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| Logo  Description automatically generated | **First Inter-Regional Meeting (IRM-1) to prepare for the WTDC-21 Virtual, 11 March 2021** | | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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|  | | **Document** **IRM21-1/33-E** | |
|  | | **14 April 2021** | |
|  | | **Original: English** | |
| Chairman, IRM-1 | | | |
| Report by the IRM-1 Chairman | | | |
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1. **Summary**

1.1 The first-ever Interregional Preparatory Meeting (IRM) for the World Telecommunication Development Conference took place online on 11 March 2021, attended by 256 participants, including 205 delegates representing 67 Member States,43 participants representing 30 Sector Member entities, 7 participants from the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and one guest. Of this number, 120 were women and 136 were men participants. The list of participants can be found [here](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0032/).

1.2 Addressing the meeting, the Director of the **ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin said that: “**At a uniquely challenging time, when connectivity has never mattered more, the success of our conference will rest on the strength of our pre-event preparation. Solid preparation will ensure that our next Development Conference delivers maximum impact, in terms of concrete, implementable and measurable outcomes that will transform not just the digital landscape, but the lives of so many around the world.”

1.3 With the uncertainty in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, BDT is working in close collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia to develop mitigation and contingency plans for the holding of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-21), scheduled to take place from 8 to 19 November 2021 in Addis Ababa. Two more Interregional Preparatory Meetings are planned, one in May and another in September 2021.

1.4 “The new series of Interregional coordination Meetings is our opportunity to make crucial interregional linkages, to listen to one another, to better understand our areas of difference, and to work together to build the vital consensus around common positions that will be so important to the success of WTDC,” the Director commented, adding that “…all eyes are on us to make this next WTDC a truly landmark conference that delivers on its vision of universal connectivity, universal opportunity, and universal prosperity. We must not disappoint.”

1.5 The following is a summary of the first IRM.

1.6 The meeting approved the agenda in [Document 1](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0001/).

1. **Appointment of chairman and vice-chairmen**

2.1 His Excellency Dr Ahmedin Mohammed, State Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia and Chairman Designate of WTDC-21, was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Interregional Preparatory Meetings. The meeting further endorsed the nominations from the six regional telecommunication organizations (RTOs) to the posts of IRM vice-chairmen (see box).

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| **Chairman** | **H.E. Dr Ahmedin Mohammed** | |
| **Vice-chairmen** | RTO | Country |
| **Dr Ahmad Sharafat** | APT | Iran (Islamic Republic of) |
| **Ms Caecilia Nyamutswa** | ATU | Zimbabwe |
| **Ms Inga Rimkeviciene** | CEPT | Lithuania |
| **Mr Santiago Reyes-Borda** | CITEL | Canada |
| **Mr Mansour AlQurashi** | LAS | Saudi Arabia |
| **Mr Arseny Plossky** | RCC | Russian Federation |

2.2 His Excellency Dr Ahmedin Mohammed said he was very honoured to lead the interregional preparatory process. “The goal of this process is to facilitate exchange between regions with the aim of reaching consensus prior to the conference. I am looking forward to working with you and making this process as fruitful and efficient as possible.”

1. **WTDC-21 update: Essential measures**

3.1 On behalf of the Government of Ethiopia, Mr Mesfin Belachew Tefera, Senior Strategic Advisor in the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, presented [Document 21](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0021/) highlighting essential measures taken to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in the host country for WTDC-21. The government has established a national inter-ministerial task force led by the Prime Minister, His Excellency Dr Abiy Ahmed, in order to address the health, social and economic impact of COVID-19. The National Task Force has enacted a string of measures to contain the coronavirus infection.

## 3.2 Ethiopia has endorsed the guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and has formulated and issued its own *Directive for the Prevention and Control of the COVID-19 pandemic.* Known *as* “*Directive No. 30/2020”,* the directive encompasses 10 major parts, but the one that relates to WTDC-21 covers “Precautionary measures to be taken during meetings,” including travel guidelines.

**Four different scenarios from which to choose**

3.3 The Government of Ethiopia has assessed four scenarios for hosting WTDC- 21 with their pros and cons, as well as their risks and mitigation strategies. This section highlights the pros and cons.

