggested that a final decision on the proposals could be taken at Council-24. One observer requested that an informal expert group be convened as soon as possible in 2023 to prepare proposals on themes for WTPF-26 for submission to Council-24.

6.3 The Council **noted** the report in Document C23/13.

**7 Youth engagement and initiatives at ITU (Documents** [**C23/63**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0063/en) **and** [**C23/67**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0067/en)**)**

7.1 A representative of the General Secretariat, introducing the report in Document C23/63, said that its purpose was to update the Council on implementation of the ITU youth strategy. The Union continued to engage colleagues across the organization, including through the Generation Connect initiative, supporting the participation of young people in ITU events and conferences and promoting internships, junior professional officers and young professional programmes and partnerships with academia. Work was currently under way to enhance the youth strategy to ensure that youth could contribute to ITU events and meetings. In accordance with Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022), Councillors were requested to continue to support initiatives to promote youth participation with voluntary and in-kind contributions.

7.2 The councillor from Canada introduced Document C23/67, which contained proposals to strengthen the preparatory process for the next ITU Generation Connect Global Youth Summit; the purpose was to deliver meaningful youth engagement in policy- and decision‑making processes that would enable young people to become a driving force for societal change. Young people were eager to participate in platforms and networks that were diverse and representative and to express their concerns about their digital future. It was hoped that the next youth summit would be held back-to-back with the next WTDC.

7.3 Many councillors commended ITU for taking steps to attract young people to its work and expressed their wholehearted support for meaningful youth participation and engagement. Young people should be empowered to share their experiences and deepen their understanding of telecommunications and ICTs. One councillor recalled that his country had sponsored youth participation from the Asia and the Pacific region to the Youth Summit (Kigali, 2022), thereby enabling young people to form lasting contact with fellow participants.

7.4 Many councillors expressed support for Document C23/67, underlining that young people should be involved in the design, organization and choice of themes for the next youth summit and that young people from all regions should be encouraged and enabled to participate. The councillor from Thailand said that, as host country of WTDC-25, Thailand would be pleased to host the next youth summit back-to-back with the conference and to ensure youth participation at WTDC‑25 itself. Many councillors expressed appreciation for that proposal and supported it in principle.

7.5 Councillors from developing countries expressed special appreciation for the internship programmes and partnerships with academia. They requested that additional consideration be given to promoting inter-generational dialogue; ensuring that opportunities for participation were extended to young people from least developed countries; and supporting the adoption of digital literacy in education, starting from primary school.

7.6 Several councillors, referring to past discussions in TDAG, requested that a working group be formed to take forward preparations for the next youth summit, with the participation of youth and other stakeholders. One councillor requested that the youth summit be held separately from other meetings and its outcomes reported independently. One observer, while expressing support for the youth summit in principle, disagreed with the proposal, as formulated, to allow the uncensored and unfiltered expression of youth opinions. Further work should be done on the subject by TDAG.

7.7 The Secretary-General said that her understanding of the value of events for young people had deepened following her encounter with a former Youth Forum participant from Nigeria who had subsequently founded an initiative supporting digital inclusion. The opportunities for engagement and mentorship provided by ITU could be life changing.

7.8 The Chairman proposed that the Council take note of the report contained in Document C23/63 and the contribution in Document C23/67 as well as the comments made during the discussion; take note of Thailand’s offer to host the global youth summit back-to-back with WTDC‑25; and invite the Director of BDT to inform TDAG of progress on preparation of the youth summit and the secretariat to report back to Council-24 on the matter.

7.9 It was so **agreed**.

**8 Statement by Spain**

8.1 A statement was delivered by Mr Matias Gonzalez Martin (Secretary General for Telecommunications and Audiovisual Communications Services)[[1]](#footnote-1), the text of which is available at <http://council.itu.int/2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/09/C23-Spain-Statement-Matias-Gonzalez_en.pdf>.

**9 Gift to ITU from the United Kingdom**

9.1 Mr Simon Manley, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, United Kingdom Mission to WTO, the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, presented a gift to ITU on behalf of the United Kingdom of an iconic, bright-red model K6 telephone box designed in 1935. In the United Kingdom, and perhaps for many people around the world, the red telephone box stood as a symbol of connectivity for all, and thus would have its place in an organization whose fundamental and most important task was to connect the unconnected.

9.2 On behalf of ITU and its membership, the Secretary-General extended her sincere thanks to the United Kingdom for a generous gift which was not only aesthetic and iconic, but clearly resonated with the goals and aims of the Union.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:  
D. BOGDAN-MARTIN C. MARTINEZ

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1. Statement delivered to the Council in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Administration and Management on Wednesday, 19 July 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)