|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Council Working Group onFinancial and Human ResourcesFifteenth meeting – 11 and 12 January 2022** |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document CWG-FHR-15/22-E** |
| **26 January 2022** |
| **English only** |
| CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES |
| Summary report of the fifteenth meeting |
|  |

The Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources is chaired by Ms. Vernita D. Harris, (United States of America) assisted by six Vice-Chairs as follows:

Ms Seynabou Seck Cisse (Senegal)

Mr Mohamed S. Ali Al Muathen Al Mazroei (United Arab Emirates)

Ms Archana Goyal Gulati (India)

Ms D.V. Kalyuga (Russian Federation)

Mr Vilem Vesely (Czech Republic)

**1 Opening remarks and approval of the revised Agenda (Document [CWG-FHR-15/1 (Rev. 2))](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0001/en)**

 **Opening remarks by the Chairman**

* 1. The Chairman, Ms. Vernita D. Harris (United States of America) welcomed the delegates and acknowledged the presence of Mr. Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, BDT Director and Mr. Mario Maniewicz, BR Director.
	2. The revised Agenda (CWG-FHR 15/1 (Rev. 2)) was approved.

 **Welcome remarks by the Secretary-General**

1.3 The Secretary-General, Mr. Houlin Zhao welcomed the delegates and wished them a Happy and Healthy New Year while hoping to meet them physically in Geneva during Council 2022 in March. He expressed gratitude to the able chairmanship of Ms. Vernita Harris.
The Secretary-General emphasized that transparency is a key concern to management who has set-up a tool on ITU accountability framework while following the example of other UN organizations on best practices. He also highlighted the importance of other issues to be discussed during this session including the draft Financial Plan for 2024-2027 for which the guidance of the members is being sought to balance the draft budget while maintaining the level of contributory unit and without withdrawal from the Reserve Account. The Secretary-General encouraged members to increase the number of their contributory units and to convey to the secretariat the number of such units. Other essential matters enumerated by the Secretary-General include efficiency measures, concerted efforts advocated to find a long-term solution for ASHI, improvement in human resources internal controls and policies, Learning Management System (LMS), new policy on harassment, gender balance enhancement in all levels, as well as the importance of staff well-being and welfare including during the pandemic. He wished the delegates a productive and successful meeting.

**2 Statement by the Staff Council**

2.1 The statement which is to be found in document [CWG-FHR-15/INF-1](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-INF-0001/en) was made by the Chairman of the Staff Council, Mr. Maximilian Jacobson-Gonzalez.

**3 Recruitment process – reduction of the advertisement period (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0009/en)**15/9)**

3.1 The secretariat presented the proposal in document CWG-FHR-15/9 to reduce the period of advertisement for professional positions (P1 to D2) identified for external recruitment on an international competitive basis from two months to one month. This change requires a modification of the Staff Regulations and needs the approval of Council.  CWG-FHR was invited to recommend to Council the amendments to the Staff Regulations as provided in the document.

3.2 The secretariat provided statistics on the number of applicants during the vacancy period, as well as benchmarking data with other organizations. Delegates asked the Human Resources Management Department to provide additional information for the next meeting on the full recruitment process timeline to be able to evaluate the request further.

 **Contribution by Australia and Canada - Recruitment process - Proposal to reduce the advertisement period for ITU vacancies (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0016/en)**15/16)**

3.3 Australia and Canada presented document CWG-FHR-15/16 containing a proposal supporting the secretariat’s proposal in document CWG-FHR-15/9 to reduce the advertising period from two months to one month, putting in place practices that align the ITU with other UN organizations to make it an attractive place to work and remove unnecessary bottlenecks as part of the recruitment process.

 **Advancement within Grade for professional and higher categories (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0008/en)**15/8 (Rev.1))**

3.4 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/8 (Rev.1) containing a proposal to modify the Staff Regulations in order to align the periodicity of salary increments due to step increases for the D1 level with the United Nations Common System of Salaries, Allowances and Benefits, as established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). To simplify future amendments, it was proposed that this level of detail in the Staff Regulations be removed, making direct reference to the ICSC standard.

3.5 CWG-FHR was invited to recommend to Council the amendments to the Staff Regulation applicable to appointed staff as provided by the secretariat.

