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| **Council 2021Virtual consultation of councillors, 8-18 June 2021** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 2.8** | **Document C21/78-E** |
| **24 May 2021** |
| **Original: English** |
| Note by the Secretary-General |
| Contribution from IndiaWTSA-20: Possible scenarios pursuant to COVID-19 and recommendations |

I have the honour to transmit to the Member States of the Council a contribution submitted by the **Republic of India**.

 Houlin ZHAO
 Secretary-General

**Contribution from India**

WTSA-20: POSSIBLE SCENARIOS PURSUANT TO COVID-19 AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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| SummaryThe conduct of WTSA-20, scheduled during 1-9 March, 2022, may be impacted by the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. This document presents two possible scenarios for holding WTSA-20 and recommendations on the way forward.Action requiredThe Council is invited to **endorse** this document.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_References[C21/24](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0024/en) |

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# Introduction

The World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly (WTSA-20) is scheduled to be hosted from 1-9 March 2022, at Hyderabad, India. The outcomes of WTSA-20 are crucially dependent upon active participation by Member States, with a good number of delegates attending in person. The prevailing COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty across the globe. In spite of the efforts and mitigation measures taken by India and other Member States, COVID-19 has led to in the imposition of travel restrictions and curtailment of physical contact between persons. In view of these health- and travel-related uncertainties, there is a possibility that Member States will not be able to physically travel to India and actively participate in the WTSA-20 deliberations. Such a possibility of low participation is not conducive for the successful conduct of WTSA-20. In order to ensure that the Assembly is held successfully, this contribution delineates two possible ways forward.

# Objectives

* + Evaluate the pros and cons of possible scenarios,
	+ Propose recommendations and way forward on hosting the WTSA-20

# Scenarios

This section explores two possible scenarios assessed for WTSA – 20 with their pros and cons for consideration by the ITU Council.

## 3.1 Scenario – 1: Hosting WTSA-20 as planned in Hyderabad, India.

1. **Pros**
	* Members expressed a strong preference for a physical meeting.
	* The dates and location have already been set by ITU Membership, and preparation work has begun and India is prepared to hosting a physical WTSA.
	* Hosting a conference on site will benefit the well-designed agenda of the conference, because it enables a relatively better conference output with frequent formal and informal interactions among participants, keeping with the spirit of such major conferenes.
	* Provides opportunities for visits to the cultural heritage and historic sites, socializing events, cultural programmes, networking get togethers, etc.
2. **Cons**
	* COVID-19 may continue as a challenge during and beyond WTSA-20 schedule despite vaccination and other measures by India and other Member States. Due to COVID-19 the attendance may be much lower than expected.
	* Implementing social distancing rules would have logistical consequences, notably on the venue capacity, accommodation, and transportation. Due to various restrictions, the participants may not enjoy the full India experience.

## 3.2 Scenario – 2: Holding WTSA-20 in Geneva at the same dates (fall-back option)

1. **Pros**
	* The pros of section 3.1.1 will apply.
	* In case the participants from Member States may not be able to attend the WTSA-20 in person, then the presence of diplomatic staff of the respective Member States in Geneva could participate in the decision-making process with technical support from Member States via remote participation.
	* There would be no need to change the dates of the event which can be hosted at Centre International de Conférences Genève (CICG) where adequate infrastructure is readily available.
	* ITU support staff, interpreters and others need not travel outside Geneva.

1. **Cons**
	* COVID-19 cases could increase in Switzerland despite vaccination. Local authorities in Geneva could limit the number of meeting participants or impose strict quarantine rules as per evolving situation.
	* Social distancing measures would need to be implemented, in accordance with UN and Swiss standards.

# Recommendations - Way Forward (Proposal)

* It is recommended to hold the Assembly as envisaged and originally planned i.e 1-9 March 2022 in Hyderabad India (Scenario 1).
* Six months before the Assembly (i.e. by September 2021), the situation will be reviewed by India and ITU secretariat and in case the circumstances are not favourable to host WTSA 20 in India, the Assembly can be held in Geneva, the default location for ITU Conferences and Assemblies, at the same dates (fall back option – Scenario 2) and India may host WTSA in next cycle i.e. in 2024.
* VCC is invited to endorse this action plan.

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