## **Scenario 1 – Holding the conference as initially planned**

**3.4 The pros:** Hosting WTDC-21 on site by tackling the challenges of COVID-19 will make this event a best-practice example for other similar conferences.Hosting a conference on site enriches its agenda and outcomes, thanks to frequent formal and informal interactions among participants. It will create a sense of belonging for participants from the hosting continent as they would be gathering at an event held in their diplomatic capital.An onsite conferencewill enable other African countries to showcase their telecommunication and ICT development agendas to the international community. It will also help build confidence in hosting similar high-profile international events.

**3.5 The cons:** COVID-19 may continue as a challenge during and beyond WTDC-21. Due to COVID-19, attendance may be much lower than expected.

## **Scenario 2 – Hybrid event**

**3.6 The pros:** Hosting WTDC-21 on site and online by tackling the challenges of COVID-19, adapting thus to the new normal will make this event a best-practice example for other similar conferences. Ethiopia can advise ITU Member States, based on their requirements and in the best interest of WTDC-21, to send representatives that are already vaccinated against COVID-19. A hybrid event partially achieves the pros indicated in scenario one. It partially breaks the monotony of virtual events and allows people to engage with each other. It creates visibility for the host continent.

**3.7 The cons:** The inherent challenges of hosting an onsite and online conference include how to keep online participants actively engaged and the technological challenges of finding a conference management platform that is user-friendly.TheITU membership has not been in favour of hybrid events because not all members can participate on the same footing.

## **Scenario 3 – Virtual event**

**3.8 The pros:** Less exposure to COVID-19, less logistics and conference management challenges.

**3.9 The cons:** WTDC-21 would not enjoy the benefits indicated in scenarios one and two. There may be technological challenges to host a fully virtual conference. Virtual sessions tend to become long and monotonous and depending on time zones, attendance can be a challenge.

**Scenario 4 – Postponing the conference**

**3.10 The pros:** Most of the COVID-19 challenges may ease globally, creating a suitable environment to host the conference. So the pros from scenario one would also apply here. Like in scenario two, Ethiopia can advise ITU Member States, based on their requirements and in the best interest of WTDC-21, to send representatives that are already vaccinated against COVID-19. The projection of the COVID-19 status may become clearer by the end of 2021.Most of theparticipants would have received their jabs for COVID-19 by then, so transmission maybe substantially reduced.

3.11 By the summer of 2022, hopefully most preventive measures may have turned things around in curbing the pandemic. The roll-out of vaccination in Ethiopia will have reached a good number of the community whereby things will be safer, given more time. No doubt, if WTDC is postponed to summer 2022, availability, affordability and accessibility to medication and other personal protective equipment (PPE) will be much safer.

**3.12 The cons:** COVID-19 might remain a challenge. There might be an overlap of global events for the host country and the organizers. The cons indicated in scenario one would also apply here.

**Comments and views from the floor**

3.13 A number of delegations expressed support for scenario one, if the COVID-19 situation improves globally, but if there are still challenges then the conference should be postponed (scenario four). This view was expressed mainly by the delegates of **Canada**, **Burkina Faso**, **Ghana**, **Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe** (also speaking on behalf ATU), with **Egypt** asking whether in the case of scenario one there would be limitation in the number of participants in a delegation; and **Côte d'Ivoire** suggesting that it may be necessary to look into postponing the Plenipotentiary Conference from 2022 to 2023 to align it with the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23), given that the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) had already been postponed once, from 2020 to 2022.

3.14 Other delegations expressed the view that while the rolling out of vaccines does at least offer some grounds for optimism, infections are still compelling governments around the world to lock down their populations, so it is better to postpone WTDC without delay.

**3.15** The delegate of **Romania, speaking on behalf of CEPT** and as host country for the Plenipotentiary Conference planned for 2022, stressed the need to **take a decision quickly, at least six months before the currently planned dates for WTDC-21.**

**3.16** The delegate of **Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Arab group**, called for postponement, stating that scenario four is a very wise option because it makes things clear immediately, allowing the host country to prepare properly. In the same way WTSA had to be postponed, WTDC-21 should be postponed until it is safe enough to hold it.

