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|  | **Document C23/105-E** |
| **13 September 2023** |
| **Original: English** |
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| SUMMARY RECORD  OF THE  INAUGURAL PLENARY MEETING | |
| Tuesday, 11 July 2023, from 0930 to 1020 hours and Wednesday, 12 July 2023, from 0935 hours to 1240 hours  **Chairman:**  Mr C. MARTINEZ (Paraguay) | |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** | | 1 | Opening of the 2023 session of the Council | - | | 2 | Video address by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General | - | | 3 | Report by the Secretary-General on the state of the Union | - | | 4 | Approval of the draft agenda of the 2023 session of the Council | [C23/1(Rev.2)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0001/en) | | 5 | Allocation of documents | [C23/DT/1(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0001/en) | | 6 | Draft time-management plan | [C23/DT/2(Rev.2)](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0002/en) | | 7 | Organizational matters | - | | 8 | Report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union from July 2022 to April 2023 | [C23/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0035/en) | | 9 | Draft four-year rolling operational plan for the Union for 2024-2027 | [C23/28](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0028/en) | | 10 | Draft biennial budget of the Union for 2024-2025 | [C23/60](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0060/en) | | 11 | Accelerating the implementation of the ITU strategic plan for 2024-2027, and the transformation roadmap to achieve organizational excellence | [C23/36](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0036/en), [C23/52](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0052/en), [C23/72(Rev.1)+Corr.1](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0072/en), [C23/90](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0090/en) | | |

**1 Opening of the 2023 session of the Council**

1.1 The Chairman declared the 2023 session of the Council open and delivered the address available at: <http://council.itu.int/2023/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/C23-opening-speech-Cesar-Martinez-Chair-Council_en.pdf>

1.2 Regarding the conduct of the Council’s deliberations, he said that, in line with the rules governing participation in Council sessions, he would first call upon Council Member States present in the room to speak in the debates and then those participating remotely.

1.3 Observers were welcome to participate in the Council session under the conditions laid down in the Council Rules of Procedure, which also applied in the Standing Committee on Administration and Management and any working groups established. Those conditions could be summarized as follows:

* Observer Member States do not have the right to vote or to raise points of order or motions of order.
* Observer Sector Members do not have the right to speak or to submit written contributions.
* Observer Member States have the right to submit written contributions but are entitled to speak only once on any given agenda item. Consequently, an observer Member State which requests the floor to introduce its written contribution will not be able to speak again on the same agenda item; it may, however, decide not to introduce the written contribution orally, thus reserving the right to speak later under that item.
* Observer Member States must have previously signalled to the secretariat their wish to speak on a specific agenda item or to introduce a written contribution.
* Contributions from observer Member States may be introduced after all Council Member States have introduced theirs. An observer Member State wishing to speak will otherwise be given the floor only after the Member States of the Council have finished making their statements.
* The duration of observers’ statements will be limited according to the number of requests made and the total amount of time allocated for the meeting, in order to ensure efficient accomplishment of the Council’s work.

1.4 Any Council or observer Member State had the right to request that a statement it had made during a plenary meeting be included in the summary record and, in such cases, was invited to hand in the summarized text of its intervention to the secretariat within 24 hours after the end of the meeting.

1.5 He thanked participants in advance for their cooperation in complying with the relevant rules, which were essential in ensuring productive and orderly meetings.

**2 Video address by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General**

2.1 TheUnited Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Amina Mohammed, delivered the video address available at: <https://council.itu.int/2023/en/news/speeches/video-message-ms-amina-mohammed-united-nations-deputy-secretary-general/>.

**3 Report by the Secretary-General on the state of the Union**

3.1 The Secretary-General delivered the report on the state of the Union available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/osg/Pages/Speeches.aspx?ItemID=17>

**The meeting was adjourned at 1020 hours on Tuesday, 11 July 2023, and resumed at 0935 hours on Wednesday, 12 July 2023.**

**4 Approval of the draft agenda of the 2023 session of the Council   
(Document** [**C23/1(Rev.2)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0001/en)**)**

4.1 The Secretary of the Plenary introduced Document C23/1(Rev.2), which was **approved**.

**5 Allocation of documents (Document** [**C23/DT/1(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0001/en)**)**

5.1 The Secretary of the Plenary introduced Document C23/DT/1(Rev.1), which was **approved**.

**6 Draft time-management plan (Document** [**C23/DT/2 (Rev.2)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-230711-TD-0002/en)**)**

6.1 The Secretary of the Plenary introduced Document C23/DT/2 (Rev.2), which was **approved**. She pointed out that the time-management plan would be updated as the session unfolded.