3.6 After discussion, the Chairman proposed that, in addition to the proposal made by the secretariat, the following text was added to the Staff Regulation being modified “The Secretary-General will inform staff members annually in case there are changes in the periodicity of salary increments.”

**4 Summary of status of PwC Recommendations on ITU forensic audit (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0003/en)**15/3)**

4.1 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/3 and provided a summary on the Annex to the document relating to the progress of implementation of the PwC recommendations on the Forensic Audit Report. Reference was made to the Annex to the document and the nature of the exercise completed by the Internal Audit Unit in having compiled information from the various responsible Bureaux and the General Secretariat divisions.

4.2 As at December 2021, 44 per cent of the total 71 recommendations had been completed, whilst 46 per cent are still in progress, and 10 per cent are yet to be started. The majority of the outstanding recommendations was noted to have been planned for completion in Q1 of this year, whilst it is expected that all remaining outstanding recommendations be implemented by end of 2022. The recommendations would continue to be monitored by the Internal Audit Unit.

4.3 The Chairman opened the floor for questions. One delegate requested to know the planned timeline for completion of the critical priority recommendation that remained outstanding.

4.4 The secretariat replied that this recommendation was related to HRMD, and as noted in the Annex to the Document, the completion of actions regarding this recommendation would follow closely to the Recruitment Management system, which is planned to go live by end of January 2022.

4.5 The Chairman noted the document.

**5 Fraud and related matters (permanent Agenda item): Report of the ITU working group on internal controls (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0014/en)**15/14)**

5.1 The secretariat introduced document CWG-FHR-15/14 on the Report of the Working Group on Internal Controls. A fraud perpetrated by a staff member in an ITU Regional Office was investigated in 2018 by ITU Internal Audit Unit (IAU). ITU set up a working group, chaired by BDT Director, to strengthen control mechanisms across ITU in May 2019. The presentation provided a progress update on the systems and measures established in 2021 which further advanced improvements previously established in the course of 2019 and 2020.

5.2 Progress reported for 2021 included the following areas:

* In the area of **ethics**, Declarations of Interests and Compliance Statements for all staff;
* **Project Management** was further enhanced through the Projects Board, project governance, establishment of a new “Community of Practice” and systematic project monitoring and quarterly assessments;
* The use of the **ITU Compliance Dashboard** was expanded among management;
* Continuation of the **weighting exercise** of mitigation measures;
* Launch of a new e-recruitment system and competitive procedures for **selection of consultants,** complemented by new Recruitment and Selection Guidelines; and
* Implementation of the **IT4BDT project** which has improved integration of key functions of ITU’s organizational administrative software applications.

5.3 The Working Group on Internal Controls will continue meeting in 2022 for further monitoring and refinement of internal controls where necessary.

5.4 Several delegates expressed their appreciation for the document, especially the level of detail on the progress made. In response to questions on the remaining number of consultants and requirements for experts to reapply to the roster, the secretariat provided explanations on the process for consultants to reapply as well as plans to use the improved system functionalities to enhance the quality of monitoring and reporting.

**6 Accountability framework (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0005/en)**15/5)**

6.1 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/5 on the accountability framework which has been developed in line with the following management initiatives:

* Action Plan of the Working Group on Internal Controls;
* Improvements in the Results-Based Management framework and the development of the delegation of authority framework;
* Implementation of the Risk Management Action Plan;
* Development of the ITU Compliance Dashboard;
* Other related projects, including the Leadership Culture Assessment and the Culture Diagnosis and Skills Gap Project.

6.2 There are nine components in the new ITU Accountability Framework covering a total of 36 elements.

* Control Environment & Oversight;
* Result Based Management (RBM);
* Risk Management;
* Control Activities;
* Information;
* Communication;
* Performance Management;
* Monitoring & Evaluation;
* Trusted Places.

6.3 Following some research based on best practice, further analysis will be made to consider the possibility of including the following components in the framework:

* Binding Leadership Guidelines (BLG);
* Published Best Work Practices;
* Organizational Health Index;
* Leadership Circles;
* Ombuds.

6.4 The secretariat will continuously monitor the status of the components and evaluate their efficiency and efficacy with a view of applying further improvements into the framework.

6.5 Following a query from a delegate as to who will ensure that the recommendations will be implemented, the secretariat replied that ITU is considering some internal options, i.e. the role of Internal Audit in auditing the efficiency of the framework. The secretariat will also inquire with other UN organizations on where the accountability on the framework is located and follow the best practice.

