Mister Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Under the leadership of the Secretary-General, the guidance from Council and the dedicated support of its staff, ITU has become a recognized leader in promoting Information and Communication Technologies within the United Nations System and on the world stage. ITU has held true to its commitment to “connecting the world” and finding resources to move this agenda forward even in the troubling times of austerity the world is currently facing. This prestigious accomplishment is something we can all be proud of and merits our positive recognition. We all know that for ITU to continue to remain relevant in today’s ever changing and competitive world, we must be ready to adapt, have a solid and viable strategy, create the required policies and, above all, take appropriate and timely action.

During the same time that ITU has been modernizing and strengthening its outward position, the Staff Council, with the support of HRMD, has been actively engaged in a “collaborative dialogue” intended to overcome past confrontational issues and modernize ITU’s staff / management relationship. Using integrative negotiation we strive to identify and progress rules and regulations which to date have had a negative impact on staff morale (i.e., grandfathering clauses, detachments / secondments, special post allowances, special leave without pay, short-term and temporary vacancies). Together we have recognized the need for change and have made extensive efforts toward reviewing antiquated and/or ambiguous staff rules that we firmly believe, once improved, will move ITU forward by creating a more flexible, motivated and loyal workforce that can respond to the changing needs of the Sectors and our Member States. We equally recognize that in times of austerity improved staff / management relationships can minimize negative impacts on the work of the Union. To this end we must jointly commit, accept our responsibilities and work together through the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) to steadily improve the situation.

The Joint Advisory Committee, otherwise known as the JAC, has a high-level cross sector representation / participation. This should imply that discussions held on the issues before the JAC give important credibility and value to any negotiated outcomes and consensus. The finalized proposals of those discussions are submitted to the Secretary-General for his consideration, approval, and with his signature, transformed into Service Orders.

Recognizing the prominent and pertinent role that the Joint Advisory Committee plays in resolving staff / management issues, we should strive to effectively use this mechanism as it was originally designed to reduce the needless recurring conflicts that have plagued the ITU in the past.

The JAC mechanism is an excellent basis for staff and management representatives to exchange views, come to an understanding on the complex issues that are brought before it and to advise the SG thereby facilitating his decision-making process. In order for this to work effectively, we would like to offer our suggestions as to how this process could be even more effective in furthering the development/improvement of policies at the ITU.

First, we would like to see proposed policies drafted and presented to the JAC with greater speed and a reasonable time frame should be set for their review.

Second, we would also like to encourage the swift escalation of JAC consensus and advice to the SG’s office so that he may deliberate and seek further amendments as needed. A time frame for this should be reasonable and take into account the urgency of the particular policy being presented.

In the past 2 years, some proposed policies have taken an unreasonable time to move through the approval process and we would like to see this improved and hastened. ITU staff have been patiently waiting nearly 2 years for a number of changes that we were assured were in the “imminent pipeline”. While we don’t want to point the finger at anyone in particular, this overall failure risks undermining the work and credibility of this Staff Council by widening a schism that exists between staff who support “collaborative dialogue” as a means for protecting staff rights and entitlements and those who remain unconvinced of the seriousness of the administration to address what they view as inherently unfair practices.

This situation has been escalated to the Secretary-General and we are confident that he will take the necessary measures to ensure that the process is reviewed and improved so as to avoid this situation in the future.

The Staff Council also believes that the Joint Advisory Committee must continue to evolve as an important staff/management consultative and advisory mechanism:

* by being given the official recognition and reaffirmation of importance and the vital role it deserves;
* by scheduling monthly meetings at least until the backlogged staff / management issues are resolved;
* by giving priority status to staff / management conflict-related issue proposals; and,
* by swiftly transmitting its proposals to the Secretary-General without delay for his decision and eventual approval.

On this matter we believe it is imperative that management and the Staff Council prove yet once again to all that “where there is the will there is a way”.

In closing the Staff Council would like to confirm once again, to you the Members of Council that the dialogue existing with management is and continues to be strong and productive. The fact that there have been a few “bumps in the road” has not hindered, in any way, the journey we have undertaken to move the staff / management relationship forward to a new and promising level. It has been said that “passion makes possible”. If that is the indeed the case then, without a doubt, the ITU staff have a bright and promising future before them.

Thank you.