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|  | **28 May 2021** |
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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau |
| Continuity plans for the work of ITU-D in case of postponement of WTDC-21 to June 2022 |
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| **Summary:**This document presents continuity plans devised by the Secretariat for the work of ITU-D, should WTDC-21 be postponed to June 2022, as proposed by the government of Ethiopia.**Action required:**TDAG is invited to examine this document and approve the proposals contained therein related to study groups, inter-regional meetings, and TDAG and its working groups. **References:**[Letter DM-21/1010](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-DM-CIR-01010/en) |

# I. Introduction

At its 2019 session, the ITU Council noted with appreciation the official invitation from the Government of Ethiopia to host WTDC21 in Addis Ababa from 8 to 19 November 2021 and approved the precise place and exact dates.

During the first Inter-Regional Meeting to prepare for WTDC-21 (IRM-1), Ethiopia submitted a [contribution](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMIRM-C-0021/en) outlining the four possible options envisaged by the host country for the holding of the conference, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. On 12 April 2020, the Ethiopian Administration wrote to the Secretary General (see [Document CL21/76](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0076/en)) noting that due to the current sanitary situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unknown whether travel restrictions will be lifted by November and if all Member States will be able to participate on equal footing. Considering this uncertainty, Ethiopia proposed to postpone the WTDC-21 to 6-15 June 2022, and requested that the Secretary General consult ITU’s membership on the postponement as soon as possible (see [Letter DM-21/1010](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-DM-CIR-01010/en)).

By circular letter dated 14 May 2021 (see [letter CL-21/19](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-SG-CIR-0019/en)), the Secretary General advised Member States that based on the consultation of members of Council, the Council had agreed to the proposal by Ethiopia for postponement of WTDC-21 to 6-15 June 2022 and commenced consultation of member states as required by No.42 of the ITU Convention. The deadline for response to this consultation is **22 June 2021**.

In light of the above, the following continuity plans have been prepared by the Secretariat for consideration by TDAG.

# 1. Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) and TDAG Bureau

As per WTDC Resolution 61 (Rev. Dubai, 2014), TDAG Bureau members are appointed by the World Telecommunication Development Conference. Given this, the mandate of the members of the current TDAG Bureau will automatically continue until WTDC-21 takes place, in June 2022. Should any of the Bureau members not be able to serve until that date, they would be replaced as per No.244 of the Convention.

In order to allow the preparatory process to continue in the months up to WTDC it is proposed to hold an additional TDAG meeting during the original WTCD-21 dates, namely, 8-12 November.

**Proposal to TDAG:**

* Decide whether to hold an additional meeting of TDAG during the week of 8-12 November (number of days to be determined).

**2. Study Group Questions and Management Team**

As per WTDC Resolution 61 (Rev. Dubai, 2014), Study Group chairmen and vice-chairmen are appointed by the World Telecommunication Development Conference. Given this, the mandate of the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the current Study Groups will automatically continue until WTDC-21 takes place, in June 2022. Should any of the chairmen or vice-chairmen not be able to serve until that date, they would be replaced as per No. 244 of the Convention.

The seventh ITU-D study period 2018-2021 will end in 2022.

Study Group Questions are expected to continue with changes in text (submissions to March 2021 meeting and reference in section 3 of Documents [TDAG-21/8](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0008/en) and [TDAG-21/9](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0009/en).

Study Group **structure** discussions and decisions will be considered at the next WTDC through the ongoing work on the future of Questions and working methods at TDAG-WG-RDTP.

Study Group **mandate** (updates to WTDC Resolution 2 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017)) will be considered at the next WTDC, in June 2022.

Study Groups will hold one additional meeting each in October 2021 and will continue to progress its work in accordance with WTDC Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017).

