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|  | **Document C24/119-E** |
| **29 August 2024** |
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| **SUMMARY RECORD****OF THE****NINTH PLENARY MEETING** |
| Thursday, 13 June 2024, from 0940 to 1415 hours**Chair**: Mr F. SAUVAGE (France) |

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|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Youth engagement and initiatives at ITU | [C24/31](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0031/en), [C24/99(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0099/en) |
| 2 | Report on ITU’s programme on gender equality including updates on Council-23 decisions | [C24/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0006/en) |
| 3 | Status report on assistance and support to Palestine (*continued*) | [C24/69](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0069/en), [C24/103(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0103/en), [C24/DT/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-240604-TD-0010/en) |

# 1 Youth engagement and initiatives at ITU (Documents [C24/31](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0031/en) and [C24/99(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0099/en))

1.1 A representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C24/31, which contained a report on youth engagement and initiatives at ITU, updating the Council on activities carried out in the implementation of Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on empowerment of youth through telecommunication/ICT. Attention was drawn to the ITU fund that had been established to support the Young Professionals Programme (YPP), to which Member States were kindly invited to contribute.

1.2 The councillor from Mexico introduced a multicountry contribution in Document C24/99(Rev.1) sponsored by four Member States, which contained proposals for improving youth engagement across several initiatives and existing programmes at ITU. The councillor drew attention to the need to continue empowering young people. It was emphasized that it would be necessary that initiatives and programmes consider equitable use of the six languages of the Union, be inclusive and seek to engage all groups of young people including young people with disabilities and persons belonging to indigenous communities.

1.3 Councillors expressed appreciation for the report in Document C24/31 and for ITU’s efforts and actions to engage young people in its activities and programmes. Several councillors commended the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), the Youth Task Force, Generation Connect initiative, Girls in ICTs programme, the junior professional officers (JPO) programme in particular and supported the establishment of the YPP fund. A number of councillors reported the successful participation of young nationals of their countries in internships or in the JPO programme. Several councillors having emphasized that cultivating the next generation of telecommunication and ICT professionals was vital to the sustainability of the Union, one councillor called on ITU to create more longer-term opportunities for those who had completed one of the programmes such as YPP, using appropriate mechanisms such as voluntary separation programmes and creation of vacant posts.

1.4 Several councillors emphasized that young people had a right to participate in public affairs and should play an important role in shaping policies that would affect their future. In that regard, one councillor hoped that open and inclusive youth participation should be considered at the next Youth Summit and at the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-25) allowing young participants to express their views freely in the meetings they attended.

1.5 One councillor underlined the particular importance of increasing the number of girls in ICT, enhancing the role of young women in the digital economy and leadership positions, and amplifying youth voices in policy-making.

1.6 Several councillors commended and supported the multicountry contribution contained in Document C24/99(Rev.1), acknowledging the desirability of linguistic inclusion through the provision of greater multilingual support; inclusion of young people with disabilities and from indigenous communities; and particular focus on regional participation.

1.7 Replying to questions from councillors and an observer, the representative of the General Secretariat said that ITU measured its youth activities and engagement in line with Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and WTDC Resolution 76 (Rev. Kigali, 2022). Since 2021, ITU has been measuring youth engagement using the United Nations key performance indicators and the framework outlined in the Youth 2030 progress report. On the YPP, more data on the distribution of YPP applicants could be provided at Council-25. It was also emphasized that YPP did prioritize applications from under-represented developing countries.

1.8 With regard to ensuring Union-wide and regional involvement, she noted that the Youth Task Force comprised 20 members of staff representing the three Sectors, the General Secretariat and the regional offices, and was working to ensure that the youth engagement strategy was aligned across the Union. YPP positions would be distributed across the three Sectors and the General Secretariat.

1.9 Noting the call to amplify diverse young voices, she highlighted that both Generation Connect and the YAB had regional representatives, and the programmes were working with other networks in order to engage different communities, including young people, in the ICT sector. The Union carried out many programmes with academia, with a focus on capstone research projects that were usually conducted under faculty supervision, thereby helping young students to learn about ITU's work. It also held competitions to engage young students with the Union's work and the latest technologies.

1.10 The Chair took it that the Council agreed to note Document C24/31 and the creation of the ITU YPP fund; to invite Member States to contribute to the fund; and to take note of the proposals in Document C24/99(Rev.1).