**3.17** The delegate of **Thailand**, backing the timeline proposed by **Romania** for a decision, observed that looking at the COVID-19 situation, scenario four seemed to be the best option, underlining that it was highly unlikely that every country would have the necessary clearance to travel in November 2021.

4.18 Several views were expressed on the absolute need for an in-person conference. Delegations are best able to resolve their differences when there is no microphone in front of them. For a conference that is meant to address inclusiveness it has to be an in-person event because as the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare, many countries still have limitations when it comes to meaningful Internet connectivity. Then there is the issue of quality of the connections, which represents a challenge in managing a virtual conference and could affect decision-making. In terms of time zones, if preparatory meetings are anything to go by, they are limited to three hours per day, while in-person conferences often go beyond 12 hours a day. This makes it practically impossible to substitute a physical conference for a virtual one, a view mainly expressed by the delegate of **Ghana**, with the delegate of **Kuwait**, adding that during the Buenos Aries conference, delegates had worked until dawn discussing resolutions and making decisions.

**3.19** The delegate of the **United States of America** underlined that with many months of preparations for WTDC-21, focusing on partnership and collaboration and calling for a development‑focused conference, an in-person event is the best format to bring together people from around the world to reflect on challenges they face in ICT development.

3.20 The delegate of the **Russian Federation** stressed that WTDC can only be held face-to-face and called on the Government of Ethiopia and the BDT secretariat to look into all possibilities of holding the conference safely, so that all members can participate in it actively. The delegate called for **a decision to be taken by May 2021 or no later than June 2021 at the virtual meeting of the councillors**.

**3.21** The delegate of **Samoa** stressed that the work of the conference has to be done in a physical environment that is safe and secure and called for a firm decision in June 2021, to know whether WTDC-21 would go ahead as planned or whether it will be postponed to 2022.

**3.22** The delegate of **Indonesia**, calling for a decision to be taken on the scenarios by the time of the TDAG meeting (24-28 May 2021), underlined the need for the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to conduct a thorough assessment of the safety and security situation, aware that the global health crisis has not subsided. While very keen on being able to meet physically, it is equally important to ensure the safety and health of the participants and that any foreign delegate entering Ethiopia does not exacerbate the pre-existing pandemic situation there.

**3.23 Way forward:** The secretariat should **look into holding the conference safely and provide a decision by May for the Council to decide in June 2021.**

1. **Update on preparations of regional telecommunication organizations**

4.1 A representative of the **African Telecommunications Union (ATU)** from Zimbabwe presented [Document 29](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0029/) summarizing ATU preparations. At a consultative meeting on 11 February 2021, ATU agreed on its preparatory process for WTDC-21 and set up a number of working groups to run the preparations.

4.2 ATU has agreed on how contributions and proposals for WTDC can be adopted. A contribution is defined as “a proposal that an ATU Member State or a continental organization presents to the African preparatory meetings for further discussion and approval. For a proposal to become an African common proposal (AFCP) it has to be approved by at least 15 Member States of ATU. Two Working groups have been established to prepare and consolidate AFCPs and inputs to WTDC-21 agenda items (see box).

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|  | **Working group 1** | **Working group 2** |
| **Scope** | Working methods, declaration, action plan, and regional initiatives | General ICT development issues and programmes, including study group Questions |
| **Chairmen** | Mr Richard Anago (Burkina  Faso) | Mr Jim Patterson (South Africa) |
| **Vice – Chairmen** | Mr Amr Safwat (Egypt)  Ms Hilda Mutseyekwa  (Zimbabwe) | Mr Mohamed Elhaj (Sudan)  Mr Satanislas Kanvoli (Côte d’Ivoire |

4.3 ATU has also appointed focal points for the TDAG working groups and for Interregional meetings (see box):

**ATU focal points for TDAG working groups**

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|  | **Focal point** | **Country** |
| **TDAG-WG RDTP** | Mr Antony Adopo | Côte d’Ivoire |
| **TDAG-WG SOP** | Ms Caecilia Nyamutswa | Zimbabwe |
| **TDAG-WG Prep** | Mr Abdulkarim Oloyede | Nigeria |
| **IRM Vice-Chairman for Africa** | Ms Caecilia Nyamutswa | Zimbabwe |

4.4 A representativeof **the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)** from Canada presented [Document 22](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0022/) summarizing CITEL preparations. CITEL’s top priority is the conference theme: ***Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development****.* Other equally important priorities include:

