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| **Abstract:** | This TD reviews remote solutions at hand during meetings in case of crisis and force majeure. |

# Remote Participation during Crisis

## Communication Sent to SG Chairmen

Regarding coronavirus, the latest advice from the ITU Safety and Security Division is that, for events held outside ITU HQ premises, the Host Country sponsor should provide – when requested – a platform suitable for Remote Participation by delegates that are based in mainland China.

From a TSB perspective, given the “force majeure” of the coronavirus and measures to control the epidemy, we are opening all meetings for interactive remote participation, in coordination with the SG management teams, when there is a request, in line with PP and WTSA resolutions.

Please use [A.Supp-4](https://www.itu.int/rec/T-REC-A.Sup4/en) as a guide.

## SG15 experience

SG15 meeting was the first meeting that ITU had to manage during the “force majeure” of the coronavirus that cause many delegates to miss the physical meeting.

SG15 does not normally provide for interactive remote participation during its meetings. Simply passive observation through webcast is provided for the opening and closing plenaries.

During its meeting in Geneva, 27 January - 7 February 2020, SG15 management and TSB had to rapidly react to the impact of travel restrictions of 15 experts from China and the request to provide remote interactive participation to selected Question meetings where the expert participation was necessary remotely.

A remote participation guideline issued by SG15 management was also updated during this SG15 meeting to align with the latest PP and WTSA resolutions on remote participation.

## Remote participation Quality

The quality of the remote participation service depends on several factors:

* Remote participant equipment (headset, phone or laptop, etc.)
* Remote participant broadband connection
* ITU meeting room audio system
* ITU broadband connection
* Remote participation application
* Human operation, communication,
* Meeting moderation

There are a few quality issues reported and they are related to the user equipment/connection, ITU meeting room audio system, and one instance of miscommunication. Some of the ITU meeting rooms have modern audio systems and others do not. Some rooms are equipped with permanent systems while others require 2 working days’ notice. G rooms, E room and T103 are those that requires 2 days’ notice.

## Feedback

We requested all the remote participants to complete a survey to help identify any issues: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/ewm/Pages/questionnaires/feedback.aspx>

## TSAG

For the TSAG meeting, in agreement with the TSAG Chairman, the entire meeting is open for remote participation that allows for interpretation in six languages.

## Upcoming meetings

Several upcoming SG and FG meetings were cancelled, changed into an e-meeting only, or will be augmented with interactive remote participation.

## Questions for discussion, and feedback from ITU-T Study Group Chairmen:

1. Is there a need to update the relevant ITU texts to take into account crisis management? PP Resolution, WTSA Resolution, A.Supp do not have relevant clause on the situation of force majeure, for example the Coronavirus, which needs remote participation.  Decision making for example is only possible for participants in the meeting room.

PP Res. 167 does not allow remote participation during decision making. Closing plenaries are typically all about decision making (agree reports, decisions for approvals/consent/determination, and other agreements); opening plenaries are also making decisions. Some study groups do not present contributions during the opening plenaries, other study groups occasionally do this.

Most decisions by SG15 are by consensus by the delegates in the rooms; remote interventions during plenary are to be seconded by the room. A new issue with remote participation during plenary could arise when a decision taken would have to be revisited due to poor connection problems. There is also a need for remote delegates to present their documents/contributions remotely during plenaries.

ITU (e.g. General Secretariat) should and could issue an official statement to delegates/participants about a crisis situation. For this, a unified message (by TSB Director, or by TSAG) should be issued to the study groups.

It was emphasized to have consistent rules which are agreed by Member States; it is not in the authority of TSAG to change rules against the spirit of PP Resolutions.

Does PP Res.167 require updating? PP Res.167 can only be changed by the Plenipotentiary Conference, PP could amend Res. 167 for some new crisis actions.
TSAG could provide some guidance to all ITU-T study groups.

TSAG could revisit ITU-T A.Supplement 4 (for some updating), and consider proposals for amendments to WTSA Resolution 32.

1. Is the ITU HQ and Secretariat equipped to handle a sustained crisis limiting physical participation in meetings? Is there a need to allocate resources, increase the budget, improve the electronic facilities (remote system), meeting rooms, etc.?

ITU-T tools and audio facilities need to be technically sound; there is room for improvements.

Authorizations for remote participants are difficult to assert (over the phone). TSB is developing a new tool that uses AI-enabled voice recognition technology for stronger remote authentication. Until such tools are available, only registered delegates should have access to the remote facilities.

In the past, crisis situations occurred already (SARS, Ebola, volcano eruptions). Who declares a force majeure? WHO (for new Corona virus); UNDSS gives the security advisories to UN agencies.

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