1.11 It was so **agreed**.

# 2 Report on ITU’s programme on gender equality including updates on Council-23 decisions (Document [C24/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0006/en))

2.1 A representative of the General Secretariat recalled that, in addition to the annual reports requested by Resolution 70 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Council-23 had further instructions, including the creation of a functional unit on gender and elaboration of a new gender action plan with a reporting and coordination mechanism for all three Sectors within ITU on gender-related activities. Document C24/6 provided a status report covering targeted interventions to address the gender digital divide as well as institutional gender mainstreaming across ITU. Pursuant to Council Decision 631 (C23), the Gender Equality and Mainstreaming (GEM) implementation plan for 2024-2025 was provided in annex to the document. The plan is a “living” document to be updated and amended as necessary.

2.2 Many councillors and one observer thanked the secretariat for the report, welcoming the progress of ITU’s commitment to gender issues, and ITU’s efforts in tackling gender equality in ICTs as well as in gender mainstreaming within ITU. Strong support was expressed for some of the targeted initiatives to address the gender digital divide, such as Her CyberTracks, EQUALS in Tech and the Girls in ICT Day. Significant appreciation was also expressed for the Network of Women (NoW) initiatives. One councillor suggested that NoW could facilitate the sharing of experience among women at the regional level, serve as a tool to promote gender parity at national level and within ITU, and should be deployed at the “One ITU” level. Two councillors applauded the recent launch of the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders by the Secretary-General as part of the WSIS+20 high-level event.

2.3 Two councillors acknowledged the ITU gender dashboard, which supports a data-driven approach for promoting increased opportunities for women’s leadership in ITU, including in its events and working groups, and hence promoting equal representation of women staff and participants. It is essential that women, especially young women, be party to decision-making processes through direct involvement in the work of ITU. Several councillors and one observer expressed support for the GEM implementation plan, which should bring ITU into line with United Nations best practices, including the benchmarks outlined in the UN-SWAP accountability framework. A number of councillors noted, however, that ITU still fell well short of the targeted parity: the low proportion of women in senior leadership posts was a particular cause for concern.

2.4 ITU was encouraged to continue its efforts to improve both the representation of women staff in leadership positions and the equal participation of women in ITU events and activities. Capacity-building initiatives for women staff and delegates were specifically mentioned, as well as the introduction of measurable targets and timelines for achieving gender parity, with corresponding data collection, and monitoring as well as the review of the effectiveness of existing programmes and initiatives. A further councillor expressed support for the commitment to establish an internal staff feedback mechanism and requested that due attention be paid therein to the integrity of confidential submissions.

2.5 The representative of the General Secretariat, responding to the points and questions raised, said that more human resources were to be allocated to the functional unit on gender, which would contribute to progress in 2024 and beyond. The GEM plan, apart from aligning with UN-SWAP, serves to map the multiple directives set out in the various resolutions to ensure a coordinated “One ITU” approach to gender mainstreaming. ITU’s mandate on gender equality is broader in scope than many might realize, and progress is being made in tracking all the different elements: conference/assembly instructions to the Secretary-General and Bureaux directors, Council decisions, oversight recommendations and other elements such as the system-wide gender frameworks with which ITU is to comply.

2.6 Regarding ITU’s low UN-SWAP ratings, she explained that the UN-SWAP indicator scores did not roll over but were re-set each year. While the digital gender gap remained a challenge, as did ITU’s internal representation of women, and performance on the financial indicators, other indicators in regard to capacity assessment as well as the new staff engagement survey would be reflected in 2024 reporting. The gender unit would also certainly have a positive impact. ITU’s ratings were currently on a par with those of other technical organizations and entities.

2.7 Regarding resources, greater funding was indeed required, and ITU would welcome additional resources to fully deliver on its gender goals. As reported in § 3.5 of Document C24/6, ITU hoped to set a funding benchmark for gender-related work, in line with United Nations best practice and results-based management, and the relevant UN-SWAP performance indicators (No. 9 on Financial resource tracking and No. 10 on Financial resource allocation) and gender markers (a financial tool to code or “mark” projects, outputs or activities so as to be able to track the extent to which they contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women).

2.8 The Acting Chief of the Transformation Team outlined the different actions and measures being taken by the Union and its Human Resources Development Department to increase the number of women in D-level posts and to ensure that the recruitment process maximized the chance that a woman would be the successful candidate.