* A “Fit4PurposeITU”, with WTDC-21 poised to become a propulsive environment to foster the design and implementation of concrete and effective solutions for the expansion and use of connectivity and ICTs in developing and least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS).
* Increased participation of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in the work of ITU-D, particularly stakeholders from the Americas region, including small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Academia.
* A conference geared towards addressing, effectively, critical ICT for development (ICT4D) priorities identified by the regions and focused on closing digital divides; reaching out to marginalized regions and communities; promoting community networks and ensuring gender equity, equality and increased participation and engagement of young people in ITU-D activities.

**CITEL focal points for TDAG working groups**

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|  | **Focal point** | **Country** |
| **TDAG-WG-Prep** | Ms Andrea Grippa  Mr Daniel Carletti | Brazil  Argentina |
| **TDAG-WG-SOP** | Ms Kelly O’Keefe  Ms Xian Persaud | United States of America  Bahamas |
| **TDAG-WG-RDTP** | Mr Víctor Martínez  Ms Michele Wu-Bailey | Mexico United States of America |

4.5 The outcomes of WTDC-21 must reflect concrete and coordinated efforts and policies among all stakeholders (Member States, Sector Members, Associates, civil society, NGOs, international financial institutions, private sector and development banks).

4.6 Regional priorities should be linked and be consistent with the thematic priorities that will be identified. A fundamental issue for the Americas region is for all priorities to be developed and implemented under principles of universality, equity and affordability.

4.7 CITEL looks forward to discussing study group Questions and the restructuring of study groups; reducing thematic priorities for ITU-D/BDT from 10 at present to four, if possible; achieving an Addis Ababa Declaration that is consistent with the theme of the conference; and reviewing the ITU regional presence.

4.8 A representativeof the **Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT)** from Japan presented [Document 24](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0024/) summarizing APT preparations. The APT Preparatory Group for WTDC (see structure in box) coordinates regional activities for world telecommunication development conferences to ensure that the interests of APT members, in terms of ICT development, are represented properly.

**APT Preparatory Group for WTDC**

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| **Plenary: Chairman: Dr Ahmad Sharafat (Islamic Republic of Iran)** |
| Vice-Chairmen: Mr Norifumi Yamaguchi (Japan), Mr Sung Joon Choi (Republic of Korea) |
| **Working Group 1 (WG1): Programme, Study Groups and Associated Questions** |
| Chairman: Ms Mina SeonminJun (Republic of Korea)  Vice-Chairmen: Ms Yapeng Wang (China), Ms Maryam Espandar (Islamic Republic of Iran) |
| **Working Group 2 (WG2): Working Methods, Declaration and Action Plan** |
| Chairman: Ms Alexandra Borthwick (Australia)  Vice-Chairmen: Ms Thasawan Samorwong (Thailand) |
| **Working Group 3 (WG3): General ICT Development Issues including Regional Initiatives** |
| Chairman: Ms Memiko Otsuki (Japan)  Vice-Chairmen: Ms Anna AmalinaImam Baweh (Malaysia) |

4.9 The second APT preparatory meeting endorsed the four **thematic priorities** proposed by the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities, namely: **connectivity; digital transformation; enabling environment; and resource mobilization and international cooperation.**

4.10 The discussion is still going on regarding the declaration, study group Questions and WTDC resolutions. Meanwhile, a proposed revision of Resolution 8 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the **collection and dissemination of information and statistics** aims to improve the mechanism for introducing, reviewing, and revising indicators for the new ITU index.

**4.11** Resolution 34(Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the **role of telecommunications/information and communication technology in disaster preparedness, early warning, rescue, mitigation, relief and response** is also being revised toupdate and simplify the current text.

4.12 Two new resolutions are being discussed within APT: one is on **using information and communication technologies to combat pandemics such as COVID-19**. The other is on the ***digital economy****,* focusing on building a guiding framework for developing a digital economy and helping Member States of the region in that regard.

