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| **Agenda item: PL 3** | **Document C24/4-E** |
| **3 May 2024** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS ON PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE | |
| **Purpose**  The 2023 session of the Council “requested the secretariat to examine the proposals made by Romania to improve the conference roll-out, to consult the Member States on possible improvements to PP, including review of the election procedures and ethical guidelines, and to present the findings to Council-24”. Further to a consultation launched in February ([CL-24/11](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-SG-CIR-0011/en)), this report summarizes the input from Member States.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **consider** this report and **suggest** a way forward.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Convening platforms.  **Financial implications**  Within the allocated budget 2024-2025.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*B/75/1*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP14/Main/GetDocument?idProposal=14954&isSub=false&codeLang=E)*,* [*PP-14/DT/66*](https://www.itu.int/md/S14-PP-141020-TD-0066/en)*,* [*PP-14/161*](http://www.itu.int/md/S14-PP-C-0161/en)*,* [*PP-14/175 (Recommendation 8)*](http://www.itu.int/md/S14-PP-C-0175/en)*,* [*C15/4*](https://www.itu.int/md/S15-CL-C-0004/en)*,* [*C15/99*](https://www.itu.int/md/S15-CL-C-0099/en)*,* [*C16/4*](https://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0004/en)*,* [*C16/120*](https://www.itu.int/md/S16-CL-C-0120/en)*,* [*CL-16/48*](https://www.itu.int/md/S16-SG-CIR-0048/en)*,* [*CWG-FHR 7/10*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CLCWGFHRM7-C-0010/en)*,* [*CL-17/7*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-SG-CIR-0007/en)*,* [*C17/INF/6*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-INF-0006/en)*,* [*C17/4(Rev.1)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0004/en)*,* [*C17/76(Rev.1)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0076/en)*,* [*C17/78(Rev.2)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0078/en)*,* [*C17/96*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0096/en)*,* [*C17/DL/8*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-170515-DL-0008/en)*,* [*C17/130*](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0130/en)*,* [*C18/5*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-C-0005/en)*,* [*C18/50*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-C-0050/en)*,* [*C18/109*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-C-0109/en)*,* [*PP-18/31*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-PP-C-0031/en)*,* [*IAP/63A1/7*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP18/Detail/Index?idProposal=48659)*,* [*IAP/63A1/23*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP18/Detail/Index?idProposal=48675)*,* [*ARG/CAN/CTR/DOM/PRG/S/68R1/1*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP18/Detail/Index?idProposal=48944)*,* [*AFCP/55A5/1*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP18/Detail/Index?idProposal=48559)*,* [*ARB/72A1/38*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP18/Detail/Index?idProposal=48905)*,* [*PP-18/DT/18(Rev.1)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-PP-181029-TD-0018/en)*,* [*PP-18/155*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-PP-C-0155/en)*,* [*PP-18/173*](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-PP-C-0173/en)*,* [*C19/13*](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0013/en)*,* [*C19/112*](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0112/en)*,* [*CL-19/57*](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-SG-CIR-0057/en)*,* [*C20/4*](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-C-0004/en)*,* [*C20/INF/8*](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-INF-0008/en)*,* [*C21/4(Rev.1)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0004/en)*,* [*C21/86*](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0086/en)*,* [*PP-22/40*](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0040/en)*,* [*RCC/68A17/1*](https://www.itu.int/net4/proposals/PP22/Detail/Index?idProposal=55)*,* [*PP-22/189*](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0189/en)*,* [*PP-22/206*](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0206/en)*,* [*C23/4*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0004/en)*,* [*C23/84*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0084/en)*,* [*C23/107*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0107/en)*,* [*CL-24/11*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-SG-CIR-0011/en)*,* [*C24/INF/13*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-INF-0013/en)*.* | |

**Background**

At its [16th Plenary meeting](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0206/en), PP-22 adopted [recommendation 4 from Committee 5](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0189/en),

*instructing the Council to examine the conduct of election campaigns and procedures for electing the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Directors of the Bureaux and members of RRB, while ensuring that all candidates have the opportunity to participate in accordance with the principles of fairness, transparency, integrity and impartiality in the conduct of election campaigns. The examination of this matter should be completed by the end of the 2024 session of the Council and any related changes should be implemented before the next plenipotentiary conference.*

At its July 2023 session, the Council ([C23/107](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0107/en), para 1.9):

*requested the secretariat to examine the proposals made by Romania to improve the conference roll-out, to consult the Member States on possible improvements to PP, including review of the election procedures and ethical guidelines, and to present the findings to Council-24.*

In Circular letter [CL-24/11](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-SG-CIR-0011/en), the secretariat launched a consultation on further improvements of the Plenipotentiary Conference. Twenty-nine responses were received; the full text of these responses is contained in [C24/INF/13](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-INF-0013/en). Below are the questions and summaries of responses from Member States (MS).