2.9 The Council **noted** the report contained in Document C24/6.

# 3 Status report on assistance and support to Palestine (*continued*) (Documents [C24/69](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0069/en), [C24/103(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0103/en) and [C24/DT/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-240604-TD-0010/en))

3.1 The Chair said that Document C24/DT/10 contained a proposal by the Chair which had been prepared following extensive consultations on the revised draft resolution on assistance and support to Palestine for rebuilding its telecommunication sector. He believed that there was widespread support for the proposal, in which the draft resolution in Document C24/103(Rev.1) had been modified by removing the words “by the occupying power” from the preambular paragraphs *deploring in this regard* *a)* and *c)*. He trusted that delegations had been able to consult their capitals on the revised text during the course of that morning. He did not believe that further negotiations would improve the text, which he presented to the Council for adoption.

3.2 The councillor from the United States said that her delegation had worked diligently to engage the drafters of the resolution to address their significant concerns with the text, but the concerns remained. Therefore, the United States could not support the draft resolution in its current form. The United States remained focused on the shared goal of advancing digital connectivity in the region, but the draft resolution did not further that goal. The United States had repeatedly identified three discrete areas of concern which, had they been addressed, would have mitigated politically sensitive topics that lacked relevance to telecommunication capacity and development and would have sharpened the resolution’s focus on connectivity. The draft resolution actually undermined cooperation and digital connectivity between the Palestinians and Israelis. She strongly urged members to refrain from adopting a resolution that did not have consensus support.

3.3 The Chair said that the objection of the United States was duly noted and would be recorded in the summary record of the meeting.

3.4 The councillor from the United Kingdom, while appreciating the efforts of the Chair and all parties who had tried to reach agreement on what was a very important resolution, said that the United Kingdom had some remaining and important concerns that were not fully reflected in the current version of the text and did not believe that the text enjoyed full consensus.

3.5 The Chair said that the objection of the United Kingdom was also duly noted.

3.6 The councillor from Paraguay said that the draft resolution presented in the proposal by the Chair had not achieved consensus, since it did not sufficiently meet all countries’ concerns and diverging views remained. The body of the resolution should better reflect the thrust of its title, which was general in scope. ITU was a technical and specialized forum, and it should prioritize matters within its mandate; engaging in polarization would not contribute to the effective fulfilment of its objectives. The consequence of the present situation was that, once again, the needs of the Palestinian people for assistance would not be met.

3.7 The Chair said that Paraguay’s intervention was duly noted.

3.8 In the ensuing debate, a large number of councillors and observers expressed support for the proposal set out in Document C24/DT/10, many urging that it be adopted by consensus. Some councillors, observing that consensus had not yet been reached, advocated that more time be allowed for a final effort to achieve full consensus on the draft resolution.

3.9 Many councillors and observers made reference to ITU’s long and valued tradition of consensus, which every effort should be made to uphold. Consensus was not only important for the resolution at hand but should constitute an objective *per se*, in order to avoid practices that jeopardized unity within the Union. Several councillors were of the view that every effort had been made in the draft resolution to accommodate all concerns, that the points of convergence far outweighed points of divergence and that the text thus offered an acceptable level of consensus and the best opportunity for the Council to fulfil the Union’s mandate of providing assistance to a country in need.

3.10 Many councillors and observers considered that significant progress had been achieved in the negotiations on the draft resolution, thanks to the great flexibility displayed in a constructive spirit of compromise. Major concessions had been made to accommodate concerns identified, sacrificing what many considered to be important references to occupation and humanitarian catastrophe, which were a reality and, moreover, widely referenced in other internationally agreed texts. Some felt that those concessions had not been reciprocated, when balance was an important element of negotiation in good faith.

3.11 They further pointed out that the language used in the resolution was totally consistent with that employed in existing agreed texts, not only within the wider United Nations system —be it, for example, in resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and Security Council (UNSC) or those of other United Nations agencies— but also within ITU itself, in resolutions of all its top-level conferences and assemblies. Moreover, a number of very similar resolutions had been adopted expeditiously and even with a marked enthusiasm in regard to support for rebuilding telecommunication infrastructure in other countries, most recently Ukraine. The Council must steer clear of double standards.

3.12 Many councillors and observers emphasized that the resolution as drafted focused squarely on technical telecommunication matters and on assistance in the reconstruction of destroyed telecommunication infrastructure and restoration of services. As such, it was firmly in line with ITU’s mandate and mission. Connecting the world was the core value on which ITU was founded, and there could be no connectivity without infrastructure. It was ITU’s legal and moral duty to help countries in need rebuild their infrastructure, in order to support connectivity and guarantee the right to access to vital telecommunication/ICT services and to enjoy the benefits of a functioning modern network. Palestine was no exception.