4.13 A representative of the **Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC)** from the Russian Federation presented [Document 25](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0025/) summarizing RCC preparations. Until now, RCC has prepared 20 draft common proposals mainly on WTDC resolutions, and has agreed that the following three should be suppressed:

* Resolution 27 (Rev. Hyderabad, 2010) on **the admission of entities or organizations participate as Associates in the work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector**.
* Resolution 61 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) on **the appointment and maximum term of office for chairmen and vice-chairmen of study groups of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector and of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group**.
* Resolution 81 (Rev. Dubai, 2017) on further **development of electronic working methods for the work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector**.

4.14 RCC has put forward a draft new resolution on the **use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigating and eliminating its consequences.**

4.15 A regional initiative has also been agreed within RCC, calling for a “unified system for assessing the level of digitalization of industries and functional areas of the economy” in the region.

4.16 A representative of the **European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT)** from Romania presented [Document 26](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0026/) summarizing CEPT preparations. The Com-ITU CEPT Project Team on WTDC-21 was established in May 2020 to identify issues which, in Europe’s view, are of central importance for ITU-D; prepare and coordinate CEPT positions and contributions, and develop draft European Common Proposals (ECPs). The CEPT project team is chaired by Ms Inga Rimkeviciene from Lithuania and is currently developing 20 ECPs. The Com-ITU CEPT Project Team has held five meetings.

4.17 Focal points have also been appointed to coordinate the participation and input of CEPT to the three TDAG working groups.

**CEPT focal points for TDAG working groups**

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|  | **Focal point** | **Country** |
| **TDAG-WG-Prep** | Ms Inga Rimkeviciene  Mr Nick Aston-Hart | Lithuania  United Kingdom |
| **TDAG-WG-SOP** | Ms Inga Rimkeviciene  Mr Maciej Piotrowski | Lithuania  Poland |
| **TDAG-WG-RDTP** | Ms Inga Rimkeviciene  Ms Alina Modan | Lithuania Romania |

4.18 CEPT has developed acommon vision of European countries on the global role of ITU-D in connecting the unconnected. This vision is cosigned by 22 countries as a European Common Proposal. In Europe’s view, ITU-D should:

* Support the use and deployment of digital infrastructure and technologies in the field of telecommunications/ICTs.
* Strive to promote inclusiveness and sustainable development, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
* Focus its efforts on developing countries (SIDS and LLDCs), and more generally on the most vulnerable groups and areas where it can have the most impact.
* Focus on fulfilling the SDGs, especially on actions to ensure connectivity for all.

4.19 Europe further considers BDT as a “learning organization”, focused on measurable outcomes and projects with strong impact and a high sustainability potential, strengthening partnerships, cooperating with the regional organizations and attracting new members.

4.20 A representative ofthe **League of Arab States (LAS)** from Saudi Arabia presented [Document 23](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0023/) summarizing preparations of LAS.

4.21 The Arab preparatory group for WTDC-21 was established by the Council of the Arab Ministers of Communications and Information in December 2019, and has held two meetings to date: one in August 2020 and the other in February 2021.

4.22 The Arab Preparatory Group for WTDC-21 has a chairman and is composed of three working groups, each with a chairman **(see structure in box).**

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| **Arab Preparatory Group for WTDC 21** |
| Chairman: Mr Mansour Alqurashi (Saudi Arabia) |
| **Working Group on Action Plan, Strategic and Operational Plan, and Regional Initiatives** |
| Chairman: Salem Almawali (Oman) |
| **Working Group on Declaration and Streamlining Resolutions and Thematic Priorities** |
| Chairman: Ms Sameera Belal (Kuwait) |
| **Working Group on Preparations for WTDC-21** |
| Chairman: Mr Alansari Almashagbah (Jordan) |

4.23 The Arab group is currently proposing to modify 28 resolutions listed in [Document 23](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0023/). Like the RCC, LAS is proposing to suppress Resolutions 27 and 61. In addition, the Arab group will be putting forward two new proposals linked to **the role of telecommunications/ICTs in pandemic situations**, especially in developing countries; and to **digital transformation for sustainable development**, **including establishing data and cloud computing centres in developing countries.**

4.24 The Arab group acknowledged the good progress made by TDAG-WG-RDTP on streamlining thematic priorities, and suggests to add cybersecurity as a new thematic priority that would consolidate related subthemes currently scattered across other themes.

