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| **Council 2017 Geneva, 15-25 May 2017** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 2.7** | **Document C17/4-E** |
| **12 April 2017** |
| **Original: English** |
| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| Follow-up Report on Possible improvements of the roll-out of the plenipotentiary conference | |

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| Summary  At its 2015 session, the Council requested the secretariat to prepare a document on possible improvements for the roll-out of the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP). [Document C16/4](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0004/en), “Possible improvement of the roll-out of the Plenipotentiary Conference” was reviewed at the 2016 session of the Council which instructed the Secretary-General to continue his consultation and report to C17.  Action required  The Council is invited to **discuss/review** this document and **endorse** the proposed ways forward.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  [Resolution 58 (Rev. Busan, 2014)](http://www.itu.int/pub/S-CONF-PLEN-2015); [Decision 5 (Annex 2)](http://www.itu.int/pub/S-CONF-PLEN-2015) ; [GR 175](http://www.itu.int/pub/S-CONF-PLEN-2015)A  Documents [PP-14/175 (Recommendation 8)](http://www.itu.int/md/S14-PP-C-0175/en), [C15/99](http://www.itu.int/md/S15-CL-C-0099/en), [C16/4](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0004/en), [C16/100](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0100/en), [CWG-FHR 7/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CLCWGFHRM7-C-0010/en), [C17/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0006/en)  Circular Letters [CL-16/48](https://www.itu.int/md/S16-SG-CIR-0048/en), [CL-17/07](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-SG-CIR-0007/en) |

# Background

1. At its 2016 session, the Council reviewed document [C16/4](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0004/en) (Possible improvements of the roll-out of the Plenipotentiary Conference) as well as the contribution from the United Arab Emirates ([C16/100](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0100/en), Electronic voting at the Plenipotentiary Conference). Following discussion, it was agreed that the Secretary-General would carry out a consultation with Member States and report back to Council 2017.

2. A consultation was initiated through [Circular letter CL-16/48](http://www.itu.int/md/S16-SG-CIR-0048/en); the responses were compiled into document [CWG-FHR 7/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CLCWGFHRM7-C-0010/en) and presented to the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources in 2017. The Group requested that the consultation be extended, and [Circular Letter CL-17/07](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-SG-CIR-0007/en) invited Member States to provide feedback. This compiled feedback from both consultations is available in [C17/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0006/en).

3. This document takes into consideration the contributions received and proposes measures to be taken in order to improve the roll-out of the Plenipotentiary Conference, all the while being guided by the following priorities:

* improving effectiveness and efficiency of the organization and roll-out of PP proceedings while preserving the necessary conditions for the fulfilment of its role as the supreme governing body of the Union;
* reducing expenditure in line with measures listed in Annex 2 to Decision 5, particularly by reducing the duration of the conference by one or two days, while keeping in mind the constraints that small delegations face;
* ensuring high-level participation to strengthen the role of PP as supreme policy-making organ; and
* improving communication with and between ITU membership to reinforce their involvement in and ownership of this unique ITU event.

4. Using these priorities and drawing upon the experience of the secretariat, this document addresses the five main areas for action as proposed in C16/4:

1) strengthening regional and inter-regional preparations;

2) reaffirming the role of PP as the Union’s highest policy-making body;

3) improving electoral processes; and

4) utilizing up-to-date and integrated conference management tools to increase efficiency and improve the paper-smart practices of the conference;

5) eliminating underutilized interpretation services.

5. The proposals in this document take into consideration the following key dates in the PP-18 preparatory process:

* 29 Oct. 2017: invitation letter sent and candidatures open for submission
* Nov. 2017 – Feb. 2018: regional preparatory meetings
* 29 Feb. 2018: deadline for proposals to amend CS/CV (8 months prior)
* 16-17 April 2018: meetings of CWG-SPFP and EG-ITRs
* 18-27 April 2018: Council 2018
* 29 June 2018: deadline for other proposals (4 months prior)
* 1 Oct. 2018 at 23.59 Geneva time: deadline for submission of candidatures (28th day prior to the conference)
* 15 Oct. 2018: firm deadline for contributions (14 calendar days)
* 27 Oct. 2018: final meeting of the 2018 session of the Council
* 29 Oct. 2018: first day of PP-18