3.13 Finally, referring to the dire situation in the Gaza Strip and the daily suffering and insecurity of the Palestinian people which could not be ignored, councillors underlined the importance and urgency of the actions prescribed in the draft resolution. Those actions were essential for restoring telecommunications and connectivity to support both vital immediate emergency services and humanitarian actions and for longer-term recovery in line with the restoration plan called for in the recently adopted UNSC resolution; and they were needed forthwith. Adoption of the resolution by the Council must thus not be put off. One councillor said that it was inconceivable that the Council should conclude its business without having reaffirmed its collective belief that everyone had an equal right to benefit from modern and reliable telecommunications, and no one should be left behind.

3.14 The councillor from Indonesia, requesting that his intervention be reflected in the record of the meeting, amplified many of the points made during the discussion. The consultations conducted had been constructive; points of divergence had been identified and delegations had worked hard to find common ground, facilitated ably by the Council Chair. The sponsors of the draft resolution had demonstrated flexibility by accepting most of the demands of the other group, including the omission of the term “occupying power” which was a critical point for the sponsors as its inclusion would have sent a stronger message. After many compromises on the part of the sponsors, it was expected that there would be a reciprocal response rather than an imbalanced situation in which one side kept imposing its demands without any intention to move forward. He encouraged the Council to consider the draft resolution in good faith and in a constructive and consensus-driven manner. The urgency of adopting the draft resolution could not be overemphasized as the situation in Palestine continued to deteriorate. The people of Palestine no longer had the means to communicate in a dignified manner and time was of the essence. If the resolution was not adopted until the following year, momentum would be lost and the conditions in Palestine were urgent right now. The sponsors recalled that Member States had demonstrated unity as far back as PP-94 with the adoption of Resolution 34 (Kyoto, 1994) on assistance and support to countries in special need for rebuilding their telecommunication sector —thereafter revised by subsequent conferences— and by adopting Council Resolution 1408 (C22, last amended C23) on assistance and support to Ukraine for rebuilding its telecommunication sector. He wondered why the swift response demonstrated by the Council to the situation in Ukraine in 2022 had not been replicated in regard to the situation in Palestine, as if Palestinians were not equally deserving of assistance and solidarity from ITU. He questioned how connectivity would be provided if there was no agreement to rebuild even the basic telecommunication infrastructure. A failure to adopt the draft resolution would reflect poorly on how the Council responded to urgent telecommunication situations, raising the question of double standards; and also dent the integrity of the Union and its leadership in pursuing its mandate. The presence of the United Nations Secretary‑General on the previous day had highlighted the role of ITU in facilitating international cooperation in telecommunications: it was time to demonstrate whether ITU was still relevant.

3.15 The councillor from Saudi Arabia, speaking on behalf of the 37 Member States that had sponsored the draft resolution, noted that most Council members had spoken in favour of the document. In an attempt to achieve consensus, the sponsors had made many concessions in relation to the original draft, including removing language that was already used in other ITU, UNGA and UNSC resolutions. The purpose of the draft resolution was to support Palestine and the Palestinian people and to provide them with technical support to rebuild their telecommunication sector. The telecommunication sector and its infrastructure were surely not outside the scope of ITU and its mandate, and the Palestinian people were surely not outside the scope of ITU’s work. The Union should remain united and fulfil its mandate on an equal footing and without double standards. The sponsors of the draft resolution had valued the role of the Chair and his efforts to bring the parties closer together and therefore they had accepted the draft contained in the proposal by the Chair in a spirit of cooperation, even though it did not meet their expectations. For that reason, the sponsors hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted during the present session.

3.16 The Chair noted that a small number of Member States had objected to the draft resolution and that a small number had requested that discussions should continue, but his view was that discussions would not lead to any further compromises in the text. He believed that the draft resolution contained in Document C24/DT/10 represented a majority of the views expressed during the informal negotiations and it had received the overwhelming support of Member States. He therefore put the draft resolution in Document C24/DT/10 to the Council for adoption.

3.17 The councillor from the United States said that the United States was unable to agree to the proposal to adopt the draft resolution by consensus, even with the submission of a statement. Although she had great appreciation for the Chair’s efforts to encourage consensus, the concerns of the United States had not been met. Therefore, she moved to close the debate. The councillor from the United Kingdom, recognizing that it would be difficult to make time for further debate on the issue, seconded the motion to close the debate. The councillor from Argentina said that it would have been her preference to continue informal discussions in order to achieve consensus, but that she would support the motion to close the debate.