6.6 Addressing another query from another delegate, the secretariat explained that it is holding several consultations with relevant entities including the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) whose 17 benchmarks (JIU/REP/2011/15) are reflected in the Accountability Framework. The outcome of these further consultations will be incorporated the new framework.

6.7 In light of the above, the Chairman concluded that the new ITU Accountability Model and Framework will be submitted to Council 2022 for approval and will be translated into a service order.

**7 In-kind contribution guidelines (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0004/en)**15/4) and Modifications to the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0006/en)**15/6)**

7.1 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/4 on in-kind contribution guidelines which has been prepared based on the contribution from the Russian Federation during CWG-FHR in 2021 (document CWG-FHR-12/15) and in line with the summary report of the 12th CWG-FHR session (document CWG-FHR-12/17) indicating what had been agreed during that session namely that the Russian Federation and the secretariat will work together to establish a methodology for calculating in-kind contributions and report to the next CWG-FHR session. Should these guidelines be approved by the Council, the secretariat will amend Annex 2 to the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules to reflect these guidelines on in-kind contributions.

* 1. In-kind contribution is defined as follows:
* Non-cash contributions;
* Services, goods and assets received to support ITU’s activities;
* Measurable and can be audited;
* Recorded and reported in compliance with IPSAS 23;
* Recorded as revenue and offset by an equivalent amount as expense;
* Subject to ITU Rules, Regulations, policy and procedures.

7.3 The document indicates the valuation of the in-kind contribution (in-kind services and in-kind goods below and above the threshold of capitalization (CHF 5,000) and the reporting procedure.

7.4 In response to queries from several delegates, the secretariat clarified that during the CWG-FHR session in January 2021, it had been asked to draft guidelines on in-kind contribution in collaboration with the Russian Federation. Consultations have been made with other international organizations on in-kind contributions. The comments from IMAC and the External Auditor were received in December 2021 and are reflected in this document. If needed, the secretariat may add as Annex to the document the reply to the survey which was held in March-May 2021. The secretariat also informed delegates that in the absence of an active market, the Financial Resources Management Department will evaluate the cost associated with in-kind contribution.

7.5 Following a query from another delegate, the secretariat explained that as of December 2021, one staff is serving on secondment (fund-in trust) in each bureau. Requests for secondments are triggered by Member States. The secretariat reviews these proposals based on the needs and requirements of the relevant bureau. Secondments are usually with a duration of up to three years without any expectation of renewal. Seconded staff have excellent technical knowledge and are valued by ITU. Should they be interested in applying for regular posts, they are considered as external candidates and not as internal candidates.

7.6 Support to the document was expressed by one delegate. However, another delegate was of the view that this document on in-kind contribution guidelines has not significantly changed since the last meeting and therefore it is not ready to be reflected in the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules (document CWG-FHR 15/6).

7.7 In light of the above, the Chairman concluded that the secretariat will provide additional information on in-kind contribution guidelines and that further discussions should take place while encouraging Member States to submit their comments and proposals to the current draft guidelines. Thus, document [CWG-FHR-](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CWGFHR14-C-0004/en)15/6on Modifications to the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules was not discussed during this session.

**8 Consideration of the elaboration of the first draft Financial Plan and modifications to Decision 5 (Revenue and expenses for the Union for the period 2024-2027)
(Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0010/en)**15/10) and Preliminary amount of the contributory Unit (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0011/en)**15/11 (Rev. 1))**

8.1 The secretariat presented document [CWG-FHR-](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CWGFHR14-C-0003/en)15/10 on the first draft Financial Plan for 2024-2027 showing the preliminary analysis of variances between the 2020-2023 Financial Plan and the 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 Budgets. This first draft Financial Plan for 2024-2027 results in a deficit (revenue minus expenses) of CHF 25.4 million. Further efforts will be made to present a balanced draft financial plan to Council 2022.

8.2 The following have been taken into consideration in the Financial Plan for 2024-2027:

* Financial – based on the revenue-expenses structures stipulated in the Financial Regulations;
* Result-based – in line with the structure of the strategic plan.

8.3 The key drivers for the preparation of the financial plan are as follows:

* Strategic plan and priority areas;
* Amount of the contributory unit;
* Overall revenue level for the timeframe (ceiling of expenses);
* Work programme.

