|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Document C24/111-E** |
| **29 August 2024** |
| **Original: English** |
|  |  |
| **SUMMARY RECORD**  **OF THE**  **FIRST PLENARY MEETING** | |
| Tuesday, 4 June 2024, from 1435 to 1750 hours  **Chair**: Mr F. SAUVAGE (France) | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Update on the transformation process and transformation roadmap | [C24/52](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0052/en), [C24/73](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0073/en) |
| 2 | Strategy for the coordination of efforts among the three Sectors of the Union | [C24/27](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0027/en) |
| 3 | Strengthening ITU’s regional presence | [C24/25](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0025/en), [C24/79](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0079/en), [C24/98](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0098/en), [C24/100](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0100/en) |

# 1 Update on the transformation process and transformation roadmap (Documents [C24/52](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0052/en) and [C24/73](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0073/en))

1.1 The Acting Chief of the Transformation Team introduced Document C24/52, which provided an update on the status of the transformation process to achieve organizational excellence; and Document C24/73, which set out the ITU roadmap for organizational transformation, building on the update and methodology provided in Document C24/52. The transformation was focused on achieving specific outcomes which reflected organizational performance improvements gauged by clear and measurable indicators.

1.2 Many councillors expressed their appreciation and support for the documents, commenting on their detail, clarity of purpose and focus on excellence in human resources and organizational innovation. The progress that the transformation process had achieved to date was commendable. Improved procurement and optimization of financial resources, which would contribute to making the Union more attractive to new partners and donors, were especially welcome. It was important that the transformation process should be well funded to reflect its ambition and its critical importance for ITU in terms of enhancing the delivery of the Union's services to members.

1.3 A number of councillors stressed that funding for the transformation process, which would likely take a number of years to carry out and would have a considerable impact on the activities of the Union, should be derived from the regular budget rather than from savings. Given budgetary limitations, it would be crucial to prioritize initiatives in order to maximize effectiveness, accompanied by comprehensive reporting to the Council and the Council Working Group on financial and human resources (CWG-FHR).

1.4 Some councillors commended the launch of the Young Professionals programme and the focus on recruitment from least developed countries, which were currently underrepresented in the staff. The programme would result in an infusion of new ideas and improve the outcome of the transformation process. Transformation of the ITU website was similarly of critical importance for engaging with young people.

1.5 One councillor said that the responsibilities of the Transformation Team as set out in Document C24/52 should be aligned with the mandate of the team and the scope of transformation work and a document on the mandate of the Transformation Team should be provided.

1.6 Responding to the many questions from councillors, the Acting Chief of the Transformation Team said that the role of the Transformation Team was to identify necessary improvements and to promote and monitor transformational activities that were undertaken by the relevant teams throughout the secretariat. While use would be made of external support for some initiatives of the transformation process, the majority of the work would be performed internally. Stakeholder engagement had been a very important part of the process, especially in securing specific change-management and communication skills to make internal and external communication processes more systematic. Engagement with the Staff Council was a key element, and proposals were in place for each initiative to ensure that staff had the necessary skills for the processes in question. Reporting to the Council and its working groups would be normalized as the process moved forward. The transformation plan would undergo risk assessment in terms both of risks related to the achievement of the plan and of external and internal risks. There was also regular engagement with youth as part of the stakeholder engagement in ITU.

1.7 On questions relating to funding, he said that, as the transformation process had been designed in the middle of a budget cycle, the funds required had thus not yet been identified in the regular budget. The figure of CHF 1 354 000 in Document C24/52 related to new funding that was awaiting approval and was intended to tide the transformation process over until the next budget cycle. No estimate of the total cost of the transformation was currently available: needs would be assessed over the coming period with a view to including them in the regular budget process going forward. Various sources of funding existed across the Union that could be —and, in some cases, already were being— used for initiatives related to the transformation process. The quoted figure of CHF 700 000 for systems and tools did not represent the total funding required for measures being undertaken in relation to systems processes and tools, which had yet to be fully assessed, but this is rather the amount of the surplus funding that was currently available. The transformation roadmap —and associated timelines— would have to be optimized within the funding currently available.

1.8 In regard to questions on digital transformation, he emphasized that the proposals in the Ernst & Young report were being taken on board by ITU, but in the case of the transformation process would not be implemented *en bloc*, since it would be counterproductive to carry out a comprehensive digital transformation in isolation; they would be implemented on an initiative-by-initiative basis, once the digital and other tools required by each individual transformed process were known, and as available funds permitted. That also explained why some of the timelines might appear quite lengthy. The update to the Identity and Access Management System was ready, but for practical reasons its launch was being held over until major Union events and meetings, including the current Council session, were concluded.

