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| **Virtual consultation of councillors  starting 16 November 2020** |  |
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|  | **Document VC-2\12-E**  **14 January 2021**  **Original English** |

SUMMARY RECORD

OF THE

THIRD MEETING

Wednesday, 18 November 2020, from 1200 to 1515 hours

**Chairman:** Mr S. BIN GHELAITA (United Arab Emirates)

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|  | Subjects discussed | Documents |
| 1 | Outcomes of discussions held on 17 November 2020 | [VCC-2/DT/1(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-201116-TD-0001/en) |
| 2 | Preparations for WTDC-21 | [C20/30(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0030/en) |
| 3 | Preparations for WTSA-20 (continued) | [C20/24(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0024/en), [C20/72](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0072/en), [VC-2/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0002/en),  [VC-2/3](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0003/en),  [VC-2/4(Corr.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0004/en),  [VC-2/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0007/en), [VC-2/8](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0008/en),  [VC-2/9](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0009/en) |
| 4 | Preparations for WTPF-21 (continued) | [C20/5(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0005/en) |
| 5 | Schedule of future conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union: 2020–2023 | [C20/37(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0037/en) |
| 6 | Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the conditions of service under the United Nations common system | [C20/23](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0023/en) |

1. **Outcomes of discussions held on 17 November 2020 (Document** [**VCC-2/DT/1(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-201116-TD-0001/en)**)**
   1. Document VCC-2/DT/1(Rev.1) was **noted**.

**2 Preparations for WTDC-21 (Document** [**C20/30(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0030/en)**)**

2.1 The Director of BDT provided the meeting with an update on the information contained in Document C20/30(Rev.1), including that the draft host country agreement had been signed on 9 November 2020. In reply to a question, she confirmed that the agreement contained the standard *force majeure* clause, and that BDT would continue to consider contingency plans as the situation evolved.

2.2 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind the fact that that item was urgent for business continuity, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken to note the report in Document C20/30(Rev.1). Moreover, a contingency plan should be prepared in case the WTDC would not be able to be held in Ethiopia.

2.3 It was so **concluded**.

**3 Preparations for WTSA-20 (continued) (Documents** [**C20/24(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0024/en)**,** [**C20/72**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0072/en)**,** [**VC-2/2**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0002/en)**,** [**VC-2/3**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0003/en)**,** [**VC-2/4(Corr.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0004/en)**,** [**VC-2/7**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0007/en)**,** [**VC-2/8**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0008/en)**,** [**VC-2/9**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0009/en)**,** [**C20/INF/23**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-INF-0023/en)**)**

3.1 The Chairman drew attention to Document C20/INF/23, which proposed a way forward in the light of earlier discussions (see the summary record of the first meeting (Document [VC-2/10](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CLVC2-C-0010/en))) during which councillors had voiced no objection to the proposal to hold a physical WTSA in Hyderabad, India, in March 2022 but had expressed concern about the continuity of ITU-T work, the overall calendar of events in 2021 and 2022, and the proposal to hold a shorter WTSA.

3.2 In the ensuing discussion, a number of councillors expressed concern about the length of the next WTSA, now proposed for 2022. Several considered that five days would suffice, in particular if the agendas of WTSA-20 and TSAG were adapted appropriately. Several others considered that shortening WTSA-20 from nine to seven days, as proposed by the secretariat and the Administration of India, would have a negative effect on the agenda and result in the need to hold night sessions in a year when preparations for PP-22 limited the possibilities to work at night or over the lunch hour. Other councillors agreed that WTSA-20 could be reduced to seven days, given the substantive work that would be done by TSAG, the interregional meetings and the study groups beforehand. In that respect, it would be useful to have more information on the division of work between TSAG and WTSA, with reference to §7.2 of Resolution 1 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016), on the approval of new or revised Questions between WTSAs, and *resolves* 1*b)* and 1*c)* of Resolution 22 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016), on the development of ITU-T A-series Recommendations and the establishment of ITU-T study groups, respectively.

3.3 Several councillors, while expressing support for a shorter WTSA, said that, before reaching a decision, they had hoped to have an overall picture of the schedule of events in the coming years, in particular with regard to the cluster of CWG meetings scheduled for February 2022, and a clear understanding of the virtual decision-making process for TSAG and the study groups.