**7 Organizational matters**

7.1 The Secretary of the Plenary, after confirming the customary working hours, said that interpretation and documentation would be provided in the six official languages of the Union. Remote participation had been arranged, but decisions would be taken only by councillors physically present. Participants were reminded that there was a standard of conduct, integrity and respect for diversity and professionalism that all could reasonably expect in discussions, free of discrimination and harassment. The Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, including Sexual Harassment, at UN System Events, was applicable to all ITU meetings.

7.2 The information on the organization of work for the 2023 session was **noted**.

**8 Report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union from July 2022 to April 2023 (Document** [**C23/35**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0035/en)**)**

8.1 The Deputy Secretary-General, introducing the report in Document C23/35, said that it highlighted progress made towards implementation of the 2023 targets, which were aligned with the Connect 2030 Agenda. While growth indicators showed that digital development was on track, some targets relating to inclusiveness - including those on connectivity in least developed countries (LDCs), the gender divide and improving access for persons with disabilities - and to sustainability were off track. There was also insufficient data on indicators such as online government services, ICT skills and the environment. Improving on that data would allow tracking of achievement of the goals and targets.

8.2 Feedback from Member States on the structural improvements made to the report would be welcome. The reporting framework was results-focused, with an integrated format for presentation of activities and results and cross-referencing that avoided duplication. More detailed reporting on activities was available on the Council’s website. The report contained situational analyses that highlighted the effect of digital technologies, including detailed analysis of progress and presentation of the work of ITU across thematic priorities. The focus was impact-driven and supported by dashboards on a web-based reporting platform that contained infographics. The dashboards tracked achievements across different targets and provided the status of implementation of resolutions.

8.3 Many councillors expressed appreciation for the report, commenting on its detail, clarity and improved format. The report underscored ITU’s leading role in providing a global platform for addressing the challenges and opportunities relating to the safe and inclusive development of emerging technologies and applications.

8.4 The councillor from Türkiye said that, as a country that had recently experienced devastating earthquakes, Türkiye was particularly appreciative of the role played by ITU in the United Nations Early Warning for All initiative and emphasized the importance of strengthening capacity for the timely restoration of connectivity. Türkiye was providing its views and experiences to the relevant ITU study groups dealing with emergency communications and disaster relief. He also commended ITU’s support for AI for Good, which brought together leading minds on artificial intelligence and promoted international cooperation.

8.5 One councillor emphasized the relevance of the United Nations System‑wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which might also be considered during discussion of ITU’s work programme on gender equality (Document C23/6).

8.6 Many councillors expressed strong support for ITU’s collective work with United Nations partners and regional and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Union should continue to push for achievement of sustainable digital goals, identifying challenges pertaining to new and emerging digital technologies while strengthening its efforts to reduce the digital divide and create digital access for vulnerable groups. Councillors also expressed support for the “One ITU” approach.

8.7 Several councillors underlined the need to further assist developing countries and LDCs, noting that achievement of some Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets was as low as 20 per cent. In that regard, ITU was encouraged to strengthen its multilateral role, including in WSIS-related activities, and to bolster capacity building and technical cooperation for development. There was still a crippling digital divide, especially with respect to women and to rural and vulnerable communities in developing countries.

8.8 While some countries had made progress in terms of policy and legislation, the limited availability of data was a critical issue that hampered implementation. ITU was requested to assist developing countries to enhance their data-collection and reporting mechanisms. Real-time dashboards and trackers in web-based facilities implemented at country level would enable Member States to track their own performance and allow more interactive exchange.

8.9 More data was required on partnerships, including Giga and the Partner2Connect digital coalition, in which some countries had made significant investments. It was disappointing that only 2.1 million students had been connected to the Internet as a result of Giga. A more purposeful and collaborative approach would be required to take forward what was a very promising initiative, especially for marginalized communities in developing countries.

8.10 Some councillors requested that future versions of the report should further develop key performance indicators (KPIs) and focus more closely on results-based management, incorporating accountability and change-management frameworks. More reporting was requested on the regional contribution to strategic objectives and on gender equality, including how to address the gender gap in Internet use. More disaggregated data was required showing which groups of countries, such as LDCs, economies in transition and small island developing States, benefited from the delivery of projects on the ground. It would be important to report on the risks encountered during implementation. Councillors observed that Table 1, showing the goals and targets, lacked statistics and asked how progress would be tracked without them. They also queried how ITU proposed to improve the collection and measurement of data on projects that were off track. There appeared to be inconsistences between the newly adopted strategic plan for 2024-2027 and the current strategic plan.