8.4 The following bases and assumptions have been taken into consideration in the draft Financial Plan for 2024-2027:

* 2022-2023 Budget revenue and expenses;
* Revenue status as of 1 November 2021 for the assessed contributions (Member States, Sector Members, Associates and Academia);
* Standard costs used for the 2022-2023 Budget;
* No vacancy rate applied since the 5 per cent vacancy rate in the 2020-2023 Financial Plan is no longer realistic and presents a risk to the budget implementation. There are fewer number of vacant posts and the recruitment delays have been significantly reduced in recent years;
* Possible future cost increases/decreases during 2024-2027 (inflation, salary increase, rising health care cost, etc.) have not been taken into account in the draft Financial Plan for 2024-2027 which may be taken into consideration, if required, during the preparation of the 2024-2025 and 2026-2027 Budgets.

8.5 The secretariat addressed several queries from the delegates which include questions which have been submitted earlier as well as those raised during the session:

* Projected General Secretariat budget increase: mainly in relation to the new building maintenance costs in 2026 and annuity in 2027, UNSMIS, post-COVID-19 and suppression of the vacancy rate. The breakdown of the General Secretariat programme variation costs of CHF 15 million was cited;
* Projected ITU-R and ITU-T limited budget increase: due to the suppression of the 5 per cent vacancy rate partially offset by a reduction in travel costs and SSAs;
* Projected ITU-D budget decrease: primarily due to the one-time appropriation of CHF 3 million for 2020-2021 regional initiatives, decrease in travel costs and SSAs and lower salary rates for General Service staff in the field offices as a result of the stronger Swiss francs compared with local currencies. The breakdown of the ITU-D programme variation costs of -CHF 6.3 million was cited;
* Projected decrease in Cost Recovery revenue: Projections were based on previous experience and current trends relating to Satellite Network Filing (SNF), project support and UIFN. An increase in the sales of publications is envisaged based on the publication programme and a progressive 10 per cent increase in the price of publications. The detailed cost of such reductions and increase in cost recovery revenue were provided;
* Additional information on the draft financial plan: to facilitate in-depth review, detailed additional information will be reflected in the draft financial plan to be presented to Council 2022 and later to the Plenipotentiary Conference 2022;
* Results-based financial plan: reallocation of costs and results-based presentation of the draft financial plan will be initiated once the draft strategic plan reaches a more stable status (appendix A of current Resolution 71 and Table 2 of Annex 1 of current Decision 5);
* Measures in balancing the financial plan: The secretariat group spearheaded by the Deputy Secretary-General and composed of the Deputy Directors of each sector and the Chief of departments, is considering several options and measures to balance the financial plan which will be presented to Council 2022;
* Rationale behind the initial deficit of CHF 74 million: the preliminary draft financial plan reflected the submissions from the General Secretariat and the three Bureaux which included new requests which have not been covered by the current budget as well as reduction in revenue. Details were provided by the secretariat on the requested increase in expense, the projected reduction in revenue as well as the ICT capital fund increased allocation;
* Resource mobilization: financed by extra-budgetary funding and not the core budget. Although it is a challenge to find significant results, the secretariat continues to find new revenue streams to generate more revenue;
* IMAC: members represent one region; no fees are paid but only air tickets and DSA;
* Revenue from Telecom events: CHF 6 million (CHF1.5 million/year) is included in the draft financial plan. The Dalberg (Consultant) report was presented during the last VCC. However, more business models have to be taken into consideration in order to attract more revenue;
* Amount of contributory unit set at CHF 318,000 since 2006: It is the mandate of Member States to submit proposals for any change on the amount and not the secretariat. The Plenipotentiary Conference has the authority to decide on the value of the contributory unit;
* New building indirect cost funding of CHF 13.5 million: currently included under UMACs in Table 3 of the document but as mentioned by a delegate, it would be better if source of funding can come from volutary contributions and not from the core budget;
* UMAC: depending on the priority, may also be included in the financial plan.
* Resources for audit recommendation implementation: the secretariat is currently using the existing resources in FRMD, HRMD and the bureaux in the implementation of the recommendations from the audit including forensic audit;
* Regional initiatives: BDT continues to work hard in mobilizing additonal resources and implement many regional initiatives. In-kind contribution is an alternative to finance projects in developing countries;
* Balanced financial plan: delegates recognized the challenges being faced by the secretariat as well as the significant efforts and hard work being made by all team members in the secretariat in balancing the financial plan. The secretariat thanked delegates for their support and will continue its efforts to be able to present to Council 2022 a balanced financial plan.

