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| **Agenda item: PL 1** | **Document C23/36-E** |
| **12 June 2023** |
| **Original: English** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General |
| ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ITU STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027 |
| **Purpose**This document presents the secretariat’s plan to move from vision to action in accelerating the implementation of the ITU strategic plan for 2024–2027.**Action required by the Council**The Council is invited to **take note** of this report.**Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**The recommendations are based on the ITU strategic plan for 2024–2027 with a view to accelerate and fully implement the two strategic goals of the Union: advancing universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation.**Financial implications**Activities mentioned in this document are allocated within the ITU budget.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**References**[*Resolution 71*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-071-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference*; Council documents [C23/52](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0052/en), [C23/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0062/en). |

# Background

1. Almost 40 years ago, the ground-breaking 1984 Maitland Report, “The Missing Link”, evaluated the benefits of telecommunications for the first time. It said that it “cannot be right that in the latter part of the twentieth century a minority of the human race should enjoy the benefits of the new technology while a majority live in comparative isolation”.
2. In the 1980s, people could work without a phone. Today, for two-thirds of the world’s population, it is just not imaginable not to have access to the digital world. With some countries already in the Fifth Industrial Revolution, human-robot interaction will demand an entirely different way of working.
3. However, persistent digital divides mean billions of people need to be empowered to use the Internet. Connectivity is needed more than ever to close these divides before they become irreversible.
4. If this goes unchecked, then in all probability a big part of the next generation of workers will be at risk if they do not have access today to develop the skills for tomorrow.
5. Against this backdrop, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Bucharest, 2022) (PP-22) adopted an ambitious plan ([Resolution 71](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-071-E.pdf)) with two big, bold strategic goals to be achieved over the next four years: universal connectivity and sustainable digital transformation.
6. With 2.7 billion people offline in 2022, and the race to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implement the 2030 Agenda, ITU must drive dialogue and action to make sure that technologies act as a catalyst and do not widen the digital divides even further.
7. ITU has an integral role to play and deliver what the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations system expect from us – to lead the world into the digital future.
8. While digital is a key enabler to rescue the SDGs, connectivity is the foundation and bedrock of digital. As such, ITU must continue to drive universal and meaningful connectivity so that digital can fulfil its promise.
9. To do this, ITU has to practice what it preaches by transforming the organization to be proactive and lead. The organization needs to be fit for purpose. More importantly, it needs to be fit for the future.

# Visioning process

1. Immediately after PP-22, the new leadership team took swift action by embarking on an ITU-wide visioning process. Using the strategic plan and goals as its compass, the visioning exercise focused on three questions:
	* In the context of the framework provided by the SDGs and ITU’s own Connect 2030 Agenda, where do we want to be by 2030?
	* Where are we today?
	* What do we need to get there?
2. To enhance its internal capacity to deliver on these ambitious goals, ITU engaged with a wide range of specialists and staff at all levels from the three Bureaux, beginning with 40 but eventually scaling to 65 staff members contributing to the co-creation of the way forward.
3. In parallel, the Secretary-General reached out to more than 40 external stakeholders at the executive level, globally. They included Member States, the private sector, UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, academia, and a few notable individuals.
4. The exercise was open, robust, consultative, and self-critical,which was needed to build the vision for the future ITU. Discussions focused on three pillars:
	* ***Pillar 1: Thought leadership*** – positioning ITU as a global thought leader in the digital ecosystem.
	* ***Pillar 2: Strategic partnership and membership engagement*** –securing and growing the engagement of our Member States, Sector Members, Associates and Academia, establishing and developing strategic partnerships, and mobilizing significant financial resources.
	* ***Pillar 3: Organizational excellence*** - achieving organizational excellence across ITU, so that this organization is recognized for its technical expertise, efficiency, and the quality and relevance of the wide range of services that is delivered to its membership.
5. Staff were also informed and engaged through ITU-wide townhalls, meetings with youth, interns, and the regional offices. Everyone was encouraged to give feedback and the doors were left open for them to share thoughts and comments through the Visioning e-mail.
6. The external consultation continued through briefings with ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic community, the industry, ministerial meetings, and other groups.
7. In February, the new leadership team led the ITU senior management into a retreat to refine the findings from the first phase of the visioning exercise. The retreat was an opportunity to further develop ITU’s value proposition and determine how ITU best fits into this rapidly changing, technology-driven world. The management identified priority areas for ITU to become a leading digital agency.