3.4 One councillor questioned the need to hold three interregional meetings; she suggested that it would suffice to hold one or two, between the first and third TSAG meetings.

3.5 The Chief of the ITU-T Study Groups Department, noting that WTSA-16 had lasted eight days and involved night meetings, recalled that the initial proposal had been for WTSA-20 to run for nine days. Now that it had been postponed to 2022, TSAG, the regional preparatory process and the ITU-T study groups would have ample time to advance on issues on the agenda of WTSA-20 during 2021, hence the proposal, made in consultation with the Administration of India, to limit it to seven days. It did not appear possible to shorten it to five days, as the Global Standards Symposium (GSS), an important statutory meeting, was to take place in conjunction with the WTSA. Moreover, it was important that WTSA-20 span a weekend, to allow the editorial committee to work on the resolutions and delegates to rest following a week of deliberations and to visit the host country.

3.6 Regarding the division of work between TSAG and WTSA, he drew attention to the information provided in Documents C20/INF/23 and VC-2/3. WTSA would have its usual agenda as outlined in Document C20/INF/23. TSAG, over the course of its three meetings currently scheduled, would advance on a number of issues, in particular the ITU-T A-series Recommendations, which it had authority to approve and update. TSAG also had authority, under §7.2 of Resolution 1 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016), to endorse Questions for ITU-T study groups.

3.7 The councillor from India said that his administration was flexible about whether to organize WTSA-20 over nine or seven days but would be reluctant to reduce it to five, as a weekend visit to the host country was an essential aspect of any conference. In response to the councillor from Spain, who observed that the Mobile World Congress would be held in her country in late February/early March 2022, he said that the proposed dates for WTSA-20 of 1-9 March 2022 took account of the fact that the Congress was usually held in late February.

3.8 One councillor asked what platform would be used for virtual meetings, as the platform used at the previous TSAG meeting had not been particularly successful; she suggested that such meetings be rotated among different time zones.

3.9 The Chief of the ITU-T Study Groups Department confirmed that virtual meetings would be the default solution for as long as international travel was not possible. An unfortunate technical malfunction had occurred with the software version of the platform used for the previous TSAG meeting, but no similar issues should arise if the number of participants was limited to 230.

3.10 In reply to a request for clarification, the Director of TSB said that the deadlines for nominations for ITU-T chairmen and vice-chairmen would be reviewed following the consultation by correspondence of Council Member States on the outcome of the current deliberations.

3.11 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind the fact that this item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken: 1) to note Document C20/24(Rev.1); 2) to approve the modification of Decision 608 to schedule WTSA to 1-9 March 2022, preceded by GSS on 28 February 2022; and 3) to note the ITU-T work continuity plan until WTSA in March 2022 contained in Document VC-2/3.

3.12 It was so **concluded**.

3.13 In addition, it was **noted** that:

• TSAG would hold three meetings prior to WTSA to provide continuity of work for ITU-T and prepare for WTSA;

• An interregional meeting would be held prior to each TSAG meeting to further develop consensus among the regions;

• TSB would revisit the calendar of ITU-T study group meetings in 2021;

• TSAG would be virtual and take decisions by consensus.

**4 Preparations for WTPF-21 (continued) (Document** [**C20/5(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0005/en)**)**

4.1 The Chairman invited councillors to resume their consideration of the item, begun at the second meeting of the virtual consultation.

4.2 In the course of a wide-ranging discussion, several councillors expressed the strong view that WTPF should not be moved to 2022, which already looked set to be an extremely busy year. If it proved impossible to hold the forum in 2021, as planned, it should be postponed until 2023. One added that the overall schedule of ITU meetings and conferences for the period should be reviewed, with priority for 2022 given to the plenipotentiary conference and WTSA. A number of other councillors, however, were firmly in favour of holding WTPF in 2022. The Informal Experts Group on WTPF-21 (IEG-WTPF-21) needed time to complete its work, the outcomes of which would provide valuable input to PP-22; there was also the possibility of scheduling the event so as to take advantage of delegates’ presence in Geneva for WSIS. Postponing WTPF until 2023 risked rendering the work of IEG-WTPF-21 obsolete, given that the theme for the forum was “Policies for mobilizing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development”. The technologies studied would be neither new nor emerging by 2023. While some councillors considered that WTPF could be held virtually, and that the original dates might therefore be retained, most favoured a physical forum, given the technical, procedural and legal difficulties associated with virtual events. In particular, the lack of opportunity for informal discussions could hamper the work of the forum if it were held online.