8.6 In light of the above, the Chairperson concluded that the secretariat will continue its efforts in applying the measures including the comments expressed by delegates with a view of presenting a balanced financial plan to Council 2022.

8.7 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/11 (Rev.1) on the preliminary amount of the contributory unit.

8.8 During the Virtual consultation of councilors in June 2021, the preliminary amount of the contributory unit at 318,000 Swiss francs for the period 2024-2027 was established and will be used as the basis for the discussions by the Member States on the financial plan and for the preparations for the 2022 Plenipotentiary Conference.

8.9 Member States have been invited by ITU on 5 August 2021 to announce by 31 December 2021 their provisional class of contribution for the period 2024-2027 to be used by the secretariat in establishing a reliable and realistic draft Financial Plan for 2024-2027.

8.10 Annex 1 of the document reflects the class of contribution chosen for each Member State for the period 2020-2023 and the seventeen announced provisional classes of contribution for the period 2024-2027. The number of provisional contributory units so far remains the same i.e., 343 11/16 units as of 31 December 2021.

8.11 The Chairperson concluded that delegates had taken note of the document.

**9 Contribution by the USA - Possible new approach to financial risk management of construction (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0021/en)**15/21)**

9.1 The delegate from the United States of America presented document CWG-FHR-15/21. The Risk Register Fund (RRF) has been created by Council as an extra contingency in managing financial risk to the Member States in relation to the construction of the new ITU building.

9.2 The RRF creation contributed to agreement in Council 2018 to proceed with the construction project which is a part of the overall risk management strategy. However, the current funding available of only CHF 3.6 million is insufficient as per MSAG.

9.3 The United States of America proposes that CWG-FHR request the ITU Financial Management Group to gather more information on the possible cost of using insurance as a means of transferring risk, as an alternative to the RRF and to report to Council 2022.

9.4 Several delegates expressed support to the US proposal taking into consideration that there may be no savings from the 2021 budget as well as the projected budget deficit in the Financial Plan.

9.5 The secretariat informed delegates that work has already commenced with an external party to find out whether such insurance coverage exists, the outcome of which will be conveyed to Council 2022. Moreover, the secretariat is also holding consultations with other UN agencies to find out if they have already availed of such insurance coverage for financial risk management for building constructions. With regard to the Risk Register Fund, updated information will be presented during the Information Session which will be held prior to Council 2022.

9.6 In light of the support received from delegates, the Chairman concluded that the proposal from the United States of America in document CWG-FHR-15/21 would be submitted to Council 2022 for approval.

**10 Strengthening the Regional Presence (Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)) – Regional presence review implementation (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0013/en)**15/13) and Contribution by Mexico - Strenghtening ITU Regional Presence (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0020/en)**15/20)**

10.1 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/13on behalf of the Secretary-General. It was noted that the Dashboard published by the secretariat reflecting the implementation status of the workplan for the PWC report (based on the decisions made by CWG-FHR upon recommendation by the Ad Hoc Group on the Regional Presence) remained available on the website.

10.2 Delegates were advised of the following key points:

* To address possible security concerns, the Dashboard would be updated monthly by the 20th of each month;
* The Dashboard reflected overall completion of 53 per cent for Internal Coordination as this area is largely in the control of the secretariat, almost 40 per cent completion on Strategic Positioning which would largely depend on the progress with the development of the ITU’s Strategic Plan. The Roll out of Delivery Model completion is at 25 per cent and further implementation would be dependent on decisions that would need to be made by the plenipotentiary conference;
* The planned implementation is up to the end of 2023.

10.3 The Chairman congratulated the secretariat on the efforts made so far and invited Mexico to present document CWG-FHR-15/20 following which comments on both documents would be considered**.**

10.4 Document CWG-FHR-15/20 containing a proposal for further action for implementation of the recommendations in the PWC report and adding recommendations to the report’s recommendations was introduced by a delegate from Mexico.

