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| **Virtual consultation of councillors  starting 16 November 2020** |  |
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|  | **Document VC-2\9-E**  **2 November 2020**  **Original English** |

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| **Name of the submitting Member State(s):** | **Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Cyprus, Republic of Croatia, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Republic of Poland, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** |
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| **Document title:** | **Hosting of ITU-World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA)** |
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| **Ref. to draft agenda of the virtual consultation:** | **Document** [**C20/24**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0024/en) |
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| Comments relating to Document C20/241 Background Council Decision 608 (Modified 2020) said that, subject to the agreement of the majority of Member States, the next World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-20) would be postponed until 23 February to 5 March 2021. 101 member states responded positively to this proposal and there were no negative responses. Circular Letter No. CL-20/40 of 2 September 2020 announced the date and the venue. Since then, it has become clear that the impact of COVID-19 will continue into 2021 and that international travel restrictions are also likely to continue. |

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| 2 Discussion 2.1 We greatly appreciate the generous hospitality of the Government of India in offering to host WTSA in Hyderabad and the flexibility that India has shown in being prepared to postpone the dates. We greatly regret the terrible impact that COVID-19 has had on countries around the world and the impact that it has had on a wide range of important international meetings.  2.2 There appear to be two main options for holding WTSA-20. One option would be to hold a virtual WTSA on the currently planned dates in February/March 2021. A virtual meeting would need to have a more narrow agenda, focusing on the essential issues that WTSA needs to address. This means that, under Article 13 of the ITU Convention, a virtual WTSA should agree recommendations from Study Group reports, agree the structure of Study Groups and Study Questions for the next period and appoint chairs and vice-chairs. Another option would be to postpone WTSA again with the objective to hold a physical meeting in Hyderabad in March 2022.  2.3 We have considered the advantages and disadvantages of these two main options and set them out in the two tables at Annex 1. It is clearly a very difficult decision and there is no easy solution. We would draw Council’s attention to some of the most significant factors and note in particular that postponing WTSA to 2022 would mean that the ITU secretariat and ITU members would need to prepare for and attend a very large number of major conferences within a 12 month period: WTDC (November 2021), WTSA (March 2022), Council (March/April 2022), WTPF (June 2022) and the Plenipotentiary Conference (September/October 2022). We also note that there is no guarantee that international travel restrictions will be fully lifted by 2022.  **3 Proposed way forward**  We invite the Council to take into careful consideration the advantages and disadvantages of these two main options before moving on to make a decision that will have an important impact on the work of the T-Sector, whatever option is chosen. We recognise of course that there are no easy answers and we would encourage Council to consider fully all the advantages and disadvantages set out at Annex 1.  **Annex**  Annex 1 - Advantages and disadvantage of WTSA options |

**ANNEX 1**

**Advantages and disadvantage of WTSA options**

**Option One - Virtual WTSA 22 Feb – 5 March 2021**

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| **Description of option** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| A virtual meeting (potentially with some representatives from Missions present in Geneva but most participation taking place virtually).  Focus on essential tasks necessary to achieve programme of work (consistent with Article 13):   * agreeing recommendations from SG reports * agreeing SGs and study questions for the next period * appointing chairs and vice-chairs.   All other proposals, including changes to procedures or resolutions, to be discontinued. | Ensures essential ITU-T business is continued, with key issues being able to progress with only with a 6-month delay.  Allows the sequence of ITU meetings to be maintained and WTSA to be formally completed, in line with ITU Constitution and Convention.  Avoids multiple ITU conferences held within a 12-month period (ie WTDC (Nov 2021), Council (March 2022), WTPF (June 2022) and Plenipotentiary (Sept/Oct 2022) along with the usual TSAG meetings.)  Focusing on essential issues avoids or limits the challenges of running multiple different committees and drafting groups at the same time.  Avoids uncertainty around when travel will really be back to normal worldwide.  Allows full participation by ITU members, whether or not they are still affected by travel restrictions.  Approach is in line with the approach of other UN organisations in Geneva, including WHO, ILO and WIPO | It may be challenging to identify and agree the list of essential issues and the mechanisms for managing the hybrid virtual meeting.  A lot of work on resolutions will not be immediately used and may become out of date.  There could still be difficulties for some delegations to participate virtually.  Some rules of procedure may have to be adapted or created, particularly if there is a hybrid model.  A virtual/hybrid meeting of WTSA or TSAG makes it difficult to have informal talks to facilitate consensus building. |

**Option Two - Physical WTSA postponed to 1-15 March 2022**

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| **Description of option** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| In-person meeting in Hyderabad.  Some essential decisions could be taken at virtual meetings of TSAG, including on Study Groups and Study Questions (but not chair and vice-chair appointments). | All the functions of WTSA could be fully completed, including revisions to resolutions, with scope for ad hoc face-to-face meetings.  No need to adapt rules of procedure.  Allows more time before WTSA for consensus-building. | Within one 12-month period we would have   * + WTDC (Nov 2021)   + WTSA (March 2022)   + Council (March/April 2022)   + WTPF (June 2022) and   + Plenipotentiary (Sept/Oct 2022)   in addition to TSAG and other meetings. It is extremely challenging to ask the secretariat and delegations to prepare for and attend so many meetings.  Further postponement will cause delay to ITU-T’s work.  Regional proposals on resolutions, which began in 2019, might out of date by March 2022.  By March 2022, some cross-cutting issues may just be postponed for decision by the Plenipotentiary Conference anyway.  Potential negative impact on the delivery of other major meetings in 2022.  If some essential decisions are taken at a virtual TSAG, they can just as well be taken at a virtual WTSA.  There is no guarantee all travel restrictions will be lifted by March 2022 or that covid-19 will not continue to exist in some parts of the world.  Environmental costs of travel. |