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| **Second virtual consultation of councillors  starting 16 November 2020** |  |
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|  | **Document VC-2/4-E 30 October 2020 Original: Russian** |

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| **Name of the submitting Member State(s):** | **Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Belarus, Russian Federation** |
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| **Document title:** | **Format and timing of WTSA-21** |
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| **Ref. to draft agenda of the virtual consultation:** | **Item 14 of the first group of items on the draft agenda for the second virtual consultation of councillors (PL2.8) Document** [**C20/72**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0072/en) **(Preparations for WTSA-21)** |
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| Introduction  In view of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting on restrictions on work and travel, the Administration of India proposed to reschedule the next WTSA from 23 February to 5 March 2021 after the Global Standards Symposium on 22 February 2021 and subject to the restoration of normal work and travel conditions in India and in other ITU Member States. This proposal was supported in the consultations that were held with the Member States. However, the pandemic situation rules out any return to a normal regime for working and travelling in India and other Member States within that time-frame.  Experience gained from a number of virtual meetings held shows that it is not possible to guarantee the full participation of all members of the Union in the discussions and, in particular, in the decision-making regarding the Union’s financial and human resources. None of the available virtual meeting platforms can exclude the risk of a connection failure, for one reason or another.  An important factor is the lack of any real possibility for holding informal consultations in the search for compromise solutions on the most important questions, as well as the large time zone differences.  Furthermore, virtual meetings reduce the available meeting time by at least half, making it necessary to either extend the meeting duration or shorten the agenda.  Virtual meetings, particularly if spread out over many days, can be used for events such as the World Summit on the Information Society Forum, the Internet Governance Forum, World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, the Global Symposium for Regulators and other forums that have as their main objective the exchange of information and best practices or the preparation of non-binding recommendations. | |

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| Hybrid meetings can create conditions of inequality for Member States that do not have a mission or have a small mission lacking the necessary technical staff at the location of the conference or assembly.  In view of the above, we consider that holding WTSA-20 as a virtual or hybrid meeting is not an option, and that the Assembly should be postponed until the pandemic has been overcome, particularly in view of the expectation of a successful vaccination.  The study groups and other groups should continue their work in the established manner. |
| Proposed way forward  Make use of virtual and hybrid meetings only for those events that do not require decisions on financial and human resources.  Postpone WTSA-20 to the second half of 2021, when in-person participation will be possible.  Continue the work of study groups and other groups in the established manner. |

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