10.5 The delegate from Mexico explained the proposed six concepts for the orientation of the strategic positioning of the regional presence and noted that the performance of field offices depends on the effective, prompt and efficient completion of key administrative procedures that are primarily managed at Headquarters. The following proposals were presented:

* Decentralize ITU staff so that they are located in as many countries in the region, even working since their place of origin; to expand dialogue and cooperation with research centers, with the network of universities in the Americas region; and a further rapprochement of ITU with micro, small and medium enterprises because of their relevance for the digital transformation;
* Expand the presence in North America through officials located in this geographical area. International coordination regional presence should operate under a digital technology scheme that could be integrated by collaborators from various countries of the regions to foster participation of all ITU member states and mitigating costs;
* Propose to organise the regional presence under the Deputy Secretary-General in order to increase the level of internal coordination between the three ITU Offices.

10.6 The floor was opened for comments on both documents, noting that the efforts of the secretariat team to implement and provide the dashboard is commended.

10.7 No comments were received on document CWG-FHR-15/13.

10.8 On document CWG-FHR-15/20, one delegate thanked Mexico for the interesting contribution and expressed that the required action by CWG is unclear. Positions should be connected with Resolution 25 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and would need further study, particularly the proposal to move the Regional Presence to the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General. Further work on the document is suggested.

10.9 Another delegate provided general comments on Regional Presence noting that the PWC report needed to be considered in the context of the discussion on financial matters as there would be a need to reconcile these with the expected budget deficits. It was noted for example the comments by PWC on the decline in project expenditure in recent years which has budget implications. The delegate suggested extraction of the financial related matters from the regional presence report for consideration in the context of the budgetary discussion.

10.10 One delegate thanked Mexico for the contribution, noting the comments made by another delegate and suggested that the document be brought to CITEL for further discussion and strengthening within the region. One delegate expressed disagreement with the proposal that the regional presence be moved to the responsibility of the Deputy Secretary-General, on the basis that the regional presence effectiveness is about which sector is best placed to execute the activities and considered that the BDT is the correct place for this.

10.11 The delegate from Mexico responded to the comments noting that digital technologies provided scope for decentralisation which would significantly improve regional presence in all countries and reiterated the arguments made in the note. ITU and Member States should analyse the possibility that the regional presence should report to the Deputy Secretary-General to determine the benefits or otherwise.

10.12 The secretariat noted that the contribution by Mexico was well appreciated noting that the decentralisation would present some possible challenges as it would mean significant changes to the way ITU operates including possible budgetary implications, notwithstanding the possible savings due to the number of countries that would need to be accommodated and the resulting human resource implications.

10.13 On the issue of representation of and coordination between the three Bureaux, the secretariat noted that the regional presence although it reported into the BDT considered itself a One ITU organization and that there was strong effective intersectoral coordination through regular meetings and engagements, though strengthening through direct participation by the other Bureaux is being actively explored. The issue of the regional presence reporting to the Deputy Secretary-General is a matter which the secretariat would be prepared to consider and report.

10.14 The Chairman noted that the issue of reporting of the regional presence to the Deputy Secretary-General had been an issue at PP18 and is perhaps a matter for the plenipotentiary conference, rather than Council, but invited legal advice on the matter from the secretariat.

10.15 One delegation thanked Mexico and the secretariat for the update on the dashboard and agreed with the clarifications and noted that the BDT is the appropriate home for the regional presence as it is reflective that the key constituency is the developing countries, and that the inter sectoral coordination goals noted by Mexico could be covered by the work of the ISCTF and other inter sectoral coordination groups, to ensure the one ITU concept while retaining the regional presence focus on developmental priorities.

10.16 The Chairman ended the discussion noting that the secretariat should continue to work on the implementation of the PWC recommendations, while the issues raised by Mexico that are outside the purview of the CWG-FHR should be pursued within preparations for the plenipotentiary conference.

10.17 The Chairman noted that there were no requests for the floor and therefore proposed that the meeting note the status of the regional presence review Implementation.

**11 ITU compliance dashboard: Follow-up on the recommendations of the External Auditor and IMAC (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0012/en)**15/12)**

11.1 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR 15/12 on the ITU Compliance Tracker and Dashboard, for information.

11.2 The new tool which has been created in February 2021 shows in a clear manner the status of compliance to recommendations of the following oversight entities:

* The External audit;
* Independent Management Advisory Committee (IMAC);
* Joint Inspection Unit (JIU);
* Internal audit;
* Forensics audit.

