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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C24/100-E** |
| **21 May 2024** |
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| Contribution from Mexico, Panama (Republic of) and Paraguay (Republic of) | |
| MEASURES TO IMPROVE, PROMOTE AND STRENGTHEN ITU FELLOWSHIPS | |
| **Purpose**  The Administration of Mexico and the co-signatories invite the Council to consider its proposals for the improvement, promotion and strengthening of ITU fellowships.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **consider** and **discuss** the proposals.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*Resolution 25 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-025-e.pdf) *and* [*Resolution 213 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-213-e.pdf) *of the Plenipotentiary Conference; Council Documents* [*C24/25*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0025/en)*,* [*C23/25*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0025/en)*,* [*C23/INF/7*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0007/en)*;*  [*Document TDAG-24/12*](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0012/en) | |

Introduction

Resolution 213 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on measures to improve, promote and strengthen ITU fellowships, instructs the Secretary-General to take measures that promote inclusiveness and participation by Member States in ITU meetings and events and ensure that fellowships are awarded in a fair and transparent manner with a view to maintaining equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and the inclusion of delegates with disabilities and with specific needs. It also instructs the Secretary-General to prepare annually a report on fellowships which includes information and analysis on, *inter alia*, the ITU Sectors, number of fellowships and the beneficiary regions and countries. The resolution also requires the review of existing criteria for awarding fellowships.

In addition, Resolution 25 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on strengthening the ITU regional presence, instructs the Secretary-General to submit each year to the Council a report on the regional presence containing, for each specific regional and area office, detailed information on how the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan and the four-year rolling operational plans of the General Secretariat and the three Sectors are being delivered, including, inter alia, detailed information on fellowships awarded.

Background

The 10th meeting of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR), held in September 2019, discussed the possibility of modifying the criteria for eligibility, award and selection of fellowships for activities funded through the ITU regular budget, based on contributions submitted by two delegations. It was agreed to prepare a consolidated document reflecting the contributions and comments made during that meeting. That document was then presented to the 11th meeting of CWG-FHR, held in February 2020.

During the 2020 session of the Council, the Chair of CWG-FHR presented the report of CWG-FHR (Document [C20/50](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0050/en)), containing a consolidated proposal on the policy for awarding fellowships for events and activities funded through the ITU regular budget and the list of eligible countries. The document entered into force in 2021 with the publication of Service Order [21/02](https://www.itu.int/en/fellowships/Documents/2021/SO_21-02_E.pdf), on policy for awarding fellowships for events and activities funded through the ITU regular budget. It defines a fellowship as a specially tailored or selected training activity that provides a monetary grant to a qualified individual for the purpose of fulfilling special learning objectives, with the aim of promoting inclusiveness and participation by Member States in ITU events and activities, which include training, study tours and in-service training, the primary objective being to enhance expertise in telecommunications and information and communication technologies, particularly in developing countries.

In relation to the above, the criteria for awarding fellowships provide that Member States eligible to receive ITU fellowships are those classified by the United Nations as developing countries, which include least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and that consideration to grant fellowships to high-income developing countries on the list shall only be made subject to available resources and after first fulfilling requests from other eligible Member States listed as low-income, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle-income developing countries.

In addition, it is worth noting the information provided by the General Secretariat in Document [C23/25](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0025/en), on strengthening the regional presence, complemented by Document [C23/INF/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0007/en), which was presented to the 2023 session of the Council. According to that information, some 224 fellowships funded through the ITU regular budget were awarded in 2022, of which 109 fellowships (48.66 per cent) were awarded to the Africa region, 44 (19.64 per cent) to the Arab States region, 27 (12.05 per cent) to the Asia and the Pacific region, 16 (7.14 per cent) to the Commonwealth of Independent States region, 8 (3.57 per cent) to the Europe region and 20 (8.92 per cent) to the Americas region.

At the 31st meeting of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG), Document [TDAG-24/12](https://www.itu.int/md/D22-TDAG31-C-0012/en), on the ITU-D operational plan for 2024, was presented, providing a breakdown of the budget by beneficiary region and showing that, as with the operational plan for 2023, more than half of the budget for the operational plan for 2024 (54 per cent) had been earmarked for globally focused outputs and multi-regional activities, while approximately 7-8 per cent of the budget had been evenly distributed among outputs that meet various ITU-D priorities and enablers for the benefit of the six ITU regions.

Proposal

Considering the Union's continuing interest in promoting the physical participation of developing countries in ITU events through the awarding of fellowships, the Administration of Mexico and the co-signatories consider it important for ITU to provide information on the number of fellowships granted, and to provide an assessment of the fellowships awarded by region and the fellowship applications received both by region and by country, as equitable geographical distribution is clearly lacking.

While it is important to prioritize the awarding of fellowships to developing and least developed countries to facilitate their active participation in ITU activities, geographical distribution is necessary in order to ensure an equitable regional presence, which would promote the exchange of ideas by including different regional perspectives in discussions. Similarly, the Administration of Mexico and the co-signatories consider it necessary to ensure that fellowships are awarded in a way that promotes gender balance and the inclusion of delegates with disabilities and delegates with specific needs.

Finally, the Administration of Mexico and the co-signatories consider it necessary to ensure a better budget distribution by region, since the largest percentage of resources is allocated to global initiatives, which leaves a limited budget available for regional initiatives and for carrying out necessary associated activities, including the granting of fellowships to attend ITU events. In view of the foregoing, the Administration of Mexico and the co-signatories reiterate the importance of implementing Resolution 213 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Resolution 25 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and requests:

1) that the ITU secretariat ensure that fellowships are awarded in a fair and transparent manner with a view to maintaining equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and the inclusion of delegates with disabilities and with specific needs, in accordance with *resolves* 2 of Resolution 213 (Rev. Dubai, 2018);

2) that the ITU secretariat report on guidelines taken into consideration in determining the budget allocated for fellowships, how fellowships are distributed by region, and how fellowships are distributed by country;

3) that the ITU secretariat provide information on the number of fellowship applications it receives per region or country and the number it awards and declines, as well as the percentage of fellowships awarded to men and women and the percentage of fellowships awarded to persons with disabilities or persons with specific needs, with a view to identifying issues to be addressed in order to improve equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, in order to analyse and identify factors that could help to ensure that the awarding of fellowships is equitable among countries, balanced in terms of gender and inclusive of persons with disabilities;

4) that the ITU Secretariat analyse the fellowship application process and consult with Member States in order to identify whether they consider the process difficult or inaccessible and, if necessary, to analyse possible improvements in the established format and process.

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