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| **Virtual consultation of councillors  starting 9 June 2020** |  |
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| **Name of the submitting Member State(s):** | **People's Republic of China** |
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| **Document title:** | **Proposed further improvements on remote participation in ITU's meetings** |
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| **Ref. to draft agenda of the virtual consultation:** | **Additional agenda item 15: Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on ITU's operations and activities** |
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| I Background Ever since the beginning of 2020, COVID-19 has been posing a huge threat to the safety and health of all humanity and has severely impacted the global economy. In order to contribute to global response efforts through the use of information technologies, ITU has strengthened collaboration with other international organizations . In April, ITU and WHO issued a joint statement: *Unleashing information technology to defeat Covid-19* and worked with telecommunication companies to text billions of people – who aren’t able to connect to the internet for information – directly on their mobile phones with vital health messaging. ITU also joined hands with the World Bank, GSMA and the World Economic Forum (WEF) and launched an [accelerated action plan](http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/788991588006445890/Speedboat-Partners-COVID-19-Digital-Development-Joint-Action-Plan.pdf)[[1]](#footnote-1), which proposes a number of objectives, including managing network congestion, ensuring the continuity of critical services, especially health services, and enhancing cybersecurity. The plan also identifies the responses over the immediate and short terms. A network resilience platform (# REG4COVID)[[2]](#footnote-2) was launched, where regulators, enterprises, third-party organizations and other entities can share information and communicate policies, measures and experiences for pandemic response. We commend the above-mentioned efforts carried out by ITU and relevant international organizations. These measures will help Member States improve the level of social governance in the Covid-19 pandemic and emerge , as early as possible, from the pandemic impact on the economy and society.  At the same time, we have also seen the impacts of the COVID-19 on the work of ITU and the ways how Member States participate in its meetings. At the beginning of the outbreak, some Member States were unable to attend physical meetings. With the global spread of the epidemic, many ITU meetings were postponed, or changed to virtual meetings[[3]](#footnote-3). At present, remote participation has become a common way for Member States to participate in ITU’s meetings. Judging from the effect of the previous technical rehearsals organized by the Secretariat, the Interactive Remote Participation (IRP) can provide good support for the virtual meeting services. However, the procedures and effect of remote participation have to be specified in the existing ITU regulations. ITU has been actively exploring on this matter, and Resolution 167 (Dubai, 2018, Rev.) adopted by the Plenipotentiary Conference *resolves* that "the Union further study the impact of remote participation on existing rules of procedure". After the outbreak of COVID-19, it was identified in a Circular Letter on the organization of a virtual consultation of councillors in 2020 that "the virtual meeting will only draw proposed conclusions pending formal decisions at the subsequent physical 2020 Council session and if any one Council Member State wants a document or conclusion deferred, it will be moved to the subsequent physical 2020 Council session". In 2020, ITU will convene decision-making events like C-20 session and the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) and deal with matters such as the financial impact of WRC-19. These subjects are important both for the operations of ITU and for the development of global standardization work. As the pandemic is still prevalent and there are still uncertainties on the convening of the physical meeting, substantial discussions are desirable during virtual meetings in order to reach consensus. II Proposal As a result of the pandemic, remote participation in meetings, business, and learning through ICTs may become the "New Normal" in people's work and life. At present, there is still a gap between the developing and the developed countries in terms of network infrastructure, affordability of international data services, and ICT skills. It would be advisable for ITU to adjust its related policies and rules accordingly to provide more help to the Member States, especially to developing countries, so as to promote the organization of important events and meetings via remote means. Based on this, we propose that the ITU do the following:   * Increase capital and technology input, and make active use of 5G, virtual reality, artificial intelligence and other technologies to enrich the means of participation, improve the effect of participation and ensure that remote meetings and activities are carried out smoothly. * Study and develop guidelines for remote participation in important ITU meetings, identify remote participation and decision-making processes with the view to subsequent drafting of relevant Council decisions. In the meantime, ITU-R, ITU-T, and ITU-D are all invited to participate in the related work. * Increase financial and technical support to developing countries and carry out corresponding capacity building to ensure that representatives of developing countries, especially those from the least developed countries, can participate in remote meetings effectively and on an equal footing. * Continue to strengthen cooperation with other international organizations, give full play to the important role of ICTs in the global fight against the pandemic, and encourage members to actively participate in relevant activities and digital platforms for COVID-19 responses, and share technologies, experiences and practices. |

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1. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/788991588006445890/Speedboat-Partners-COVID-19-Digital-Development-Joint-Action-Plan.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regulatory-Market/Pages/REG4COVID.aspx> . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ITU announced that from March 16 to April 17, 2020, unless otherwise notified, all international meetings held in ITU premises will be remote meetings. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)