4.25 Regarding the draft declaration of TDAG-WG-RDTP, the Arab group believes it should be considered as first step, underlining that the final declaration should be balanced and inclusive to reflect all thematic priorities.

4.26 The Arab group is currently reviewing and developing its regional initiatives in close collaboration with the ITU Regional Office for the Arab States.

1. **Agenda item 5: RPM outputs to regional preparatory meetings**

5.1 The **Regional Preparatory Meeting for Europe (RPM-EUR)** was organized by BDT and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic and held online on 18-19 January 2021, attended by 114 participants. His Excellency Mr Petr Ocko, Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, was unanimously elected as Chairman of RPM-EUR for WTDC-21. Ms Inga Rimkevičienė (Lithuania) was elected as Vice-Chairman. Ms Rimkevičienė is also the Chair of Com-ITU CEPT Project Team on WTDC-21.

# 5.2 RPM-EUR approved five proposed regional priorities for Europe for the period 2022-2025 as follows:

* RP-EUR 1: Digital infrastructure development.
* RP-EUR 2: Digital transformation for resilience.
* RP-EUR-3: Digital inclusion and skills development.
* RP-EUR-4: Trust and confidence in the use of digital technologies.
* RP-EUR-5: Digital innovation ecosystems.

5.3 The meeting saw the launch of [**Digital Trends in Europe 2021**](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/Documents/RPM/EUR/Digital-Trends_Europe-E.pdf), a report highlighting trends and developments in ICT infrastructure, access and use in Europe; **Generation Connect Europe Youth Group**, an initiative comprising 24 young people aged between 18 and 24; and the [**Network of Women (NoW)**](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/Pages/NoW/default.aspx)**Europe for the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector**, an initiative which aims to build a community to support women delegates and expand their network and share experiences and knowledge with other women delegates from around the world.

5.4 The [**Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific**](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/Pages/RPM-ASP.aspx) **(RPM-ASP)** was held online on 9-10 March 2021, attended by 168 delegates. Dr Ahmad Sharafat, Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of Information & Communication Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was unanimously elected as Chairman of RPM-ASP for WTDC-21.

5.5 The meeting endorsed the recommendation from the heads of delegation meeting regarding the vice-chairmanship of RPM-ASP, electing Ms Mina Seonmin Jun, Policy Advisor, Korea Information Society Development Institute (Republic of Korea); Ms Gisa Fuatai Purcell, Regulator, Office of the Regulator (Samoa); and Ms Philomena Gnanapragasam, Director, Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development as Vice-Chairmen.

5.6 RPM-ASP welcomed the report entitled ***Digital trends in Asia and the Pacific in 2021*** as an important contribution to developing the regional initiatives taking into account the developments and challenges at the regional level in the field of ICTs.

5.7 RPM-ASP approved five proposed regional priorities for Asia and the Pacific region for the period 2022-2025, for submission to WTDC-21 as follows:

* **ASP 1**: Addressing special needs of least developed countries, small island developing states, including Pacific island countries, and landlocked developing countries.
* **ASP 2**: Harnessing information and communication technologies to support the digital economy and inclusive digital societies.
* **ASP-3**: Fostering development of infrastructure to enhance digital connectivity and connecting the unconnected.
* **ASP-4**: Enabling policy and regulatory environments to accelerate digital transformation.
* **ASP-5**: Contributing to a secure and resilient ICT environment.

5.8 In parallel with the regional preparatory meeting, the [**Generation Connect – Asia and the Pacific Youth Group**](https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/generation-connect-asia-pacific-youth-group-gc-asp/) presented its draft Action Plan 2022-2025. The meeting also unveiled the [**Network of Women (NoW) Asia-Pacific for the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector**](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/Pages/NoW/default.aspx), an initiative that aims to build a community to support women delegates, expand their network, and advocate and share experiences and knowledge with other women delegates from around the world.

1. **Agenda item 6: Report on the work of TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities**

6.1 The TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities (TDAG-WG-RDTP) has held four meetings as follows: 15 July 2020, 21 October 2020, 21 January 2021 and 3 March 2021 and will hold its fifth meeting on 9 April 2021. TDAG-WG-RDTP is open to all ITU Member States and ITU‑D Sector Members.