# Strengthening regional and inter-regional preparations

6. In document C16/4, it was proposed to:

* *Ensure more efficient participation of ITU secretariat in regional preparatory meetings organized by the RTOs.*
* *Strengthen the inter-regional coordination meetings with the objective of reaching possible convergence of interregional views on major issues. Two formal inter-regional meetings could be scheduled well in advance and in conjunction with other ITU events so that RTOs may plan their meetings around these meetings.*
* *Include MS which are not part of established Regional Telecommunication Organizations (RTOs) in this process.*
* *In line with Resolution 167, provide the possibility of remote participation for these inter-regional meetings.*
* *Improve communication and involvement of ITU membership in preparation for the meeting of the supreme organ of the Union (membership could be consulted on possible high-level speakers and themes of round-tables […]).*
* *Organize in cooperation with RTOs training for new delegates on preparing for ITU Plenipotentiary Conference*

7. Overall, Member States supported holding physical preparatory inter-regional meetings with remote participation facilities, so long as they could be held without any budgetary impact. It was noted that the current informality of the inter-regional coordination should not be lost. Delegate training and practical information seminars were also supported. At present there is no budget foreseen to organize any regional or interregional meetings away from Geneva.

8. The following actions are therefore proposed for PP-18:

* The ITU secretariat to attend and support RTO preparatory meetings. In order to provide more support for new delegates, a training package should be developed and published online and also presented by ITU staff attending RTO regional preparatory meetings.
* Based on the practice in 2014, hold two informal interregional meetings at HQ in Geneva with remote participation. The following dates are proposed: the first meeting could be held on Tuesday, 17 April 2018 (the day before Council 2018), and the second meeting could be held on 2 October 2018, after the deadline for the submission of candidatures. As in 2014, it is proposed to limit physical participation to three regional representatives per group, conduct the meeting in English only, and provide remote participation open to all MS.

# Reaffirming the role of PP as the Union’s highest policy-making body

9. In document C16/4, the following actions were proposed:

* *A first-ever “Ministerial week” could include high-level, thematic round-tables in Plenary during which ministers will have the opportunity to discuss their administrations’ goals, objectives, and commitments, with a view to replacing traditional policy statements. Member States could also choose to submit videos of each Minister delivering his/her statement which could be posted online rather than being delivered during PP.*
* *A number of services which are already provided could be better coordinated and packaged to make the event more attractive for ministers: rooms for bilaterals, media opportunities, announcements of projects, meeting with young policy leaders, speaking opportunities in selected side events, etc.*
* *Invite Ministers to sign the Final Acts in advance in a VIP signing room with official photo coverage.*
* *In view of the above, discontinue the formal signing ceremony. A time-frame for all other delegates to sign the Final Acts in the Committee 2 office could be established (as is done with declarations/reservations), and delegates could join the Elected Officials for a final group photo.*
* *The outcomes of the “Ministerial week” should be communicated to the Plenary and mainstreamed into the official work of conference.*

10. Responses were received on various issues, some of which were not suggested by the secretariat but still fall under this category. For example, it was proposed to set the definitive upper limit of the contributory unit on the second day of the conference, and specify that MS must announce their definitive choice of class of contribution by the third day in order to allow the budget to be drafted based on accurate financial projections. Regarding policy statements, some Member States have expressed the desire to shorten the time devoted to policy statements or eliminate them entirely, while others feel that the policy statements should reflect each Member State’s goals and objectives for ITU.

11. Taking into consideration the feedback from Member States, it is therefore proposed to maintain and streamline the signing ceremony for PP-18.

12. It is also proposed that the Council:

* Invite Member States to limit policy statements to three minutes maximum, and request that they be focused on goals and objectives for ITU (for example related to ICTs for SDGs). The full speech will be published on a dedicated webpage. Based on PP-14 figures (121 policy statement speeches), more than a half-day of working time could be saved. To this effect, it is also suggested that the Council recommend to PP-18 to update Recommendation 5 accordingly.
* Recommend to PP-18 to set the definitive upper limit of contributory unit on the first day of the conference, as was done at PP-14, and the deadline to announce definitive choice of class of contrinution by midnight of the third day, which is consistent with CS 161D and 161E.

