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| **COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES** 7th meeting, Geneva, 30 January - 1 February 2017 |  |
| INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION |  |
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**CONTRIBUTION BY THE SECRETARIAT**

**Accountability and Transparency Framework**

**International Telecommunication Union**

## **I. Background**

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in its 2011 report on “Accountability Frameworks in the United Nations System” ([JIU/REP/2011/5](https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2011_5_English.pdf)), recommended that Executive Heads of United Nations system organizations develop accountability frameworks as a matter of priority. The JIU review of ITU management undertaken in 2015 ([JIU/REP/2016/1](https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_1_English.pdf)) includes a formal recommendation, which ITU management accepted, that the “ITU Secretary-General should further develop and consolidate the core elements of accountability into a stand-alone ITU Accountability Framework and present it to the Council at its 2017 session and report annually on its implementation”.

## **II. Introduction**

2. The UN General Assembly adopted [resolution 64/259](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/259) which defined accountability as follows: “Accountability is the obligation of the Secretariat and its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honoring their commitments, without qualification or exception”.

3. UNGA resolution 64/259 also stated that accountability “includes achieving objectives and high-quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, in fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat approved by the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other subsidiary organs established by them in compliance with all resolutions, regulations, rules and ethical standards; truthful, objective, accurate and timely reporting on performance results; responsible stewardship of funds and resources; all aspects of performance, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions; and with due recognition to the important role of the oversight bodies and in full compliance with accepted recommendations”.

## **III. The ITU Accountability Framework**

4. ITU’s management is being guided by the principle of fulfilling the mandate of the Union in a transparent manner. It is accountable to the membership of the Union. Over the years, ITU has developed core elements of accountability that include, amongst others, delegation of authority instruments; financial disclosure policy; ITU Internal letter of representation; performance management tools and risk management in strategic planning; a results framework enabling Results-based Management(RBM); and the creation of the Independent Management Advisory Committee (IMAC)**.**

5. The aim of this document is to consolidate the existing core elements of accountability into an ITU-wide Accountability Framework (AF), as well as to incorporate any missing components of such a framework (as per the JIU report 2011/5).

6. ITU’s accountability framework builds up on the three main pillars based on a structure presented in the JIU report as shown below. Section IV of this document describes each of the three pillars.

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| **PILLAR 1**  **Covenant with Member States, Sector Members, Associates, Academia, and users of ITU’s Services** | **PILLAR 2**  **Internal Controls and Risk Management** | **PILLAR 3**  **Complaints and Response Mechanism** |
| * ITU’s Basic Instruments, relevant agreements and treaties * ITU’s Results Framework | * Control Environment * Control activities * Risk assessment * Monitoring | * Procurement * ITU’s staff * Membership & other users of ITU services |

7. This framework seeks to strengthen a culture of accountability and transparency across the Union, based on a clear orientation by Member States; proper implementation (planning, managing and reporting) by the Secretariat; adequate internal and external controls/oversight; and the corresponding complaints and response mechanisms.

8. ITU’s AF adopts five key principles that help describe and guide a culture of accountability (in line with the JIU report) and aims to fully implement them in the Union, as follows:

1. Leading by values and examples - accountability as a top priority in day-today operation and evidenced by high standards of integrity of senior management.
2. Leading by information and communication - accountability through transparent decision-making.
3. Leading by motivation - accountability through recognition of staff achievements.
4. Leading by guidance and discipline - a zero-tolerance policy for unacceptable behavior at all levels.
5. Leading by participation - an open dialogue to encourage mutual accountability.

### **IV. Pillars of the ITU Accountability Framework**

### **Pillar 1 - Covenant with Member States, Sector Members, Associates, Academia, and users of ITU’s services**

9. The first pillar of ITU’s AF relies on mutual accountability - the alliance with its membership. This agreement (covenant) is embedded in the instruments listed below, and is monitored through ITU’s Results framework:

1. ITU’s Constitution and Convention as approved by plenipotentiary conferences (PP);
2. General Rules of Conferences, Assemblies and Meetings of the Union;
3. The Radio Regulations;
4. The International Telecommunication Regulations; and
5. PP/Council/WCIT/Sector World Conferences/Assemblies decisions, resolutions and recommendations.