6.2 The Chairman of TDAG-WG-RDTP, Dr Ahmad Sharafat, recalled the terms of reference of the group and confirmed that TDAG’s guidance with regard to developing a short and concise declaration and reducing the number of thematic priorities had been followed to the letter.

**Thematic priorities**

6.3 On **thematic priorities**, TDAG-WG-RDTP has had extensive discussions and there is broad support for four thematic priorities, namely **connectivity; digital transformation; enabling environment; and resource mobilization and international cooperation**. TDAG-WG-RDTP is expected to reach a conclusion on these thematic priorities at its next meeting on 9 April 2021.

6.4 A draft **WTDC declaration** was presented to the fourth meeting of TDAG-WG-RDTP on 3 March 2021, and is in line with the WTDC-21 theme of **“Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development**”, adopted by TDAG in November 2020having noted that **3.7 billion people remain unconnected**. TDAG-WG-RDTP aims to conclude discussions on the draft declaration at its next meeting on 9 April 2021.The final declaration shall be decided and adopted by WTDC itself.

**Streamlining resolutions**

6.5 The Russian Federation is leading this streamlining exercise on behalf of TDAG-WG-RDTP, and has proposed the revision of 14 resolutions, the suppression of three resolutions, and has put forward one draft new resolution for preliminary consideration.

* Revision of Resolution 8 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the ***collection and dissemination of information and statistics*** takes into account Resolution 131 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, and also seeks to increase transparency in the work of ITU on telecommunication/ICT statistics, aligning this work to the rules of procedure of ITU-D and increasing interaction between ITU-D study groups and Expert Groups on indicators.
* Revision of Resolution 15 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***applied research and technology transfer*** includes the idea of South-South cooperation presented in the UN system, and which should be promoted within ITU, and also aligns the text on Resolution 64 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.
* Revision of Resolution 21 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***coordination and collaboration with regional and subregional organizations*** to includereferences to Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.
* Revision of Resolution 30 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on***the role of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*** aligns the text on Resolution 140 Resolution (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference to delete the many repeated provisions.
* Revision of Resolution 31 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the ***regional preparations for world telecommunication development conferences*** to streamline it with Resolution 58 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and, also, to clarify the status of regional telecommunication organizations in the preparations for WTDCs.
* Revision of Resolution 58 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs*** to align the text on Resolution 175 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and to incorporate the provisions received from ITU-D Study Group 1, based on its activities for the period 2018-2021.
* Suppression of Resolution 61 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) on ***the appointment and maximum term of office of chairmen and vice‑chairmen of study groups in the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector and of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group.*** Resolution 208 (Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference was adopted, establishing the maximum term of office for chairmen and vice-chairmen of Sector advisory groups, study groups and other groups. With this in mind, it is proposed to transfer the appropriate text from Resolution 61 to Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the **rules of procedure of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector**. It is further proposed to suppress Resolution 61.
* Revision of Resolution 67 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***the role of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector in child online protection*** to align the text of Resolution 179 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference to include references of recent resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the Human Rights Council and, also, to incorporate provisions received from ITU-D Study Group 2, based on its activities for the period 2018-2021.
* Revision of Resolution 34 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***the role of telecommunications/information and communication technology in disaster preparedness, early warning, rescue, mitigation, relief and response*** tostreamline it to include provisions considered necessary from Resolution 136 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.
* Revision of Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***bridging the digital divide*** to streamline it with Resolution 139 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and also update it with the latest activities, including new instructions to BDT to continue taking measures to develop cooperation with the international financial institutions, donor agencies and private-sector associations regarding projects aimed at bridging the digital divide, and inform Member States of the status of these efforts on a regular basis.
* Revision of Resolution 64 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***protecting and supporting users/consumers of telecommunication/information and communication technology services*** tostreamline the text to include additional provisions from Resolution 196 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and, also, to reflect activities and findings outlined in the report on Question 6/1 of ITU‑D Study Group 1 for the period 2018-2021.
* Revision of Resolution 85 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***facilitating the Internet of Things and smart cities and communities for global development*** to simplify the current text and update its “recalling” part to reflect the changed titles of Resolution 197 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.
* Revision of Resolution 86 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the **use in the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector of the languages of the Union on an equal footing** to align it on Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and, also, to take into account Council Resolution 1386 in terms of coordinating work on terminology involving all Sectors and the General Secretariat.
* Revision of Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on the **rules of procedure of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector** to take into account the practical experience of the ITU-D study groups in the study period 2018-2021, as well as the experience of the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) and Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T).
* Revision of Resolution 71 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***strengthening cooperation between Member States, Sector Members, Associates and Academia of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector and the evolving role of the private sector in the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector*** to take into account Resolution 169 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and to incorporate the salient provisions from Resolution 27 (Rev. Hyderabad, 2010) on ***admission of entities or organizations to participate as associates in the work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector*** to ensure a holistic understanding of the role of Sector Members, Associates and Academia in ITU-D activities.
* Suppression of Resolution 27 (Rev. Hyderabad, 2010) would be necessary for the reasons given above and considering that this resolution has not been revised since 2010.
* Suppression of Resolution 81 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on ***further development of electronic working methods for the work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector*** would be necessary because it duplicates Resolution 167 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. In addition, it is proposed to transfer the salient provisions to Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), which has a section on electronic access.
* A proposed draft new resolution ***on the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigating and eliminating its consequences*** has been put forward by the Russian Federation for preliminary discussion, comments and suggestions.