**Proposal for TDAG:**

* Approve the revised study group Questions, as initially submitted in documents [TDAG-21/8](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0008/en) and [TDAG-21/9](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0009/en) and further refined as listed in the following table to follow the template in Annex 3 to WTDC Resolution 1 (rev. Buenos Aires, 2017):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Study Group** | **Question** | **Revised text proposed for approval** |
| SG1 | Q1/1 | [TDAG-21/DT/8](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-210524-TD-0008/) (reformatted) |
| Q2/1 | [1/460](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG01-C-0460/en) |
| Q3/1 | [1/468](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG01-C-0468/en) |
| Q4/1 | [1/444](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG01-C-0444/en) (also [TDAG-21/31](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0031/en)) |
| Q5/1 | [1/435](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG01-C-0435/en) |
| Q6/1 | [1/467](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG01-C-0467/en) |
| Q7/1 | [1/445](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG01-C-0445/en) (also [TDAG-21/32](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0032/en)) |
| SG2 | Q1/2 | [2/TD/42](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG02-210315-TD-0042/) |
| Q2/2 | [2/425](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG02-C-0425) (Annex 1) (reformatted) |
| Q3/2 | (No change) |
| Q4/2 | [2/TD/44](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG02-210315-TD-0044/) |
| Q5/2 | [2/425](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG02-C-0425) (Annex 2) (reformatted) |
| Q6/2 | [2/TD/43](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG02-210315-TD-0043/) |
| Q7/2 | [2/425](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-SG02-C-0425) (Annex 3) (reformatted) |

* Approve the additional meetings, as follows:
	+ Study Group 1 – 4-8 October 2021;
	+ Study Group 2 – 18-22 October 2021.

# 3. TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities ([TDAG-WG-RDTP](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/TDAG/Pages/TDAG_WG_WTDC.aspx))

The postponement of WTDC-21 will provide additional time to this working group to advance its work and report to the next TDAG meeting in November 2021, should TDAG decide to hold it.

**Proposal to TDAG:**

* Invite the chairman of TDAG-WG-RDTP to re-convene the group, as necessary, and report back to the next meeting of TDAG.

# 4. TDAG Working Group on the Strategic and Operational Plans ([TDAG-WG-SOP](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/TDAG/Pages/TDAG_WG_SOP.aspx))

The development by membership of ITU-D of a contribution to the ITU Strategic planning process, is a matter of key importance to members. The change in date of WTDC, as related to the dates established for the PP, has an impact on how members will engage at the ITU-D level on the Strategic Plan.



The Secretary-General shall “*prepare, with the assistance of the Coordination Committee, and provide to the Member States and Sector Members, such specific information as may be required for the preparation of a report on the policies and strategic plan for the Union*” (CS/Art. 11 – 74A).

The Plenipotentiary Conference establishes the Strategic Plan for the Union, by revising PP Resolution 71, and the Secretary-General accordingly then coordinates the implementation of the new Strategic Plan (CV/Art.5, 86A).

According to the ITU Constitution and Convention, responsibility for the approval of the ITU Strategic and Financial Plan is vested in the Plenipotentiary Conference only.

The Council shall, “*in the last but one ordinary session of the Council before the next plenipotentiary conference, initiate the preparation of a draft new strategic plan for the Union, drawing upon input from Member States, Sector Members and the Sector advisory groups, and produce a coordinated draft new strategic plan at least four months before that plenipotentiary conference*” (CV/Art. 4 –62A).

The practice followed in the previous cycles was that Council established a Council Working Group to develop the draft new strategic and financial plans (ref. Council Res. 1384/C17). The CWG on Strategic and Financial Plans (CWG-SFP) was open to Member States and Sector Members when addressing the draft strategic plan. In addition to inputs from Member States, Sector Members and the Sector advisory groups, it also considered the results of public consultations conducted on the proposed strategic framework.

The last ordinary session of the Council before the PP reviews and endorses the draft new Strategic Plan (submitted by the CWG-SFP), and the draft plan produced is being forwarded to PP at least four months before the beginning of the conference.