11.3 The document indicates the status of compliance as of December 2021 to all recommendations of the External Auditor and IMAC. (Document CWG-FHR-15/3 provides the status report on the implementation of the forensics audit recommendations).

11.4 The recommendations are quantified as follows:

* Closed Implemented;
* Implemented;
* In-progress;
* Not started.

11.5 The secretariat informed delegates that at the time of writing the document, the report from the External Auditor had not yet been received. An updated status was provided by the secretariat.

11.6 As concluded by the Chairman, delegates took note of the document.

**12 JIU Reports on United Nations system-wide issues for 2020-2021 and recommendations to executive Heads and Legislative Bodies (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0002/en)**15/2)**

12.1 Delegates thanked the secretariat for the document, and although no objections were made, the use of proper terminology was raised, given it is the purview of Council to endorse the acceptance of the recommendations addressed to Legislative Bodies.  The financial impact, if any, to ITU for the implementation of each recommendation should also be provided for consideration of the CWG-FHR.  In this regard, one delegate underlined the need to be more selective in the acceptance of the JIU recommendations, indicating the pertinence and actual benefit to ITU, including the financial and human resource implications associated with these, all in view of the large number of recommendations emanating from the JIU, and that ITU is a small UN specialized agency compared to other larger sister agencies with much larger budgets and resources.

12.2 The importance of the JIU reviews and recommendations were also highlighted, in particular, those related to cybersecurity and support to landlocked developing countries. With regard to the latter, a request for further information on the follow-up to the recommendations in that report would be appreciated, as well as having this report reflected in the ITU dedicated site on LLDCs.

12.3 The Chairman noted there were no objections to the document and requested that the financial implications, if any, be added to an updated document for submission and consideration to Council for its endorsement.

**13 Personal status for the purpose of ITU entitlements (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0007/en)**15/7)**

13.1 The secretariat presented document CWG-FHR-15/7 containing a proposal to amend the Staff Regulations to allow the recognition of domestic partnerships therefore aligning ITU with all UN organizations which recognize the Secretary-General’s Bulletin ST/SGB/2004/13/Rev.1 of 26 June 2014. This bulletin states that the personal status of staff members for the purpose of entitlements under the Staff Rules and Staff Regulations of the United Nations will be determined by reference to the law of the competent authority under which the personal status has been established. CWG-FHR was invited to (i) recommend the amendments to the Staff Regulation applicable to appointed staff contained in Annex to this Decision; and (ii) recommend the Council to instruct the Secretary-General to make corresponding amendments to the Staff Regulations in the other official languages of the Union.

13.2 The secretariat presented the results of benchmarking, including with the International Labor Organization, as well as an estimation of the financial impact of implementing this change. It was reported that, based on the request by the CWG-FHR, the secretariat had undertaken a full review and translation of the Staff Rules and Regulations into Russian, Arabic, and Chinese. It was furthermore noted that, according to Article 29 of ITU’s Constitution, which states that: “In case of discrepancy or dispute, the French text shall prevail”, the base language for review has been the French version of the rules.

13.3 The costs of not implementing the proposed change were also discussed. In addition to the reputational risk of being the only UN organization that does not recognize domestic partnerships, the current policy undermines employee retention, makes it difficult to recruit new talent, especially younger generations who are looking to work for organizations espousing modern and just principles. Furthermore, depriving staff in domestic partnerships from the tangible and intangible benefits of recognition by their employer, is not only an act of discrimination but it affects their mental health and wellbeing, puts them at a disadvantage with respect to fellow colleagues, and deprives them from the possibilities of enjoying full legal recognition at their duty station with the legal, economic, and social consequences that this represents.

13.4 While several delegates supported the proposal, there was no consensus to implement it as some delegates stated their disagreement with recognizing domestic partnerships. It was agreed that the English translation of the Staff Regulations and Rules should be aligned with the French version as French is the controlling language.

 **Contribution by Australia and Canada - Personal status for the purpose of ITU entitlements (Document**[**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0018/en)**15/18)**

13.5 Australia and Canada presented document CWG-FHR-15/18 proposing that the CWG-FHR adopts the secretariat’s proposal from the September 2021 session of CWG-FHR to replace the term “husband and wife” with “spouses” in the ITU Staff Regulations as a matter of priority. This gender‑neutral language will ensure that the spouses of ITU staff, irrespective of their marital status or gender, can receive entitlements under the ITU Staff Regulations 3.12, article 2) a). Australia and Canada also support the term “spouse” being consistently applied throughout Staff Regulations and related rules.