10. Based on the Union’s mandate and obligations, an ITU Results framework composed of achievable Goals and Targets, common to all components of the Union, and sectoral and intersectoral Objectives/Outcomes, Outputs and Activities, is set forth in the Strategic Plan for the Union by the membership through its PP and Council, with contributions by World Conferences, Assemblies and Advisory groups. Accountability for such achievements is implemented on a yearly basis through the Operational Plans of the Sectors and the GS, and monitored and reported through the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Strategic plan, Annual Operating/Performance reports and the State of the Union report. Through the Results-Based-budgeting and Results-based management results are monitored and reported to members for future guidance.

### **Pillar 2 - Risk management and internal controls**

11. This pillar aims to ensure the alignment of results with ITU’s policies, rules and regulations, as well as ethics, integrity and other standards.

12. Existing components of this Pillar are:

1. Financial Operating Report including Statement of the Internal Control (SIC) and Management Report;
2. Internal Audit Reports;
3. External Auditors Report;
4. IMAC Reports;
5. Risk Management Policy and Appetite statement (to be adopted by C17);
6. Delegation of Authority;
7. Access to ERP system based on segregation of duties.

### **Pillar 3 - Complaints and response mechanism**

13. As specified in the JIU report, this pillar is based on “the mechanism through which stakeholders can hold an organization to account by querying a decision, action or policy and receiving an adequate response to their grievance. Complaints and response mechanisms should be seen as a means of last resort for stakeholders to hold the organization to account and for organizations to become aware of an issue that requires a response”. In ITU there are a number of complaints and response mechanisms available, which are as follows:

1. The Ethics Officer – Ethical value and Standards of Conducts;
2. The Staff Council;
3. The Mediators of the Union;
4. The request for reconsideration of a decision to be addressed to the Secretary-General;
5. The Appeal Board;
6. The Administrative Tribunal of the International Labor Organization (ILOAT): According to the Staff Regulations a staff member shall have the right to appeal to the ILOAT in accordance with the conditions set forth in the Statute of that Tribunal;
7. The UN grievances mechanism, to which staff members may appeal for decision in relation to the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) issues;
8. The classification Review Board; and
9. The investigation commissions to be created on the basis of relevant Service Orders (e.g. SO 05/05 on Harassment and abuse of Authority).

**V. JIU benchmarks for the Accountability Framework**

14. The JIU Report/2011/5 provides 17 benchmarks to measure a robust accountability framework based on transparency and a culture of accountability. The Annex provides detailed information on the status of the benchmarks and tools in the ITU Accountability Framework.

**VI. Conclusion**

15. ITU will continue to ensure that the Union’s Accountability Framework responds to evolving circumstances and takes into account the best practices in the UN system. The goal is to have an accountability system in the Union with increased focus on the results and performance-based management giving greater flexibility and autonomy to managers in order to achieve the best results, and to emphasize transparency as an essential feature of accountability.

16. ITU’s Accountability Framework will be reviewed periodically in order to strengthen organizational capacity and to ensure continued relevance. It will be updated to reflect new requirements or improvements arising from new initiatives or lessons learned. ITU will ensure that the Accountability Framework remains relevant to the mandate and objectives of the Union.