8.11 Several councillors welcomed the tracking of implementation of resolutions and requested that information be made available in a more readily accessible format such as a mapping table. On standardization, additional metrics could be introduced to measure ITU-T and ITU-R, in order to highlight migration and adoption of industry specifications and standards in multiple technologies, especially new and emerging technologies.

8.12 Councillors praised ITU’s impact-driven projects and the outcome-centric approach of the report. The practical application of thematic projects, such as the International Girls in ICT Day, within Member States was particularly appreciated. One councillor said that her government had created its own version of Generation Connect to enable young people to join in digital policy-making. It was hoped that more thematic programmes would cascade to the regions.

8.13 One councillor said that there was still room to introduce efficiencies in the strategic plan’s programmatic implementation and that more impact could be created by directing resources to specific target groups, such as youth and women, through skills development and specialized training. Engagement with multiple stakeholders, including NGOs, should be measured and monitored.

8.14 The Deputy Secretary-General said that Member States would see many of their suggestions for improvement incorporated already in the new plan for 2024-2027, including data disaggregation on inclusivity in terms, for example, of youth and gender. The regional presence had been included as one of the enablers that would allow for better reporting.

8.15 He appreciated the support given to the “One ITU” reporting approach, which would be further strengthened in the new strategic plan with a view to providing transparency on contributions and showing how the Union’s goals were aligned with Sector outcomes. He noted the need for more statistics and for better measurement of impact, outcomes and outputs. More collective work would be needed to gather available data from Member States. Work would continue to improve reporting tools, including further customization.

8.16 He noted the request to include risk management in the reporting, and drew attention to agenda item 2.1 (Document C23/20), under which consideration would be given to strengthening of internal control systems and measures. Going forward, risk management would be added to the agenda of the Coordination Committee and dealt with more strategically. Risk management was, moreover, a component of the ITU Transformation Roadmap for Organizational Excellence (Document C23/52). Evaluation, monitoring and oversight functions would be considered as part of an organizational enhancement package during discussion of the proposal to create an oversight unit (Document C23/53).

8.17 He welcomed the references to ITU’s partnership initiatives, including the Giga project and the Partner2Connect digital coalition. More information on Partner2Connect activities was available in Document C23/INF/8. ITU looked forward to achieving its goal of mobilizing USD 100 billion in pledges by 2026. The Giga project had been successful in providing connectivity to schools and communities and ITU was grateful to its partners for their continued support to the initiative, but efforts would certainly be deployed to further improve its impact. Collaboration and linkage with United Nations activities were important, and were addressed, *inter alia*, in Document C23/49.

8.18 The ITU community would continue working together to achieve more on the important themes of bridging the digital divide and sustainability.

8.19 Document C23/35 was **approved**.

**9 Draft four-year rolling operational plan for the Union for 2024-2027   
(Document** [**C23/28**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0028/en)**)**

9.1 The Chief of the Financial Resources Management Department (FRMD) introduced Document C23/28, which contained the draft four-year rolling operational plan for the Union for 2024-2027 and, in Annex A, a draft resolution on the approval thereof. The draft plan was structured around the implementation of five thematic priorities. It set out the expected outcomes for each thematic priority, the relevant outcome indicators and the cost allocations, including for activities to achieve the SDGs. In line with the feedback received from the advisory groups, the draft plan also provided an overview of Sector outputs and services and how they were allocated to the five thematic priorities. The plan will be reviewed and improved to provide additional information on the operational plans for each Sector.

9.2 Councillors welcomed the draft four-year rolling operational plan for 2024-2027. One councillor applauded the new format and its focus on thematic priorities, while another expressed the view that a Sector-based focus was more useful. A further councillor wondered whether the outputs specified in the draft plan were cross-Sectoral in nature and whether they were fully reflective of the current activities of each Sector. He encouraged the secretariat to avoid unnecessary overlap between outputs.

9.3 Some councillors encouraged the allocation of additional funds to activities aimed at reducing the digital divide, especially in LDCs, and one encouraged the allocation of additional resources to operations aimed at attaining the SDGs. Another councillor said that further information was required on the allocation of resources in the medium term in order to inform the implementation of the Union’s strategic plan.

9.4 One councillor wondered in which circumstances the secretariat might need to exercise the flexibility provided for in *resolves* 2 of the draft resolution contained in Annex A, while another emphasized that the secretariat should inform the Council of any significant changes made in that context.

9.5 Some councillors encouraged the secretariat to provide an overview, in the draft plan, of how the SDGs aligned with the decisions reached at the WSIS Forum 2022, and one councillor expressed concern that insufficient resources had been allocated in the draft plan to cover the cost of all upcoming WSIS-related activities.