1.9 With regard to indicators and benchmarks, the key performance indicators (KPIs) set out in the annex to Document C24/52 were based on common measures used by various types of corporate entity. Some would be measured using numerical data and others using employee surveys, as appropriate. The extent to which benchmarking could be employed would be assessed based on the availability of similar indicators from other relevant organizations both within and outside the United Nations system, and the indicators modified accordingly. Once appropriate targets had been set in future months, dashboards based on the KPIs would make information on the progress of the overall plan available to the membership on an ongoing basis.

1.10 The Performance Management Toolkit had already provided managers with tools to carry out performance appraisals under the existing performance-management system, which was set to be reviewed and modified with a focus on providing incentives to staff to perform at a higher level. Work to improve the performance of the Service Desk without increasing its budget was ongoing. The significance of the accountability framework was reflected both in the initiative-by-initiative transformation process and in the general governance review of rules and procedures and internal justice and accountability; work to align the oversight framework with the other accountability frameworks was already ongoing.

1.11 In respect of the streamlining of the recruitment process, he said that the transformation process aimed to speed up time-to-hiring through improvements in internal operations, without altering or impinging on the actual recruitment rules and procedures or limiting applicant numbers.

1.12 The Council **noted** the progress achieved to date in the transformation process and the financial implications set out in § 7 of Document C24/52, along with the roadmap in Document C24/73.

1.13 The Secretary-General said that she wished to thank councillors for their comments and their support for the transformation process. Stakeholder engagement, which was key to the process, included both internal engagement with all staff, management and the Coordination Committee as well as external engagement with Member States and with United Nations system partners in the context of UN 2.0. Requests for further clarity in future presentations, more reporting, clearer KPIs and the identification and management of risks had been noted.

# 2 Strategy for the coordination of efforts among the three Sectors of the Union (Document [C24/27](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0027/en))

2.1 A representative of the General Secretariat introduced Document C24/27 on the strategy for coordination of efforts among the three Sectors of the Union and the General Secretariat, which reported on the implementation of Resolution 191 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and on the actions taken towards the organization of work to best ensure governance of inter-Sectoral coordination, notably through the Inter-Sectoral Coordination Task Force (ISC-TF). The document was linked to the annual report of the Union (Document C24/35) and the report on the implementation of the “One ITU” concept (Document C24/17). It also included a briefing on the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) meetings held in 2024 under the chairmanship of Mr Fabio Bigi.

2.2 The Chair of the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) gave an update on the work of ISCG. The group continued to work on the thematic priorities of accessibility, climate change and remote participation, with a coordinator appointed for each theme. At its most recent meeting, it had agreed to appoint a fourth coordinator to cover the theme of sustainable digital transformation. Specific issues addressed by the group include harmonization of the ITU website; the tables mapping the activities of the three Sectors and the General Secretariat and the resolutions of the different conferences and assemblies; and improving mechanisms for the Sectors to comment on the strategic plan.

2.3 Several councillors highlighted the importance of coordination and expressed appreciation for the work completed to date and support for its continuation. The mapping exercise offered a broader and clearer image of resolutions from the three Sectors that would help elaborate a proposed strategy to address the growing number of areas of mutual interest, avoid duplication and facilitate the work of CWG-FHR.

2.4 Councillors further highlighted the importance of inter-Sector coordination in each ITU initiative, including green digital action, the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Transformation and bridging the standardization gap. One councillor urged that the group focusing on sustainable digital transformation be strengthened and its work made more visible on the website. One councillor requested that the themes be matched with KPIs and the risks that would arise from a lack of coordination among the three Sectors also be identified. There should be further analysis of the role of the regional offices in the coordination of work. Some councillors referred to the work still being carried out in silos: with better coordination of efforts across the three Sectors, duplication could be avoided, and funding and resources could be shared more effectively. Consideration should be given to coordination between ISC-TF and ISCG for better integration of their work.

2.5 Replying to councillors’ comments and questions, the representative of the General Secretariat said that full information on areas of common interest identified through the mapping exercises was visible on the ITU website from the General Secretariat homepage under the tab “Intersectoral coordination”. On the roles of the regional offices, the directors of the regional offices were members of ISC-TF and thus fully involved in the discussions. Concerning risk, mitigation measures to alleviate the risks related to inter-Sector coordination had been defined in Document C24/49 on strengthening risk management and the internal control system. The question of a unified platform for remote meetings had been reviewed in ISCG; further information could be found in the report on remote participation in line with the implementation of Resolution 167 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) in Document C24/61.

2.6 The Council **noted** Document C24/27.

2.7 The Deputy Secretary-General noted with appreciation the feedback received on inter-Sector coordination and the interest demonstrated by councillors in the topic. The task was not easy, as reflected in the growing list of resolutions and corresponding list of common themes on the ITU website. ISC-TF was functioning well and its work had been streamlined, with a clear composition, a focused agenda and good collaboration with ISCG.