**Improving inter-regional preparation and input to the conference**

*What aspects of the informal inter-regional meetings/coordination could be improved?*

Overall, Member States expressed appreciation for the inter-regional meetings and coordination efforts prior to the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP). They find them to be useful to agree on organizational/administrative issues such as allocation of documents and chairs/vice-chairs of committees, but their scope of ability to negotiate more complex issues is limited, as not all regions follow the same preparation schedule, and regional coordinators are not necessarily mandated to negotiate on behalf of many Member States. Some of the main points:

* The thematic approach started for PP-22 could be continued, with clearer objectives to ensure focused discussions, sent well in advance so that Member States could prepare.
* The schedule should be established well in advance, and meetings should be held multiple times throughout the year prior to the conference.
* Maintain hybrid/virtual for maximum participation, while noting that physical meetings allow more informal exchanges.
* Encourage more dialogue between regional focal points; ITU could compile and share contact information.
* Encourage MS/Regional Telecommunication Organizations (RTOs) to share their positions/contributions earlier.

*Do you have any suggestions for delegate and conference officer preparation/training?*

Overall, the suggestions emphasize the importance of comprehensive, accessible, and interactive training programs to equip newcomers, delegates, and conference officers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to effectively participate in plenipotentiary conferences.

* Online training/workshops/presentations, created and shared well in advance, on the following topics: PP objectives, negotiation techniques, procedures, timelines, delegates’ functions, code of conduct/ethics, resolution drafting, administrative processes and procedures, credentials, what to expect at the PP, election procedures, rules of procedure, newcomers’ session/induction video.
* Mentoring/inviting former conference officers and delegates to share their experiences and knowledge.
* Organize training through the ITU Academy.
* Virtual thematic briefings as is done for the Council.
* Utilize the regional offices for the above-mentioned goals.

*Do you have any suggestions for improving and shortening contributions?*

Although most Member States would support short, concise contributions, it should be noted that most contributions amend existing documents and therefore their length depends on the original document. However, there was overall agreement that Member States should be encouraged to use executive summaries, limit number of pages to the maximum extent possible, utilize CPI, and submit multi-country contributions so as to avoid duplication amongst single Member States. The above-mentioned training on drafting resolutions could assist Member States in this effort as well.

*Do you have any suggestions for streamlining resolutions?*

Overall, the suggestions highlight the need for collaboration, procedural improvements, capacity building, and awareness raising to effectively streamline resolutions. Some Member States noted that PP resolutions should come before resolutions of other conferences, and that those conferences should look first to the PP before creating similar resolutions. The above-mentioned training on drafting resolutions could also help in this matter. Some suggestions include:

* Build upon the exercise of mapping all resolutions (Sectors and PP) that was created before PP-22.
* Encourage early submission of contributions and incorporate fixed agenda items on streamlining resolutions in meetings.
* Organize workshops and projects to train Member States in streamlining language.
* Establish correspondence groups or working groups to review and consolidate resolutions.
* Deepen understanding of the benefits of streamlining through inter-regional coordination.

*Do you think it would be helpful to assess financial impact of proposals before final approval by the conference? If so, what could be the mechanism?*

Many respondents view assessing the financial impact of proposals before final approval as helpful and even obligatory. As some Member States rightly point out, according to Nos 71 and 73 of the General Rules and Article 34 of the Convention, this task falls under the purview of the Budget Control Committee. Suggestions include:

* Involve committees like the Budget Control Committee or CWG-FHR.
* Integrate financial aspects into submissions as has been implemented for the Council.
* There are some concerns about delays and complexities in assessment.
* There should be an emphasis on practicality and feasibility given diverse proposals.
* Some Member States express concerns about stifling creativity.
* Suggestions include carrying over proposals for future consideration.

**Improving inclusive participation**

*What kind of incentives could be implemented to further improve women’s engagement and participation in the conference, including in leadership positions (chair, vice-chair)?*

Overall, the responses suggest a multi-faceted approach involving financial support, training, awareness-building, and policy measures to encourage greater participation of women in leadership positions at the conference.

