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| **Agenda item: ADM 3** | **Document C24/97-E** |
| **11 June 2024** |
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| Contribution from Mexico and El Salvador (Republic of),  Panama (Republic of) and Paraguay (Republic of) | |
| IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 167, ON STRENGTHENING AND DEVELOPING ITU CAPABILITIES FOR FULLY VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND PHYSICAL MEETINGS WITH REMOTE PARTICIPATION, AND THE ELECTRONIC MEANS TO ADVANCE THE WORK OF THE UNION | |
| **Purpose**  The Administration of Mexico invites the Council to consider its proposals for the implementation of Resolution 167 of the Plenipotentiary Conference.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **consider** and **discuss** the proposals.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*Document PP-22/64*](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0064)*;* [*Resolution 167 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-167-E.pdf) *of the Plenipotentiary Conference;* [*Document CWG-FHR-16/26*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0026/en)*;* [*Document CWG-FHR-17/24*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CWGFHR17-C-0024/en)*;* [*Document C24/61*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0061/en)*;* [*Document C24/INF/7*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-INF-0007/en) | |

Introduction

Resolution 167 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference resolves, *inter alia*, that the Union further study the impact of remote participation on existing rules of procedure, especially regarding decision-making in different types of meetings.

The resolution recognizes further the need to clarify the roles, rights and procedures for participation and decision-making in fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation.

In addition, Annex 1 of the resolution invites the establishment of general high-level guidelines for fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, including but not limited to rights of different categories of members participating remotely in terms of decision-making in different types of meetings.

Background

The 2023 session of the Council concluded that remote participation is an invaluable tool for Member States and instructed the General Secretariat to prepare a roadmap for the harmonization and the development of facilities and capabilities to organize and conduct fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation by electronic means for the meetings of the Union, for submission to the 2024 session of the Council.

At the 16th meeting of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR), held in October 2023, the Administration of Mexico noted that virtual participation allows for more members to participate and reiterated the importance of this mode of participation. At the meeting, it was agreed to create draft guidelines for fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation ([CWG-FHR-16/26](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CWGFHR16-C-0026/en)). Additionally, at the 17th meeting of CWG-FHR in February 2024, delegates emphasized the need to clarify the rights of remote participants and the importance of considering the costs for Member States attending ITU meetings ([CWG-FHR-17/24](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CWGFHR17-C-0024/en)).

In this regard, CWG-FHR asked the secretariat to contact other United Nations organizations to investigate how they manage the rights of remote participants in decision-making or legally binding meetings. The secretariat was also asked to submit to the 2024 session of the Council a report on draft procedural and legal guidelines on managing virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, addressing the legal rights of remote participants and remote chairs.

Context

Given the financial cost to the Union of holding virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, amounting to an annual operating cost of CHF 855 000 and a capital investment of CHF 1 000 000 every five years, according to Document [PP-22/64](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-PP-C-0064/en), and the Union's difficult budgetary situation, the Administration of Mexico considers it important for ITU to have high-level principles for the holding of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation.

It is important to recall the financial barriers to physical participation in the meetings of the three Sectors of the Union faced by developing countries[[1]](#footnote-1), while virtual participation allows them to follow the progress of the Union's activities without incurring significant costs. Moreover, the participation of a large majority of members in decision-making would foster an enabling environment for innovation and inclusive and sustainable technological development at the global level.

Although the ITU Legal Counsel has previously clarified that an important principle of Resolution 167 is that decisions are taken by delegates in the room and that remote participants are therefore not allowed to participate in decision-making, it is important to bear in mind the analysis provided by the General Secretariat in Document [C24/61](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0061/en) and the contents of Annex 1 to Resolution 167, which recognizes the need to establish high-level guidelines that include the rights of members participating remotely in terms of decision-making in different types of meetings.

Proposal

The Administration of Mexico appreciates the information provided by the General Secretariat, which reflects the current situation of the Union with regard to the implementation of Resolution 167. It also appreciates the secretariat's efforts in presenting the outcomes of the consultations that it has carried out ([C24/INF/7](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-INF-0007/en)), indicating that various United Nations system organizations provide equal rights to physical and virtual participants, including the right to vote, raise points of order, make interventions and submit documents as appropriate.

However, the Administration of Mexico considers it important to continue studying the issue with a view to strengthening and expanding the rights of virtual participants in the Union's decision-making process.

It therefore proposes the following:

1) The Administration of Mexico supports the ITU secretariat's proposal that the ITU Council assume responsibility for determining the modality of all conferences, assemblies and Council sessions as of 2025.

In this connection, the Administration of Mexico proposes the creation of a correspondence group to develop high-level guidelines for the management and governance of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, taking into account Annex 1 to Resolution 167, including but not limited to the rights of members participating remotely.

2) In the view of the Administration of Mexico, terms of reference should be developed for the correspondence group in order to guide it in its work in developing such guidelines. To that end, the administration has submitted in annex hereto a proposal for members' consideration.

3) The secretariat should present an analysis of physical meetings with remote participation held by the three Sectors of the Union and indicate where it may be feasible to strengthen the rights of remote participants in the decision-making process.

4) The secretariat should further study the impact of remote participation on the existing rules of procedure and on other relevant instruments of the Union, in order to improve decision-making in physical meetings with remote participation within ITU.

**Annex:** 1

ANNEX

Proposed terms of reference for the correspondence group on the management and governance of meetings of the Union

1) In view of *resolves* 2 of Resolution 167 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and the responsibility assigned to the ITU Council, councillors agree to the creation of a correspondence group comprising Member States interested in participating in the development of high-level guidelines for the management and governance of the following meetings:

– fully virtual meetings; and

– physical meetings with remote participation.

2) In accordance with Annex 1 to Resolution 167, the high-level guidelines should include the following elements:

1) The rights of members participating remotely in terms of decision-making in different types of ITU meetings: define the rights of remote participants in terms of decision-making (right to vote, participation, motion of order, etc.) in hybrid meetings of the Union.

2) Interpretation services: identify the events for which interpretation in the six official languages of the Union should be provided, taking into account the particular needs of each event/meeting and considering the budget of the Union.

3) Technology neutrality: determine the platforms to be used for holding meetings of the Union in order to meet the intended objectives of the meetings and ensure their security and cost-effectiveness.

4) Notification of the mode of participation for different meetings of the Union: identify actions to improve notification of the type of different ITU meetings in order to provide members with the required information to make informed decisions on their participation.

5) Opportunity to engage in in offline discussions: identify meetings where virtual participants can participate in offline discussions and elements for determining such participation, e.g., capacity of host country (as appropriate), availability of human/financial resources, topics to be addressed, etc.

6) Participation of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs: Resolution 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, resolves to involve persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the work of ITU. It will be important to identify mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs in the different events/meetings of the Union.

7) Length and timing of meetings: it is important to bear in mind associated costs, e.g., interpretation services for meetings. In this regard, it will be important to determine length of meetings with a view to optimizing the Union's resources and to take into account differences in time zones.

8) Training for ITU meeting organizers and regional office staff, including those in leadership positions: determine the frequency of training in the use of technological and technical tools, methods for identifying training needs, and training for those holding leadership positions within the Union.

9) Collection of statistics regarding trends in remote participation across the three Sectors: determine the frequency with which the General Secretariat is to present such data with a view to assessing the need to update the high-level guidelines, according to the different needs of members.

3) The correspondence group should submit to the 2025 session of the Council draft high-level guidelines for discussion and approval, as appropriate, by members.

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1. According to the Plenipotentiary Conference, this term includes the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)