Although in previous iterations, WTDC has provided input through contributions to CWG-SFP for consideration in their drafting of the Strategic Plan (as envisaged in [WTDC Resolution 1 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017)](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/Documents/WTDC17_final_report_en.pdf)), if WTDC is postponed to the proposed dates which will be after Council 2022, it will not be possible for WTDC to approve inputs to the Strategic Plan in time for Council 2022.

TDAG is reminded that at its meeting on 16 June 2020, TDAG 2020/2 created the TDAG Working Group on the BDT Contribution to the ITU Strategic and Operational Plans (TDAG-WG-SOP) to review the status of implementation and impact of the Strategic Plan approved by the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference and to prepare proposals for the draft new ITU-D contribution to the Strategic Plan for the next period (2024-2027).

Following consideration of the matters within its mandate, the TDAG-WG-SOP, in its [report to TDAG](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG28-C-0022/en) recommended that TDAG endorse the application of the four thematic priorities proposed by TDAG-WG-RDTP as the strategic priorities for ITU-D to be included in the new Strategic Plan. TDAG could then submit this proposal as an input to CWG-SFP, which will begin working on the draft ITU Strategic Plan in June 2021 and provide the final draft for review to Council in March 2022.

**Proposal to TDAG:**

* TDAG endorse the application of the proposed Thematic Priorities from TDAG-WG-RDTP as the ITU-D Objectives for the next ITU Strategic Plan, specifically:

a) Connectivity;

b) Digital Transformation;

c) Enabling Environment; and

d) Resource Mobilization and International Cooperation;

# 5. Inter-regional Meetings (IRMs)

Inter-Regional Preparatory Meetings were introduced to the WTDC preparatory process based on the deliberations of TDAG-WG-Prep, to provide an additional forum for membership across different regions to deliberate on and discuss matters of importance in preparation for WTDC, thereby enhancing consensus on key issues before the conference. A total of up to three meetings were proposed, and to date, one meeting was held on 11 March 2021.

It is proposed to hold the two remaining meetings each over two days, as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Group** | **Comments** |
| 16-17 September | IRM-2 | Virtual – previously for IRM-3 |
| 11-15 October | IRM-3 | Virtual – two days in that week (currently Telecom dates) |

Due to the additional costs that would be incurred by an extended preparatory process, the Secretariat seeks the input of membership on the need for interpretation for the IRMs, which would significantly impact the ability to support additional meetings.

**Proposal to TDAG:**

* Decide on the dates for the IRMs as proposed above;
* Decide on the need for interpretation at these two IRM meetings.

# 6. Partner2Connect for Digital Development

The postponement of the WTDC will allow for additional preparatory work to be done to ensure that he P2C is as impactful and has optimal reach to all targeted stakeholders. In addition to an ongoing series of working group calls to advance the development of the focus area agenda, preparatory events (virtual and/or physical) will be planned at key UN (e.g. WTPF-21, LDC5) and key private sector for a to maintain momentum, engagement, and commitment to P2C.

# 7. Youth Summit

The Youth Summit is still proposed for a two-day period shortly before the WTDC, and therefore if WTDC is postponed, the Summit would also have to be postponed to a suitable date prior to 6 June 2022, in collaboration with the Host Country.

# 8. Road to Addis

The events of the Road to Addis series will take place across the entire year 2021 and will continue in 2022 to capitalize on opportunities to create global awareness around WTDC.

# 9. Regional Initiatives and Projects

The ITU Regional Initiatives (RIs) 2018-2021 were adopted at the ITU's World Telecommunications Development Conferences in 2017 (WTDC-17) to address specific telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) priority areas to meet the regions' development needs and will continue to be implemented until the next WTDC.

Similarly, the postponement of WTDC-21 will not have an impact on the implementation of ITU projects, which will continue to be implemented based on each project’s scope, timeline and resources.

# 10. BDT Thematic Priorities

The postponement of WTDC-21 will not have an impact on the implementation of the BDT thematic priorities.

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