* Offer fellowships, sponsorships, and scholarships.
* Provide mentorship, coaching, and raise awareness.
* Establish quotas or minimum percentages for women in leadership.
* Provide travel grants, awards, and recognition.
* Set up dedicated teams and committees.
* Promote a safe and inclusive environment.
* Increase visibility of female role models.
* Empower women through training and support networks.
* Evaluate processes and enforce gender parity.

*How could the regions and the ITU Networks of Women encourage and involve more women in PP?*

As with the previous question, a combination of financial support, training, networking opportunities, and awareness-raising activities is essential to encourage and involve more women in the PP. Collaboration with Member States, regional organizations, and women's networks is also crucial for success.

* Offering fellowships and scholarships for women participants.
* Encouraging administrations to involve women in organizational levels early on.
* Pre-planning and expanding ITU Networks of Women as a side event to showcase achievements.
* Promoting cross-regional exchanges among Networks of Women.
* De-linking Network of Women activities from conferences to ensure everyday involvement.
* Organizing trainings and workshops for women at early stages of event preparation.
* Encouraging regional groups to cultivate women's participation.
* Including gender engagement goals in the Council Session agenda.
* Establishing mentoring programs for women interested in leadership roles.
* Hosting events dedicated to women alongside the conference.
* Providing greater accessibility to mentoring programs and scholarships.

*What kind of opportunities could be provided by ITU and/or Member States to engage young delegates more actively in PP?*

Overall, the responses emphasize the importance of providing opportunities, support, and platforms for young delegates to actively participate in the PP, contribute their perspectives, and gain valuable experience in ITU proceedings. Member States must play an important role in this initiative, including young people in their delegations and assigning them responsible tasks.

* Establish youth delegate training programs, fellowships, and internships.
* Increase awareness about Generation Connect.
* Establish mentoring programs and pair younger delegates with experienced counterparts.
* Organize special sessions and forums dedicated to young delegates.
* Consult youth on resolutions relating to younger generations.

*How can we ensure that knowledge and experience are effectively passed on to the next generation of ITU delegates, with a better gender balance?*

Overall, the responses emphasize the importance of structured knowledge transfer initiatives, digital platforms for information sharing, succession planning, mentorship programs, and collaboration with Member States to ensure effective knowledge and experience transmission to the next generation of ITU delegates, with a particular focus on achieving better gender balance. Again, much of this effort lies with Member States as they compose their own delegations. Some suggestions include:

* Implement structured knowledge transfer initiatives.
* Develop digital platforms for information sharing.
* Promote succession planning strategies.
* Facilitate mentorship programmes.
* Encourage collaboration between Member States and the secretariat.

**Advancing the ITU greening the PP agenda**

*Do you have any suggestions for making the conference more sustainable?*

Member States appreciated the efforts made at PP-22, and suggested the following measures to continue to make ITU conferences more environmentally friendly and socially responsible:

* Integrate sustainability presentations and discussions into the preparatory process.
* Include sustainability requirements in host country agreements.
* Choose eco-friendly venues with renewable energy and recycling facilities, as well as accessibility.
* Promote eco-friendly transportation options and reduce air travel emissions.
* Offer remote participation options to broaden involvement, reduce costs, and minimize travel-related emissions.
* Develop digital solutions such as mobile apps and digital documentation to minimize paper usage.
* Implement sustainable practices such as recycling, minimizing waste, and using renewable energy sources.
* Encourage the use of reusable materials and eco-friendly giveaways.
* Collaborate with local organizations for sustainable practices.
* Promote eco-friendly procurement policies and locally sourced products.
* Eliminate late-night and weekend sessions to improve energy efficiency.
* Encourage Host Country to donate or recycle and leftover food, materials, and equipment.

*How could the secretariat help delegates before and during the conference to follow the sustainability principles?*

* Provide comprehensive guidelines and resources to Member States and delegates before the conference, as well as specific training sessions.
* Use the website or mobile app to highlight what steps to take.
* Develop guidance for PP host countries.
* Request Member States who are/have candidates to emphasize sustainability in their campaigns.