 **Contribution by Australia, Canada, New Zealand - Use of gender-neutral language in ITU texts (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0017/en)**15/17)**

13.6 Australia, Canada and New Zealand made a proposal to suppress Council Decision 500 and adopting a new Council Decision outlining the use of gender‑neutral language in ITU texts as a fundamental step to promote gender equality, parity and inclusion by using gender-neutral language in ITU texts. It specifically recommended (i) that Member States consider suppressing Council Decision 500 on the use of the term “chairman”, (ii) that Member States consider the proposed draft Council Decision on the use of gender-neutral language in ITU texts provided at Annex A, and submitting the draft Decision to Council for approval, (iii) that Member States consider replacing the footnote to the ITU Constitution and Convention, which currently states “the language used in the basic instruments of the Union (Constitution and Convention) is to be considered as gender neutral”, with the following: “Some text in the basic instruments of the Union (Constitution and Convention) is not gender neutral. When the instruments are next modified, gender-neutral language outlined in Council Decision XXX will be applied.”

13.7 The discussion did not reach consensus and it was agreed that this proposal needs to be further discussed by Council.

**14 Contribution by the Russian Federation - Preliminary draft Decision 11 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) on Creation and Management of Council Working Groups (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0015/en)**15/15)**

14.1 The delegate from the Russian Federation presented document CWG-FHR-15/15 with proposed revision to Decision 11 on the Creation and Management of Council Working Groups taking into account the experience gained during 2018 - 2022 management of Council Working Groups and discussions on possible improvements of the Decision. The extension of the scope of this Decision to expert groups of the Council is also being proposed.

14.2 In view of the limited time, the Chairman encouraged delegates to send to the Russian Federation their comments to the proposed revision to Decision 11 as contained in the document.

**15 Contribution by Australia and Canada - Virtual and hybrid meetings (Document** [**CWG-FHR-**](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CWGFHR15-C-0019/en)**15/19)**

15.1 The delegate from Australia presented the document on virtual and hybrid meetings on the need to develop procedures, guidelines and rules to facilitate both fully virtual meetings (no physical attendance) and meetings that allow both virtual and in‑person (“hybrid”) participation that will help safeguard and progress future work in the ITU.

15.2 The delegate emphasized that it is not being proposed to replace all ITU events and meetings with a virtual or hybrid format or to unnecessarily increase the number of virtual meetings.

15.3 Practical measures to support equitable opportunities for participation by all administrations may include rotating time zone, flexibility in the length of meetings, assistance and support to meeting chairs to manage remote participation fairly, and further support in physical meetings to ensure that the participants are given the same opportunity in meetings.

15.4 Australia and Canada propose that the CWG-FHR recommends actions for ITU Council’s consideration for the development of procedures, rules and guidelines, including the appropriate governance and management for virtual and hybrid meetings that provide equal footing and without discrimination to meeting participants. Procedures, rules and guidelines would apply across the ITU, where applicable, with each sector taking into account their respective working methods and rules. Each sector should openly work with all administrations to allow them the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the development of these working methods and rules.

15.5 A number of delegates thanked Australia and Canada on the proposal which some consider as a fundamentally important matter and expressed the following needs:

* Clear distinction between hybrid meetings and remote participation during physical meetings;
* Clarity on the rights of members who participate remotely, on decision-making and voting process;
* Facilitate discussions and conversations including during the plenipotentiary conference;
* Discuss the issue on time zones;
* Consider more virtual and hybrid meetings.

15.6 In light of the above, the Chairperson concluded that there was a general support to forward to Council 2022 for further discussion the rules and procedures for virtual and hybrid meetings as contained in the document.

**16 Other business**

16.1 The secretariat will provide the draft report of this meeting to the Chairman. The Chairman’s report containing the summaries of the 14th and 15th meetings will be submitted to Council 2022.

16.2 Delegates thanked the Chairman who in turn expressed gratitude to the delegates for their comments and suggestions. The Chairman looks forward to a physical meeting in the future hopefully including Council 2022 in March.

**17 Next meeting**

17**.**1The date of the next CWG-FHR meeting is to be determined.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_