9.6 Another councillor encouraged the secretariat to seek further opportunities for horizontal collaboration with existing United Nations instruments and, at regional level, with United Nations country teams and to define, within the draft plan, which countries were considered a priority for operations in relation to each SDG. He also encouraged the secretariat to take account of operational risk management considerations for all activities, develop a reporting approach for operational activities in line with that used for the Kigali Action Plan, and draw on the lessons learned from the implementation of previous operational plans. Lastly, some councillors encouraged the secretariat to develop an appropriate impact assessment framework, with key impact indicators, for all operations, including for the regional and area offices.

9.7 The Chief of FRMD welcomed the suggestions put forward. Responding to questions by various councillors, he clarified that the term “outputs”, as used in the draft plans, referred to the products and services provided by each Sector, whereas the term “outcomes” as used in Resolution 71 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) referred to the expected results for each thematic priority. He also confirmed that the regional initiatives, while not mentioned explicitly, were covered by the planned operational activities. Responding to comments regarding the allocation of resources, he stated that all costs had been allocated in accordance with the draft budget for 2024 and with Decision 535 (C05, last amended C14), on cost-allocation methodology. Staff members’ time would be allocated to each output or SDG accordingly. Further changes would be made to the draft plan in response to the comments made and as the Union’s priorities evolved, and the flexibility accorded to the secretariat in the draft resolution would allow it to adapt to changing needs during the implementation of operations.

9.8 The Deputy Secretary-General added that the secretariat would prepare an information document linking the SDGs to the WSIS outcomes (see Document C23/INF/17).

9.9 The Council **approved** the draft four-year rolling operational plan for the Union for 2024-2027 and **adopted** the resolution contained in Annex A to Document C23/28.

**10 Draft biennial budget of the Union for 2024-2025 (Document** [**C23/60**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0060/en)**)**

10.1 The Chief of FRMD introduced Document C23/60, which set out the draft biennial budget for 2024-2025. Whereas the draft budget was balanced and based on zero nominal growth, he noted that, in the light of cost-of-living increases, some other Geneva-based international organizations had recently received budget increases of between 2 and 20 per cent.

10.2 Two councillors welcomed the balanced draft budget, in particular the measures to achieve zero nominal growth and to cover the costs of unforeseen requests through resource optimization. They encouraged the ITU management team to pursue further resource mobilization and other innovations.

10.3 The Chairman said that discussion of the draft budget would continue in the Standing Committee on Administration and Management.

**11 Accelerating the implementation of the ITU strategic plan for 2024-2027, and the transformation roadmap to achieve organizational excellence   
(Documents**[**C23/36**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0036/en)**,** [**C23/52**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0052/en)**,** [**C23/72(Rev.1)+Corr.1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0072/en) **and** [**C23/90**](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0090/en)**)**

11.1 A representative of SGO introduced Document C23/36, which set out the measures taken to accelerate the goals of advancing universal connectivity and achieving sustainable digital transformation. Following a consultative exercise and a high-level retreat, it had been decided that, over the period 2023-2024, external efforts would focus on thought leadership and on strategic partnership and membership engagement, while internal efforts would focus on organizational excellence.

11.2 The Secretary-General introduced Document C23/52, which presented the key elements of the transformation roadmap to achieve organizational excellence. The aim of the proposed roadmap was not to change the structure of ITU, but rather to improve and modernize operations with a view to ensuring financial stability and the quality of services.

11.3 The Deputy Secretary-General provided an overview of the structure of Document C23/52. In line with advice received from the External Auditors, the secretariat proposed that a small, limited-term team, headed by a chief transformation officer, should be established to oversee implementation of the proposed transformation roadmap, with a focus on reforming support services. The Sectors would play a key role in defining the business requirements for those services. The transformation roadmap would be accompanied by a strong change-management programme, which would provide for staff engagement.

11.4 The councillor from Kenya introduced Document C23/72(Rev.1)+Corr.1, a multicountry contribution sponsored by 13 countries, inviting the Council to instruct the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources to further develop the “One ITU” concept and to develop KPIs for organizational excellence.

11.5 The observer from the Russian Federation, introducing Document C23/90, said that neither Resolution 71 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) nor Decision 5 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference instructed the secretariat to pursue activities in the areas of transformation or organizational excellence. He encouraged the Council to consult with all Member States on the proposals contained in Documents C23/36 and C23/52 and to provide further information about how such activities would be funded.

11.6 The Chairman said that discussion of the item would continue at the next Plenary meeting.

The Secretary-General: The Chairman:  
D. BOGDAN-MARTIN C. MARTINEZ

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