6.6 Regarding f**uture study group Questions in relation with WTDC Resolution 2 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) on “Establishment of study groups”**, work is under way to modify this resolution.

**6.7 Way forward:** TDAG-WG-RDTP will examine these proposals carefully. The ITU membership can comment and propose other amendments to these and to other resolutions.

**TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans (TDAG-WG-SOP)**

6.8 The Chairman of TDAG-WG-SOP, Ms Blanca González (Spain), reported that her group had approved a proposal to assign the task of establishing the ITU-D component of the overall ITU strategic plan to TDAG. In November 2020, TDAG agreed with this proposal, recognizing that this course of action would pave the way for a one-ITU approach in the production of the strategic plan of the entire Union. She encouraged participants to review and follow the proposed [ITU Strategic Plan Workflow](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG27-INF-0005/en), which clarifies the timelines for member proposals on the ITU-D component of the ITU strategic plan, and the steps and key deadlines for contributions.

1. **Any other business**

7.1 The meeting noted that the decision on the dates of a conference falls within the remit of the Council and that the virtual consultation of councillors, which will take place in June 2021 is not a decision‑making meeting. What it can do is discuss and decide for a consultation letter to be send out to all Member States. Following such a consultation, a decision is then taken by correspondence. Some delegations stressed that before the next IRM in May 2021, BDT should provide some clarity on how and when WTDC would be held.

7.2 Others underlined that if WTDC is postponed to 2022, a decision must be taken on what to do with the study Questions and the meetings of ITU-D study groups and their rapporteur groups until 2022. It was clarified that between the two WTDCs, TDAG is the proper venue to decide what the agenda of the study groups would be. It was noted that this matter should be discussed in the upcoming meeting of TDAG.

7.3 Meanwhile, it was agreed that BDT would continue to work with the Ethiopian administration. A task group has already been formed and holds consultations not only with Ethiopia, but also with the United Nations offices in Africa. The BDT secretariat will seek legal advice from the ITU Legal Affairs Unit and provide a way forward for a decision to be made swiftly by Member States.

1. **Closing**

8.1 The next meeting is on 12 May 2021 and the Chairman would welcome proposals for the agenda. The Chairman stated: “It was my absolute pleasure and honour to chair this meeting. I believe we just had a very fruitful discussion for all regions, which will take us to the next step in our WTDC preparation.” He thanked all participants for their valuable inputs and insights into the proposals Ethiopia had put forward to the meeting; expressed his appreciation to the regions for updating the meeting on RTO preparations; to the two regions that had already held their regional preparatory meetings for their outcomes; and to the Chairmen of TDAG‑WG‑RDTP and TDAG‑WG‑SOP for providing updates on the work of their groups.

8.2 “I hope to see you and your active participation in the coming meetings with the same commitment you have shown us today. I once again would like to take this opportunity to fully assure you of Ethiopia's commitment and affirm our relentless effort to make WTDC‑21 a success in the COVID‑19 era. I hope to welcome you and see you all in Addis Ababa,” the Chairman concluded.

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