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| **Agenda item: PL3** | **Document C23/75-E** |
| **27 June 2023** |
| **Original: English** |
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| Contribution from Algeria (People's Democratic Republic of), Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of), Bahrain (Kingdom of), Egypt (Arab Republic of), United Arab Emirates, Kuwait (State of), Morocco (Kingdom of), and Tunisia | |
| proposal for the improvement of the Council Sessions of the International Telecommunication Union | |
| **Purpose**  This proposal aims to further enhance the effectiveness of the preparations and deliberations of the Council, taking into consideration time efficiency aspired while discussing agenda items during Council Sessions.  **Action required by the Council**  Consider the proposal and take necessary action.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [Constitution](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/Constitution-E.pdf) of the International Telecommunication Union  [Rules of Procedure of the Council](https://www.itu.int/council/pd/rop-e.pdf) of the International Telecommunication Union  Report by the Secretary-General on “Council Improvement” – Document [C23/32](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0032/en)  [Council Decision 626](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-C-0098/en) (C22) on “Dates and duration of the 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026 sessions of the Council, along with the clusters of Council Working Groups and Expert Groups for 2023, 2024, and 2025”  Circular Letters: [DM-23/1003](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-DM-CIR-01003/en), [DM-23/1004](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-DM-CIR-01004/en), [DM-23/1008](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-DM-CIR-01008/en) | |

**Introduction**

In preparation for the ordinary session of Council 2023, an informal consultation on the Council improvement has been held via correspondence ([DM-23/1003](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-DM-CIR-01003/en)) in March 2023, following an informal virtual meeting with councillors held on 13 February 2023. Based on these steps, the Secretary-General of the ITU has prepared a report ([C23/32](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0032/en)) on the improvement of the Council preparations and deliberations to strengthen its strategic role and effectiveness, within the current budget of the Council.

In the report, the Secretary-General identifies these three main areas for improvement: *a)* *the strategic role of the Council; b) the high-level engagement of the Council Member States; and c) the preparatory process and facilitating decision-making*; hence, proposes the following steps – among others – for the improvement of the Council:

1. Reducing agenda items by focusing on key discussions that would advance the implementation of the Union’s strategic plan.
2. Identifying an annual theme for the session linked to the strategic plan, upon the choice of the Chairman of the Council, with the possibility of holding a side event on that theme if Member States take the initiative to do so.
3. Reducing the duration of the Council, given having an enhanced preparatory process.
4. Organizing a high-level segment on the first day of the Council, which could be an integral part of the Council but with no formal outcomes, to give the opportunity for ministers or high-level officials of the Member States of the Council to provide their views on key priorities set by the Plenipotentiary Conference.
5. Organizing a retreat with councillors to explore opportunities, including for upscaling ITU governance, processes and systems.
6. Nominating a regional focal point from among the Council Member States for each region to facilitate interaction between the secretariat and the regions in preparing for the sessions.

It’s certain that the improvement of the Council Session, in a way that makes it more productive and efficient, has become an important matter, minding the increasing number of topics and issues on the agenda to be discussed and approved/adopted by Council Member States. Effective time and agenda management of the Council sessions seem to be the easiest steps to be taken to achieve the desired improvement, however, this process needs to be wisely applied in order to realize its objectives.

**Proposal**

Considering the Report of the Secretary-General referred to above, and taking into consideration the experience of the informal thematic briefings conducted over the past three months, as well as the experience of the WTSA-22 where duration of the Assembly was reduced;

Council Member States of this contribution, propose the following, in response to the above-mentioned steps suggested by the Secretary General for the improvement of the Council:

1. Reducing agenda items to focus only on topics of priority for Council Member States, taking into consideration – but not limited to – strategic plan topics, could negatively impact some issues that needs further consideration of the attendance of the Council since these issues may emerge amid the cycle after the strategic plan has been adopted .
2. Identification of an annual theme for the session, may have a negative effect on the agenda items, allowing focus on a specific topic over others. Accordingly, other topics which may be equally important would be discussed cursorily, or postponed for lack of time, dedicated otherwise to topics under the theme. Additionally, the proposal to organize side events on that theme, is not clear in process and procedures.
3. Reducing the duration of the Council, should be considered based on experience, even with an enhanced preparatory process, taking into consideration the previous experience of reduced WTSA-22, and the pressure caused by time constraint versus the need for longer hours of debate, especially on controversial issues. Needed considerable time should be provided for meaningful discussions.
4. In view of the above proposal to reduce duration of the Council, dedicating time and resources for a high-level segment with no formal outcome might not be practical, especially when ministers or high-level officials have already provided their views on key priorities in their policy statements presented during the Plenipotentiary, and which can always be shared during discussions in the Session, whether in person, or through Member States’ Councilors who represent their administrations and introduce their policies and views, normally after consultation with their ministers and/or high-level officials.
5. Dedicating a preceding day for retreat with Councilors, must not bear any budget implications.
6. Nominating a regional focal point from among the Council Member States for each region to facilitate interaction between the secretariat and the regions in preparing for the sessions, needs further clarification. It is not clear if the focal point will be designated for the whole Council cycle, or for each session, or it is left for the decision of each region. However, since the focal point could be involved in pre-session consultations requiring regional positions.

In light of the above, the Council is invited to:

1. Study further the proposal on reducing the agenda and duration of the Council session, and decide as appropriate during the coming session 2024, when Member States have had the opportunity to experience the effectiveness of the proposed process of agenda reduction during the current session 2023, versus the Council session duration already indicated by Council Decision 626 (C22).
2. Request the Secretary-General to:
3. Proceed with the usual drafting process of the agenda according to Rules 4.1 and 4.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the International Telecommunication Union, and send the preliminary draft agenda to Member States of the Council, for their feedback, before preparing a final draft agenda at least eight weeks before the opening of the session; without specifying a theme for the session.
4. Share more details and clarifications with Member States of the Council, on side events proposed to be held under the theme of the session, while noting the request of Member States in 2.b (above).
5. Evaluate the feasibility of the high-level segment and retreat with Councilors, and its productivity, taking into consideration the proposed reduction of the Council session agenda and duration, to decide on their adoption as ways to improve the Council and strengthen its strategic role and effectiveness, within its current budget.
6. Keep interaction between the secretariat and the regions, as well as pre-session consultations, for preparing for the sessions, open to all Member States of the Council, as there is no need to nominate a focal point from among elected states who already are representatives of their relevant regions. This might not actually be as practical and effective as expected.

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