**Improving delegates’ experience**

*Do you have any suggestions for improving the time management/working procedures /working methods of the committees?*

A recurrent answer among Member States for this question was no long hours/no late nights/no weekend sessions, which was a positive example set at PP-22 and should be a goal for future PPs. Additionally, time limitations were frequently mentioned, whether it be for interventions individually or for certain discussions or ad hoc groups. The following points were suggested for improving time management and working procedures at ITU conferences:

* Implement time limits on interventions to prevent lengthy speeches and use timers to enforce them.
* Avoid scheduling parallel meetings on related topics.
* Schedule meetings only within reasonable working hours, avoid late-night meetings, and avoid weekends.
* Decide starting dates and times of committees well in advance and use realistic timetables.
* Provide comprehensive information materials on working procedures and methods.
* Carefully consider modifications to working methods to avoid increasing delegate workload.
* Replicate successful time management plans from previous conferences.
* Ensure no other sessions overlap with the electoral process to maintain focus.
* Empower committee chairs to resolve conflicts at the committee level, educate them to handle difficult matters, and encourage them to set time limits for ad hoc groups.
* Establish clear and consistent working methods for the committees and ad hoc groups.
* Continue the principle of “no consensus, no change”.

*Do you have any suggestions for improving the delegates’ overall experience at PP?*

Several suggestions repeated the above-mentioned requests for time limits on interventions, minimizing late evening or night sessions, stricter start and end times for conference days, shorter conferences, and breaks between sessions. With the exception of the conference duration, the secretariat can implement these requests. Further suggestions include:

* Enhance networking opportunities with dedicated events and digital platforms.
* Provide accessible venues and support services for seniors and delegates with disabilities.
* Offer comprehensive information desks and assistance with travel arrangements.
* Conduct induction sessions for first-time attendees prior to the conference, and offer guidance and mentorship programs for new participants to navigate the conference effectively.
* Implement efficiency measures like electronic voting systems and policy statement guidelines.
* Organize extracurricular activities like sports competitions or cultural events.
* Ensure availability of food options and convenient amenities throughout the conference venue.

*How can we ensure a safe environment for all delegates?*

The responses emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to safety, including political, health, and physical security considerations. Many suggestions focus on preventive measures such as security protocols, reporting mechanisms, and emergency procedures to mitigate risks. Cultural sensitivity and awareness of local practices are highlighted as essential for ensuring the safety and comfort of delegates. There is a call for accountability, both from host countries and delegations, to address safety concerns promptly and effectively. Establishing a clear Code of Conduct is seen as a fundamental step in promoting a respectful and harassment-free environment at PP. Logistics, such as transportation and accommodation, play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of delegates, particularly during late hours.

* Consider safety indices of potential hosts and recommendations from Geneva missions.
* Establish and promote an ITU Code of Conduct tailored to participation in ITU events to foster a respectful and safe environment.
* Communicate safety information, procedures, and emergency protocols clearly to all delegates.
* Provide accessible hotlines and clear reporting mechanisms for safety, security, and health issues.
* Increase security staff, install more cameras, and address complaints promptly.
* Encourage hosts to inform delegates about local practices, etiquette, and prohibitions.
* Ensure accessibility for all delegates, including sex-segregated facilities and accommodations for disabilities.
* Provide safe transportation options, especially during late hours, and avoid high-crime areas.

*Do you appreciate/attend side events (not social events) at PP? If so, do you have any suggestions of side events for future events?*

Side events are generally appreciated by delegates as they provide valuable opportunities for networking, professional development, and knowledge sharing. However, there is recognition that side events should not overshadow the core business of the conference and should be well-focused, substantive, and strategic. Logistical challenges associated with side events, such as room availability and rushed agendas, have been noted, emphasizing the need to prioritize the smooth operation of the conference. Concerns are raised about the potential impact of side events on the efficiency of the conference, with suggestions to carefully evaluate their necessity and timing to ensure they complement rather than detract from the main proceedings. Recommendations include organizing side events in the weeks following elections to alleviate the busy schedule of the first week and maximize participation. Suggestions for future side events include thematic workshops aligned with global technological trends and ITU strategic goals, events focusing on women and youth, thematic debates on frontier technologies, and exhibitions showcasing ICT innovations. Suggestions also include hosting side events by sectoral companies specializing in telecommunications infrastructure, cybersecurity, emerging technologies, spectrum management, and digital inclusion initiatives to provide insights and foster collaboration. Overall, side events are seen as meaningful additions to the conference but should be carefully curated to ensure they enhance the delegate experience without overshadowing the main proceedings.