# 3 Strengthening ITU’s regional presence (Documents [C24/25](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0025/en), [C24/79](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0079/en), [C24/98](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0098/en) and [C24/100](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0100/en))

3.1 The Deputy to the Director of BDT, a.i., said that Document C24/25 reported on the contribution of ITU’s regional presence to the fulfilment of the Union’s mandate. It provided information on regional work towards implementation of ITU’s strategic plan, the Kigali Action Plan and regional initiatives; as well as on the implementation of activities on the ground by the ITU field offices, details of which could be found in §§ 3.3-3.8 of the document for BR, TSB and the General Secretariat and in the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group document referenced in § 3.2 for BDT. The ITU regional and area offices continued to play an important dual role in implementation and follow-up. Six ITU regional development forums held in 2023 and 2024 had attracted over 1 500 stakeholders worldwide, providing an effective platform to discuss implementation of ITU initiatives. An important section of the forums had been the P2C coalition matchmaking roundtables where stakeholders had made pledges.

3.2 The councillor from Australia introduced a contribution, contained in Document C24/79, on promoting efficiency and effectiveness in the operations of regional and area offices. The regional and area offices were at the forefront of ITU’s work and crucial to delivering country-level assistance and capacity-building projects in all regions, so their continued improvement was essential to ensure that the maximum amount of funding and resources reached the ground and must be a core component of ITU’s transformation plans. In the document submitted, Australia offered its experience to provide some focus areas for examination by the secretariat. Australia further warmly welcomed the related Documents C24/98 and C24/100 submitted by Mexico.

3.3 The councillor from Mexico introduced Document C24/98 which, recognizing the important need to strengthen the regional presence, put forward a series of proposals relating to the level and allocation of funding for the regional offices; increasing their autonomy and decentralized decision-making, in particular in regard to the implementation of projects, events and activities; the technical specialization of staff in the regional offices; the identification of focal points for the three Sectors in the regional offices, reporting to the regional director; establishing expectations for the regional offices; and increasing participation in, and coordination and communication of, regional office activities, projects and initiatives.

3.4 A number of councillors and one observer, citing examples, emphasized the value of field offices and their contribution to local projects and programmes in support of meaningful connectivity and digital transformation.

3.5 Councillors expressed broad support for the call to strengthen ITU’s regional presence and for the contributions from Australia and Mexico. A number of councillors supported the call for greater autonomy, noting that improvements in operational efficiency would flow from better communication and processes between headquarters and regional offices. Several concurred that regional offices should have the capacity to undertake project execution and to address the specific needs of countries in their region. Improvements required included KPIs, proper and transparent financial reporting and sufficient funding, including specifically for the area offices. One councillor recommended that guidelines be established for wider cooperation between ITU and countries to strengthen cooperation and potentially attract more voluntary contributions for project planning and implementation. Attention was drawn to the fact some regions would benefit from more subregional collaboration, and to the particular challenges posed by communicating in regions where more than one ITU official language was spoken.

3.6 Councillors supported the call to mainstream the “One ITU” concept in the delivery of services in the regional offices, with greater emphasis on ITU-R and ITU-T issues. One councillor called for mobilization of the Sectors of the Union within regional offices in order to enhance the role played by the Bureaux, although it was understood that there would be cost implications associated with such proposals. Another supported the view that all three Sectors should be equally represented in the regional offices and sought to understand the process by which staff were located to the various offices.

3.7 Councillors recalled that Resolution 25 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) stipulated that ITU should review the regional presence when requested to do so by the Council, and one councillor, supported by two others, recalled that such a request had been made and formally recorded at Council-23 but had seemingly not yet been acted upon. A review would have been timely and in line with the management’s transformation goals. It would be good to have an update on the status of the review and to reflect a firm commitment in the summary record of Council-24 to completing the review and reporting to Council-25. If possible, earlier reporting to the relevant Council working group(s) would be desirable.

3.8 The councillor from India expressed pride in the innovation centre opened in the area office in New Delhi. Aspects that required the attention of ITU management included a failure to appoint a head of the ITU Area Office in New Delhi for over one and a half years, which had impacted the number of activities that had been put in place. Although a number and range of welcome activities had taken place in the Innovation Centre, including on e-waste management, digital health and early warning systems, more were needed.

3.9 The councillor from Poland, speaking on behalf of 16 countries, said that he understood that the Moscow office planned to organize a workshop in cooperation with a third party which had supported activity in breach of the Charter of the United Nations. The regional offices represented ITU as a whole in the respective regions and it was crucial that their activities should be in line with the values and principles of the Union and the Charter of the United Nations. He asked the Secretary-General to ensure that regional offices adhere strictly to ITU internal guidelines when selecting partners for events and that due diligence be exercised, in particular when planning the involvement of third parties. The councillor from Bulgaria associated her delegation with the position expressed by the 16 countries.

3.10 The Chair said that a representative of BDT would respond to the questions raised at the following plenary meeting.

3.11 It was so **agreed**.

The Secretary-General: The Chair:

D. BOGDAN-MARTIN F. SAUVAGE

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_