# Improving electoral processes

13. In document C16/4, the following actions were proposed:

* *Regarding the electoral process:*
  + *Council is invited to initiate studies to improve the election process for the Elected Officials as suggested in Rec. 8 of PP-14, Committee 5: presentations, interactive sessions, live sessions, interviews, submission of questions, round-tables, etc.*
  + *It is proposed to create well in advance an online space for PDFs/videos of campaign brochures so that MS may post their candidates’ information electronically and eliminate paper copies. Touch screens could be set up around the coffee break area containing candidates’ information.*
* *Regarding the voting, it is proposed to consider, after due review by the secretariat of existing solutions and their technical, legal, and practical requirements, switching to complete electronic voting as stated in the GR 175 which provides that “Elections should preferably be held using an electronic system when a suitable system is available and if the conference does not decide otherwise”. The outcome of the review and a trial of a preferred solution could be presented to Council 2017.*
* *It should be noted that since the review of electronic voting possibilities in 2006, no further studies or actions have been taken in this regard. In either case, it is proposed to reduce time in between rounds when possible, as was done at PP-14.*

14. In their replies and during the CWG-FHR meeting, Member States supported holding a “candidates’ forum”, and suggested that the secretariat look to sister organizations such as [WHO](http://who.int/dg/election/candidates-forum/en/) and [ILO](http://www.ilo.org/gb/about-governing-body/appointment-of-director-general/lang--en/index.htm) who have recently held such forums successfully in the run-up to the elections of their officials and submit its analysis and proposals to the 2017 session of Council. Member States requested the secretariat to explore the possibility of electronic voting.

15. Taking into consideration the 2009 JIU report “Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations System Organizations” and practice in other UN agencies such as ILO, WHO, WIPO, UNIDO, UNGA, etc., the following is therefore suggested:

* The Council is invited to encourage Member States having candidates for the elected official positions to submit, in addition to a CV, a vision statement for the Union/Sector.
* In order for PP-18 to be as paper-smart as possible and based on the practice at PP-14, the secretariat will create well in advance an online space for PDFs/videos of campaign brochures so that MS may post campaign material relating to candidatures (Elected Officials, Council Member States, RRB), eliminating the need for paper copies. Touch screens could also be set up around the coffee break area containing digital versions of candidates’ campaign material.
* The Council is invited to instruct the Secretary-General to provide a platform for candidates so that they may present themselves and their vision for the Union should they wish to do so.
* Based on the decision and successful execution at PP-14 of reducing the time between rounds of elections (GR 191-193), it is suggested that the Council recommend to PP-18 to continue this time-saving practice at PP-18 and reduce the time in between rounds by half in order to expedite the election process with the aim of concluding the elections by the end of the first week.
* Regarding electronic voting, a detailed analysis and proposal is available in document [C17/70](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0070/en). It is proposed that, if supported by the host country, a test of electronic voting be conducted at PP-18 in order to gain experience for its possible use at PP-22.

# Utilizing up-to-date and integrated conference management tools to increase efficiency and improve the paper-smart and paperless practices of the conference

16. In document C16/4, the following was proposed:

* *Follow Annex 2 of Dec. 5, as it is already applied to conferences and meetings of the Union such as the Council and WRC, by eliminating paper copies of documents to MS.*
* *Likewise, the Final Acts should only be made available in PDF form.*
* *Invitations to social events should only be distributed electronically.*
* *The reduction and elimination of paper copies of campaign brochures should also be encouraged (see Elections and voting procedures above).*

17. Member States agreed that it is in the financial interest of the Union and the interest of the environment to make the conference as paper-smart as possible. To this end, they encouraged using the available technological tools and developing new ones if necessary. The Host Country is also committed to making PP-18 a climate-neutral event.

18. Taking into consideration the feedback from Member States, existing technological tools will be further improved (CPI, CRM, etc.) and the PP-18 website will be optimized for mobile devices.

19. Furthermore, it is therefore suggested that the Council agree to:

* Make PP-18 as paper-smart as possible: no copies of any documents, including Final Acts.
* Electronically distribute invitations to social events.
* Encourage the elimination of paper copies of campaign brochures by utilizing the above-mentioned electronic alternatives.

# Eliminating underutilized interpretation services

20. In document C16/4, it was proposed:

* *…in line with Annex 2 of Dec. 5 and taking into consideration the sparse participation in these meetings during PP-14, particularly in Committee 3, to eliminate interpretation services for Committees 2 and 3.*

21. Citing Resolution 154, Member States opposed eliminating interpretation services altogether for Committees 2 and 3.

22. It is therefore proposed to maintain interpretation services to these committees.

# Other

23. Other various suggestions were made including limiting working hours and advancing the deadline for proposal submission. Resolution 165, which establishes a deadline of 14 calendar days, can only be modified by the PP itself.

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