**Annex**

**Progress towards the implementation of the JIU benchmarks for the Accountability Framework**

**Pillar 1**

| **Benchmark** | **Tools** | **Status** | **Comment** |
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| 1. A clear framework for accountability is in place, including a definition thereof and clarity of responsibility for the overall implementation of the framework, linking all components together | Framework policy document | ✓ | By this proposal, ITU is putting in place such a framework. Full implementation should follow adoption by Council in 2017. |
| Definition of accountability | ✓ |
| Roles and responsibilities of senior management, line department and staff | ✓ |
| Policy document available on the website and for staff | In progress |
| Framework contains key components of accountability | ✓ |
| 2. RBM is operational and coherent with organizational mandates and objectives, and cascades down into unit and personal work plans | Strategic plans | ✓ | RBM is operational and coherent with the organizational mandates and objectives (strategic goals and targets, Sector and Inter-Sectoral Objectives/Outcomes, Outputs and Enablers/Support Services.  Unit and Personal work plans are being elaborated based on the results-framework of the organization. |
| Unit work plans | In progress |
| Personal work objectives | In progress |
| 3. Organizations conduct credible, utilization-focused evaluations and communicate the findings, conclusions and recommendations to stakeholders | Evaluation function | Under consideration | An ITU Evaluation feasibility study is being conducted to produce: a) Brief report detailing performance identified and recommended for inclusion in evaluation process, b) Brief report detailing the evaluation needs at ITU, based on a recommended evaluation scope and objectives, and c) Evaluation policy, guidelines, work plan and further steps document. |
| 4. Organizations have an effectively implemented established information disclosure policy whereby the results of the organization’s activities are communicated regularly to legislative organs, member States and other stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries and the general public | Information disclosure policy | ✓ | As a step forward towards more transparency and accountability, ITU Council adopted at its 2016 session the ITU’s information/document access policy which “… ensures access by the public to information held, managed or generated by ITU”; this policy will enter into force on 1 January 2017 on a provisional basis. |
| Evaluation and audit results | ✓ |
| Consolidated annual financial reports | ✓ | Consolidated annual reports are presented to Council |
| Programme results | ✓ |

