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| ITU-R’s capacity building in remote participation | | |

Background

The current pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the daily operation of ITU Sectors. Meetings of all the Sectors have been postponed and routine operations have been conducted online. Meetings that cannot be postponed will be held in the form of remote online meetings.

Status of Remote Participation in ITU-R

ITU-R currently has two ways of remote participation for delegates. One is the audio webcasting of meetings, which provides delegates with audio webcasts of all plenary meetings of study groups and working parties held in Geneva. The other is the possibility of remote participation at the working party level where delegates who cannot attend the meeting physically can interact with the meeting in real time. According to the guidance provided by previous RAG meetings, ITU-R currently only provides remote participation for working party meetings that do not involve formal decision-making procedures. This administration also notes that participants who wish to actively engage in remote participation (such as introducing their contributions) need to register for the meeting in advance and coordinate with the consultant of that specific study group. Due to various restrictions, the above-mentioned two modes of participation did not effectively satisfy the demands for remote participation during this pandemic.

In view of the special situation of the global outbreak of COVID-19 this year, some study groups and working parties already proceeded to seek more practical ways of organizing teleconferences (e.g. using online conference software such as Gotomeeting or Zoom) according to their own work plans or actual needs to complete their assigned tasks.

Proposal

Taking into account that:

1) ITU, as the world's only international organization in telecommunication, should promote its leading role in online virtual meetings.

2) During this global pandemic, online virtual meetings can effectively help ITU-R and administrations to coordinate international efforts.

3) Due to their financial and other constraints, developing countries are unable to send many delegates to study group or working party meetings held in Geneva or at other venues, thus missing discussions on many matters that are helpful or influential to them. Therefore, online virtual meetings will greatly benefit developing countries.

4) In fact, it is mentioned in the 2019 ITU-R four-year rolling Operational Plan (Section 4 of Annex 1 to Circular Letter CA/246) and in the Director's Report to this RAG meeting (Section 5 of Addendum 1 to Document RAG20/1) that the number of meetings organized by all three ITU Sectors and the General Secretariat will continue to increase, and that the Union’s actual requirements for meeting rooms should be carefully taken into account. To address this issue, it is proposed in the four-year rolling Operational Plan that the shortage of meeting rooms should be solved by the increased use of virtual meetings.

It is worth noting that this year's four-year rolling Operational Plan (Four-year rolling Operational Plan for 2021-2024 in Document RAG20/10) is different from previous years. As mentioned by the Secretary General of ITU in the Foreword of the Operational Plan, it is the first real “One-ITU”Operational Plan. The four-year Operational Plan prepared in line with new developments is conducive to advancing a coordinated Union-wide update to the remote participation system. Unfortunately, at present, the Operational Plan does not mention the urgent needs of administrations for remote participation.

This administration consequently looks forward to discussions on this matter at this forthcoming RAG meeting. If a consensus can be achieved on this issue, a letter from the RAG meeting to the Secretary General/General Secretariat can be envisaged, suggesting budget considerations for updating the ITU remote participation system be included in the next four-year rolling Operational Plan for ITU.

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