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| **Council 2022Geneva, 21-31 March 2022** |  |
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| **Agenda item:** **ADM 26** | **Document C22/69-E** |
| **4 March 2022** |
| **Original: English** |
| Contribution by Australia and Canada |
| itu framework for the conduct of hybrid meetings |

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| SummaryThis contribution recommends that the ITU considers developing specific information within a framework for hybrid meetings, to ensure that ITU meetings are as inclusive as possible for all participants. Action requiredThis document **is submitted** for Council’s consideration, which requests that a framework for the conduct of hybrid meetings be established. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ReferencesCWG-FHR contribution by Australia and Canada - Virtual and hybrid meetings (Document [CWG-FHR-](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0019/en)15/19) |

**Introduction**

This contribution seeks to continue the discussion on the issue of virtual and hybrid meetings as raised in the co-contribution submitted by Australia and Canada to the fifteenth meeting of the ITU Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR), held 11‑12 January 2022 (Document [CWG-FHR-15/19](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0019/en)).

As noted in the CWG-FHR Summary Report, the Chair concluded that there was general support to forward the issue of rules, guidelines and procedures for virtual and hybrid meetings, as contained in the input document, to Council 2022 for further discussion. This includes rules, guidelines and procedures for the appropriate governance and management of virtual and hybrid meetings. The procedures would allow delegates to have equal footing and to participate without discrimination at meetings, regardless of whether they are participating physically or virtually. Further, the rules, guidelines and procedures would apply consistently across the ITU, where applicable, noting that each sector will need to take into account its working methods and rules.

While we anticipate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will lessen over time, an enduring framework for the conduct of hybrid meetings will help build a flexible and adaptable ITU that is better able to serve the needs of its membership. We appreciate and recognise the work that the ITU has already undertaken to allow for improved participation in its meetings due to the COVID‑19 pandemic.

**Proposal**

This contribution recommends the ITU Council consider the development of a framework that sets out appropriate procedures, rules and guidelines for the efficient and effective conduct of virtual or hybrid meetings that will help safeguard and progress future work in the ITU.

If not developed carefully, hybrid meetings could create a strong risk that meeting outcomes do not represent a consensus of Member States, undermining the entire progress and future work of the ITU. The primary focus of the framework should be, to the greatest extent possible, a format that provides an equal opportunity for administrations to participate equitably regardless of their location.

Australia suggests that the Council considers tasking the ITU Secretariat with developing specific information within a framework for hybrid meetings, to ensure that the meetings are as inclusive as possible for all participants, perhaps for Council’s intersessional consideration, as soon as appropriate.

The ITU Secretariat might like to consider including the following principles when developing specific information within the framework. Where members decide to hold a meeting in a hybrid form, these principles will apply to ensure all delegates can participate equally:

* Clear distinction between hybrid meetings and remote participation during physical meetings; for example, hybrid meetings will be conducted as a unique blend of both in room and remote participation, to ensure the interactivity of all participants.
* Clarity on the rights of members who participate remotely; for example, clarifying where remote participants are able to enage in decision-making.
* Facilitate discussions and conversations during break-out times; for example, ensuring virtual participants are invited to also engage in offline discussions, and that a virtual meeting room is created.
* Practical measures to support equitable opportunities for participation by all administrations; for example, having the meeting chair limit the time of meeting interventions.
* Enabling flexibility in the length and timing of meetings bearing in mind the time zones of participants.
* Providing assistance and support to meeting chairs, so they can effectively manage remote participation fairly; for example, providing additional supervision to manage fair participation by all attendees.
* Protocal for additional support in physical meetings; for example, additional staff to ensure that all participants are given the same opportunity to engage in meetings.

Supplementary to these, when developing procedures for hybrid meetings, in addition to a general framework, provisions would need to be considered for the needs of each meeting, within each sector of the ITU, to accommodate any specific requirements.

If this proposal is accepted, where possible and practical, we also advocate that each sector should openly work with all administrations to allow them the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the development of the framework.

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