3.18 Noting that a motion for closure of the debate had been tabled by a councillor and supported by two others, the Chair said that, in accordance with the General Rules of conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union, he would give the opportunity to two councillors to speak against the motion.

3.19 The councillor from Saudi Arabia and the councillor from Türkiye expressed regret that the draft resolution would be the subject of a vote; they would have liked to see it adopted by consensus in the same way as the resolution on assistance to Ukraine.

3.20 At the request of the Chair, the Legal Counsel explained that the Council had before it a motion to close the debate governed by No. 107 of the General Rules of conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union. The first vote would thus be on whether to close the debate. If the motion to close the debate was carried, then the Council would proceed to a second vote on adoption of the draft resolution contained in Document C24/DT/10. If the motion to close the debate was rejected, then the Council would not proceed to a second vote on adoption of the draft resolution in Document C24/DT/10 but would simply continue the substantive discussion.

3.21 On behalf of the Chair, the Legal Counsel, having confirmed that there was a quorum, announced that a vote would be conducted by show of hands on the motion to close the debate, and declared the beginning of the vote.

3.22 The Chair announced the results of the vote:

 Number of delegations present and voting[[1]](#footnote-2)1: 32

 Required majority: 17

 In favour of the motion: 31

 Against the motion: 1

 Abstentions: 13

3.23 The motion to close the debate was **sustained** by 31 votes to 1, with 13 abstentions.

3.24 The Legal Counsel said that, as a result, the Council would proceed to a vote on the adoption of the draft resolution contained in Document C24/DT/10.

3.25 The councillor from the United States, supported by the councillor from Argentina and the councillor from the United Kingdom, requested that the vote be held by secret ballot.

3.26 The Legal Counsel, responding to further requests for clarification from two councillors, explained that, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Council (Rule 19.3c)), once three councillors had asked that the vote take place by secret ballot, the Council had no choice but to proceed in that manner.

3.27 On behalf of the Chair, the Legal Counsel, having confirmed that there was a quorum, announced that a vote would be conducted by secret ballot on the adoption of the draft resolution on assistance and support to Palestine for rebuilding its telecommunication sector contained in Document C24/DT/10, and declared the beginning of the vote.

3.28 The Chair announced the results of the vote:

 Number of ballots deposited: 48

 Number of invalid ballots: 0

 Number of abstentions: 9

 Number of delegations present and voting1: 39

 Required majority: 20

 In favour: 34

 Against: 5

3.29 The draft resolution contained in Document C24/DT/10 was **adopted** by 34 votes to 5, with 9 abstentions.

3.30 The councillor from Saudi Arabia thanked the Chair and the sponsors of the draft resolution for their efforts to achieve consensus; he further thanked all those who had voted in favour of the resolution. He welcomed the adoption of the draft which meant that ITU would now be able to assist Palestine in rebuilding its telecommunication infrastructure.

3.31 The councillor from the United States delivered the following statement: <http://council.itu.int/2024/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2024/07/C24-Statement-United-States_PL9.docx>.

3.32 The councillors from Indonesia, Türkiye, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Malaysia, Tunisia and Cuba thanked the Chair for having guided the process that had led to the adoption of the resolution and called on the secretariat to ensure its early implementation. They expressed gratitude to the delegation of Saudi Arabia and to all those who had sponsored and supported adoption of the draft resolution. Pledging to accompany the implementation process and stressing the urgency of rebuilding a modern telecommunication network and critical telecommunication infrastructure in Palestine, they trusted that the fact that the resolution had been adopted by a vote instead of by consensus would not prevent it from being implemented in a timely and impartial manner.

3.33 The Secretary-General said that the Council had asked ITU to support rebuilding of Palestine’s telecommunication infrastructure and to facilitate meaningful and impactful assistance where it was most needed. In addition to past ITU resolutions which had been adopted to that end, ITU would make all efforts to implement the newly-adopted resolution on Palestine. She thanked those Member States that had already indicated their preparedness to provide technical assistance in support of implementation of the resolution. As requested in the resolution, ITU would provide a report to Council-25 and PP-26. Promoting the use of technology to facilitate peaceful relations and international cooperation defined the purpose and responsibility of ITU.

The Secretary-General: The Chair:

D. BOGDAN-MARTIN F. SAUVAGE

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1. 1 No. 118 of the General Rules of conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union: “For the purpose of these Rules of Procedure, a "delegation present and voting" shall be a delegation voting for or against a proposal”. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)