**Ministerial participation**

*Do you have any suggestions to improve the participation of Ministers and high-level delegates and the engagement with these participants?*

Suggestions to improve the participation of Ministers and high-level delegates at the PP include:

* Ensure specific invitations are extended to Ministers for their attendance well in advance, curate agendas prioritizing items requiring high-level guidance, and organize interactive sessions involving Ministers.
* Establish a clear high-level program agenda for a limited duration at the beginning of the conference, such as half a day per day for a maximum of two days to optimize engagement.
* Establish dedicated sessions for Ministers to discuss pressing issues and adopt a Ministerial Declaration to reflect high political commitment.
* Prioritize and streamline high-level participation while ensuring meaningful engagement and outcomes.
* Collaborate between the ITU secretariat and host countries to organize successful Ministerial Roundtables, sharing lessons learned from previous conferences.
* Structure high-level participation as a parallel event to the conference to provide more PR opportunities and easier organization of bilateral meetings.
* Rethink Ministerial participation to make it more significant, potentially through interregional panels on central ITU topics with gender-balanced representation.
* Implement special side events and roundtable sessions for better engagement of high-level delegates.

**Digitalization**

*What processes (registration/documentation/networking/preparation and engagement pre-PP/protocol services/time management/decision-making/voting/remote participation/etc.) do you think could be further improved using digital technologies?*

The suggestions aim to leverage digital technologies to optimize various aspects of the PP process, from registration and scheduling to decision-making and remote participation, ultimately enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and inclusivity.

* Implement an online room booking system for fair scheduling.
* Utilize real-time meeting room reservation tools.
* Explore AI-driven translation and interpretation solutions.
* Introduce QR codes for registration and digital documentation access.
* Continue to provide remote participation options.
* Shift to electronic voting systems for efficiency and accuracy.
* Use digital scheduling tools for better time management.
* Implement networking platforms for delegates.
* Enhance protocol services through mobile apps or notifications.
* Explore facial recognition for registration automation and room access.
* Create a dedicated ITU app for information dissemination.

**Electoral process and candidate ethical guidelines**

*Considering the previous discussions on improvements to electoral procedures, do you have any suggestions on how to improve the electoral procedures?*

Overall, the suggestions aim to modernize and streamline electoral procedures at PP by leveraging digital technologies, enhancing transparency, and promoting fairness. Electronic voting systems, remote participation options, and streamlined processes could improve efficiency and inclusivity. Additionally, reducing paper-based campaigning and congratulatory speeches aligns with sustainability goals and conference efficiency. However, implementing some of these suggestions would require modifications in the Basic Texts of the Union.

* Introduce electronic voting for efficiency and transparency.
* Provide clear guidelines on ethical campaign practices.
* Provide all information on election procedures and campaign processes in one place.
* Consider combining multiple elections onto one ballot for streamlining and complete all necessary voting rounds in one session for efficiency.
* Extend nomination periods for effective campaigning.
* Promote digital campaigning to reduce environmental impact.
* Minimize congratulatory speeches post-elections for conference efficiency.
* Monitor and prevent discrimination in candidate selection.

*Do you have any suggestions to the latest guidelines on ethical aspects of certain campaigning activities, which were approved at Council 2018 and re-endorsed by Council 2021?*

There is a consensus on the importance of ethical guidelines and continuous assessment to ensure their effectiveness. Suggestions focus on transparency, equal opportunities for candidates, and mechanisms to address misconduct allegations promptly. Emphasis is placed on training and supervision mechanisms to maintain integrity in the electoral process. Overall, there is a call for clear guidelines, equal opportunities, and robust supervision to uphold ethical standards in campaigning activities.

* Offer continuous training on ethical campaigning and update guidelines to reflect best practices and new challenges.
* Continue assessing the effectiveness of the guidelines on ethical campaigning and involve relevant stakeholders like RTOs in the assessment process.
* Clarify rights and obligations of non-elected officials running for office versus elected officials, ensuring equal opportunities for all candidates. Propose measures such as like candidates signing a commitment to respect guidelines and publishing their communication programmes.
* Establish mechanisms to address misconduct allegations promptly.
* Emphasize effective supervision in the electoral process.

**Other issues**

Other suggestions include:

* Increase the number of food and beverage kiosks at the venue.
* Provide more lockers and establish a cloakroom for delegates' convenience.
* Set up additional photo corners to encourage social media engagement.
* Maintain meeting room temperatures at a comfortable level (minimum 20 degrees Celsius).
* Install information boards for venue navigation and provide more seating areas for informal meetings.
* Offer printing and IT facilities near ministerial meeting halls.
* Advocate for greater involvement of industry and digital economy actors to enhance multistakeholder participation.
* Acknowledge that not all issues can be resolved perfectly and accept some shortcomings.
* Propose conducting similar consultations after major conferences to gather feedback.
* Avoid scheduling social events simultaneously to allow equal opportunities for Member States and candidates.
* Consider reducing event duration.

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