4.3 One councillor asked whether a virtual WTPF would be empowered to adopt Opinions. Another said that she wished to receive clarification as to whether a Council decision to postpone WTPF until 2023, such that no report on its work could be submitted to PP-22, would effectively breach Resolution 2 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Rev. Dubai, 2018).

4.4 The ITU Legal Adviser replied that, as the outcomes of WTPF were not legally binding and were adopted by consensus, it would indeed be possible for a virtual WTPF to adopt Opinions. Moreover, WTPF was not governed by the General Rules of conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union but had for some time adopted its own rules of procedure, giving it the flexibility to decide to operate in a virtual manner. As to whether the Council could decide to postpone WTPF until after PP-22, there was nothing in Resolution 2 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Rev. Dubai, 2018) explicitly preventing such a course of action, which might be the only way to ensure that Member States had sufficient time to prepare for the forum in the current exceptional circumstances.

4.5 In response to suggestions from the Chairman that WTPF might be provisionally postponed to either 2022 or 2023, pending confirmation of its exact dates and format by Council-21, some councillors considered that a provisional conclusion would not facilitate progress on the issue. A degree of certainty was needed so that plans could be made. One councillor suggested that scheduling WTPF for early 2022 might help to spread the workload envisaged for the year. In a similar vein another councillor proposed that it be held at the end of 2021. Her proposal met with overall support, though different views were expressed on the possibility of organizing the forum back to back with WTDC-21, and one councillor queried the feasibility of holding the two events in the same year.

4.6 In reply to a question, the Chairman of IEG-WTPF-21 said that it might be possible for his group to complete its work in time for WTPF to be held in December 2021. The theme chosen for the forum meant that the more it was postponed, the less impact it would have.

4.7 The Chairman took it that councillors wished to conclude that, keeping in mind that that item was urgent, a consultation by correspondence of Council Member States would be undertaken: 1) to note the report contained in Document C20/5(Rev.1); 2) to re-schedule the physical meeting of WTPF in December 2021, with the dates to be confirmed on Thursday, 19 November 2020; and 3) to approve a revised Decision 611 modified with the new dates and preparatory schedule.

4.8 It was so **concluded**.

**5 Schedule of future conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union: 2020–2023 (Document** [**C20/37(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0037/en)**)**

5.1 The representative of the secretariat introduced Document C20/37(Rev.1). She said that careful note had been taken of the discussions on the scheduling of WTSA and WTPF and related meetings, which would be reflected in the updated version of the document to be presented to Council-21. Noting that since mid-March 2020 all meetings had been held in virtual format, the proposed dates and places of physical meetings scheduled for the second half of 2022 and for 2023 were provisional and would be confirmed subsequently, depending not only on the COVID-19 pandemic situation but also on constraints related to demolition of the Varembé building and construction of the new building.

5.2 Councillors emphasized the importance of seeking ways to reduce the exceptionally heavy meeting and events schedule for 2022, and suggested that, as was the practice in a plenipotentiary conference year, only one cluster of CWGs should be held, preferably early in the year. The more streamlined the meeting schedule for 2022, the more successful the plenipotentiary conference would be.

5.3 The Chairman said he took it that councillors wished to encourage the secretariat to take into account the discussion and interventions when drafting the updated version of the document for the 2021 session of the Council.

5.4 It was so **concluded**.

**6 Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the conditions of service under the United Nations common system (Document** [**C20/23**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0023/en)**)**

6.1 The Chief of the Human Resources Management Department introduced Document C20/23, on decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on conditions of service, which was an annual submission to the Council to inform Member States about any changes to the conditions of service for all staff categories. In line with Resolution 46 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994), a draft resolution was annexed to the document, on revisions to remuneration for elected officials subsequent to staff salary revisions decided by the United Nations General Assembly applicable from 1 January 2020.

6.2 One councillor, a member of the ITU Staff Pension Committee, informed councillors that, owing to operational changes in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, ITU was likely to lose half a vote (down from 1.5 votes) in Board proceedings. The Council would be informed of the confirmation and implications of that change in due course.

6.3 The Chairman said that discussion on the item would resume the following day.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:

H. ZHAO S. BIN GHELAITA

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