**Pillar 2**

| **Benchmark** | **Tools** | **Status** | **Comment** |
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| 5. Ethical conduct, standards of integrity, anti-corruption and anti-fraud  policies are in place and enforced | Staff regulations/code of conduct for staff members, including harassment | ✓ | A new Ethics Officer has been appointed on 1st November 2016. |
| Ethics function | ✓ |
| Gifts, favors and hospitality policy | In progress | An improved policy is under preparation. |
| Protection against retaliation for reporting wrongdoing (whistle-blower policy) | ✓ |  |
| Outside activities policy (conflict of interest) | ✓ |
| Anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy | In progress |
| Training | In progress |
| 6. Failure to comply with enforced policies/regulations results in clear consequences. Sanctions shall be clear and proportional and implemented at all levels. In addition, outstanding performance should be acknowledged by recognition/awards/rewards | Policy documents on sanctions and disciplinary action | Not applicable | Chapter X of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules are applied. |
| Publication in annual reports of sanctions imposed by the Executive Head | Not applied | Not imposed by the ITU basic instruments. |
| Awards/rewards programmes decided by committees/panels based on clear criteria | ✓ | Annual awards to outstanding performance by staff are granted and published. |
| Publication of the names of staff members receiving awards and rewards | ✓ |
| 7. All staff can be held accountable for their work on the basis of up-to-date written job descriptions accurately reflecting their actual work | Job description for all staff | ✓ | Full connection between actual work and job description not always easy to obtain. |
| Coherence between job description and day-to-day work | In progress |
| 8. Concretization of policies on selection, recruitment and post-employment | Recruitment policy restricting hiring of family members and relatives | ✓ | Rule 4.7.1 of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. |
| Post-employment restrictions for staff who retire/resign from the organization | ✓ | Policy already in place for retirees (ITU applies the UN limitations) and for staff members leaving the organization within an early separation programme. |
| 9. Organization has a formal policy on ERM to be implemented with a coherent methodology | Risk analysis conducted for each unit/project/process and an organizational risk plan exists | In progress | Risk registers are maintained and reported through the Operational Plans of the Sectors and the General Secretariat.  A formal Risk Management Policy and Appetite Statement will be endorsed by the 2017 Session of Council. |
| 10. The chain of command and delegation of authority are aligned, clear, coherent and integrated into existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems | Clear definition of delegation of authority | ✓ |  |
| Coherence between management line and delegation of authority and clear reporting lines | ✓ |  |
| Delegation of authority built into existing ERP systems | ✓ | Access to ERP system based on segregation of duties |
| 11. Financial regulations and rules (FRR) in the United Nations system organizations should embody anti-fraud and financial misconduct policies and are implemented practically | FRR | ✓ |  |
| Conflict of interest statements | ✓ | ITU maintains a yearly declaration of potential conflicts of interest related to finance or procurement issues according to ethical standards. |
| Financial disclosure statements | ✓ |
| Anti-fraud policies | In progress | Under consideration. |
| 12. Managers attest to compliance with internal controls within the  framework of their delegation of authority | Letter/form of representation/assurance/attestation submitted annually to the executive head | ✓ | Each Elected official, Heads of Department and Head of Unit of GS are required to submit an Internal Letter of Representation, which constitutes a written confirmation that they have duly exercised delegated financial authorities and responsibilities. |
| 13. Staff at all levels have access to relevant, reliable information that supports decision-making in line with their delegated authorities and the organization has an internal and external communication system | ERP system or similar in place to capture and document relevant information | In progress | ITU manages information and knowledge through standardized information management. i.e. ERP, SharePoint, File repositories, BI tools, which provides staff access to information based on role and function. |
| Internal communication channels are fully exploited | In progress |
| Information disclosure policy in place | In progress |
| 14. Executive heads, senior managers and staff members’ performance is monitored and corrective action taken as necessary | Performance assessments for all staff levels including 360-degree feedback | In progress | The new appraisal system to be implemented in the course of 2017 doesn’t include a 360-degree feedback. |
| Senior compacts or scorecard-type tools | Not applied |  |
| Corrective measures for non-performing assets | ✓ | Staff members are invited to take action through the establishment training plans for redressing the situation in collaboration with their supervisors. |
| 15. Recommendations of oversight bodies/internal audits and evaluations are tracked, implemented, and if not, clear justification should be provided | Information disclosure policy | In progress | ITU Council adopted at its 2016 session the ITU’s information/document access policy which “… ensures access by the public to information held, managed or generated by ITU”; this policy will enter into force on 1 January 2017 on a provisional basis. |
| Reporting on external and internal oversight recommendations | ✓ | The SG and IMAC receive regular updates on the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations. |
| Tracking recommendations of internal and external audit, oversight bodies and internal, independent and self-evaluations | ✓ | CWG-FHR is following and overseeing all the recommendations from Ext. Auditors and IMAC |

**Pillar 3**

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| **Benchmark** | **Tools** | **Status** | **Comment** |
| 16. Staff members have recourse to non-formal complaints mechanisms | Procedures for non-formal grievances/rebuttals are outlined in a policy document and or handbook | Not applied | Each procedure is included in the relevant Service Order. |
| A mediator or ombudsperson function is in place | ✓ |  |
| 17. Staff members, consultants, non-staff, stakeholders/beneficiaries and vendors have recourse to formal complaints mechanisms and organizations have mechanisms to respond to such complaints | Investigation function, hotlines, complaints forms etc. for staff and external | ✓ | Consultants and non-staff have not access to the ILOAT and UNAT. SSA contracts are including a provision for informal resolution of conflicts and recourse to arbitration. |
| Grievance mechanisms: United Nations Dispute or ILO Administrative Tribunals | ✓ | Available for regular staff members and staff members on short term contracts, and arbitration for consultants and non-staff. |
| Procurement challenges | In progress | ITU is committed to ensuring that the purchase of goods and services is conducted in a fair and transparent manner and subject to competition, where appropriate international. To address procurement challenges, ITU is considering putting in place a debrief mechanism for unsuccessful bidders for high-value solicitations. |

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