# Results

1. It was unanimous that ITU’s focus should be on achieving financial stability and organizational excellence, building trust externally, increasing our engagement with youth and strengthening ITU’s role in the digital future through foresight analysis and thought leadership on transformational technologies that have the potential for global impact.
2. More importantly, the “One ITU” approach must be applied in all aspects of the work. For delivery in the field, voluntary mobility should be encouraged to increase capacity and ensure dissemination of knowledge in field offices. In the longer term, recruitment strategies and policies should be redefined so that all P-staff are redeployable to any ITU duty station based on the needs of the organization.
3. All these findings from the visioning exercise, senior management retreat and consultation point to **the need for** **ITU to better fit for the challenges of today and the future**.
4. ITU needs to be ahead of the curve. Business as usual is not an option moving forward. How the organization thinks, plans, executes and leads need a paradigm shift to be the ITU that leads the world into the digital future.
5. There is a plan based on the three pillars of the visioning exercise and aligned with the strategic plan for 2024–2027 and the guidance received from PP-22.
6. The work has been categorized into internal and external for the short and medium-term (2023-2024).

# Next steps

1. **Internal efforts** will focus on the third pillar, **organizational excellence**. The case for change on internal transformation presented to the ITU Council outlines a transformation roadmap to achieve organizational excellence ([C23/52](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0052/en)) and will prioritise:
* people and culture;
* financial management and planning;
* systems, processes and tools; and
* oversight, internal controls and governance.
1. A stronger focus on the capacity of staff to deliver has also started with the introduction of Learning Labs (experiential training and continuing education for staff) and the Changemakers Programme (using the findings of the visioning exercise as case studies).
2. By the end of this journey, the ITU of 2027 should be working in a better way to be in the right position to deliver higher value on the first two pillars. Everything being done internally is about delivering thought leadership and better value to members and partners as “One ITU”.
3. **External efforts** focus on the first two pillars: thought leadership, and strategic partnership and membership engagement.
4. Pillar 1 has kicked-off with an emerging trends observatory with four prongs – *Future Vision* (emerging trends), *Demystifying Digital* (engaging with the diplomatic community on topics such as AI, metaverse, ITU 101, etc.), *Learning Labs* and a *Friends of ITU Academic Network* (to provide support with white papers, research sprints, thought pieces, etc.).
5. Meanwhile, the briefings continue with the ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic community and meetings are being organized with the industry (e.g. during Mobile World Congress 2023, on the sidelines of the Conference Preparatory Meeting for the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference, etc.) on areas identified as priorities.
6. Flagship initiatives and events that will springboard ITU into a more strategic position will continue, such as AI for Good, Partner2Connect, SDG Digital Day, GSR, WSIS Forum, Girls in ICT Day and Digital Day at COP28.
7. On strategic partnership and membership engagement, actions since PP-22 have been based on Decision 5 to develop an ITU-wide resource mobilization strategy to address the need for additional funding to meet organizational priorities ([C23/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0062/en)). Based on the outcomes from the visioning exercise, and further discussions at the senior management retreat in February, ITU engaged Boston Consulting Group (BCG), who on a *pro bono* basis has laid the foundation for the development of ITU’s partnership and resource mobilization strategy.
8. The BCG work included interviews with 44 external stakeholders, including Member States and Sector Members, and over 30 internal ITU colleagues, and has provided:
	* a baseline assessment of ITU’s current funding situation and how it compares with other UN agencies;
	* an assessment of ITU’s strengths on which it should build its partnership and resource mobilization strategy; and
	* potential key resource mobilization levers that each have the potential to increase ITU’s funding streams, together with a list of next step concrete actions.
9. A One ITU Resource Mobilization Task Force has been launched to assess the best way forward to prioritize and implement these recommendations (see document [C23/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0062/en)). With very limited resources at hand, ITU must be very mindful about how they are used and focus on what is relevant for 2030 as well as what matters most to the organization for it to be an organization fit for the future, which helps bring humanity and technology together.

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