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|  | **Document C24/121-E** |
| **29 August 2024** |
| **Original: English** |
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| **SUMMARY RECORD****OF THE****ELEVENTH PLENARY MEETING** |
| Friday, 14 June 2024, from 0905 to 1150 hours**Chair**: Mr F. SAUVAGE (France) |

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|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Report of the Chair of CWG-WSIS&SDG on the outcomes of the 39th and 40th meetings (*continued*) | [C24/8(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0008/en), [C24/DT/6(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-240604-TD-0006/en) |
| 2 | Report on Resolution 214 (Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on artificial intelligence technologies and ICTs (*continued*) | [C24/67](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0067/en), [C24/85(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0085/en), [C24/DT/6(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-240604-TD-0006/en) |
| 3 | Conclusions from the third meeting of the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group on the use of the term “chair” instead of “chairman” in ITU-T Recommendations | [C24/65](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0065/en), [C24/84](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0084/en) |
| 4 | List of chairs and vice-chairs of the Council working groups and expert groups | [C24/21(Rev.5)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0021/en) |
| 5 | Dates and duration of the 2025, 2026 and 2027 sessions of the ITU Council and Council working group clusters | [C24/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0002/en) |
| 6 | Schedule of future conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union for 2024-2027 | [C24/37](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0037/en) |
| 7 | Obsolete Council resolutions and decisions  | [C24/3](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0003/en) |

# 1 Report of the Chair of CWG-WSIS&SDG on the outcomes of the 39th and 40th meetings (*continued*) (Documents [C24/8(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0008/en) and [C24/DT/6(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-240604-TD-0006/en))

1.1 The Chair of CWG-WSIS&SDG introduced Document C24/DT/6(Rev.1), which contained proposed amendments to Resolution 1332 (C11, last amended C23), on ITU’s role in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Consensus on the revised resolution had been reached in the informal consultations initiated at the sixth plenary meeting. The key WSIS-related amendments were reflected in *resolves* 5 and 6 of the draft resolution and under *instructs the Council Working Group on the World Summit on the Information Society and SDGs*. Other WSIS-related modifications served merely to update the resolution to take into account relevant recent developments, including the holding of the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024.

1.2 The councillor from China informed the Council that as a result of the informal discussions initiated at the fourth plenary meeting in relation to Document C24/85 on the need for a member-driven mechanism to address artificial intelligence (AI) in ITU’s work, a compromise had been reached. Consequently, amendments had been incorporated into the revised Resolution 1332 in Document C24/DT/6(Rev.1), which also addressed outstanding issues concerning the plenary’s agenda item on AI. The amendments in question were to be found primarily in *instructs the Secretary-General*9 and §§ i) and j) of the Terms of Reference of CWG-WSIS&SDG and provided, *inter alia*, for reporting to the Council and CWG‑WSIS&SDG by the Secretary-General; guidance on facilitating capacity building on AI; facilitating inputs from the membership; and monitoring actions taken by ITU to enhance inter-Sectoral coordination, regional empowerment and membership engagement in relation to AI.

1.3 A number of councillors acknowledged the efforts made to achieve consensus on the proposed modifications, highlighting the support of all Member States for the Union’s AI-related work and the common desire for collaboration among members. A councillor and an observer expressed their preference for establishing a CWG but indicated their support for the consensus reached through informal discussions on the agreed mechanisms.

1.4 One councillor emphasized that by enhancing membership involvement in its work on AI, the Union, as the United Nations specialized agency for ICT, could promote the benefits of technology to all human beings and address the risks of AI. Rather than duplicating efforts, the mechanisms in the proposed amendments would strengthen and unite the Union as “One ITU” in its AI-related work.

1.5 A further councillor, emphasizing the need for States to further enhance their efforts in navigating discussions on AI, underscored the necessity to disseminate these discussions and strategies to the regional and area offices. This ensures that ITU guidance reaches them, enabling them to advocate for and implement inclusive approaches. It was hoped that more regional programmes relating to AI and other emerging technologies would be launched in every regional cluster.

1.6 One councillor pointed out that it had been recognized by delegates in the informal discussions that it was important for the secretariat to have the requisite flexibility to manage timelines. Further, the reporting requirements introduced must not impose restrictions or undue time pressures that would hamper the secretariat's direct contributions and reporting to the United Nations. Another councillor agreed, also highlighting that reporting by the secretariat to the Council and through the CWG-WSIS&SDG was needed in order to keep the Council updated on ITU’s contribution to AI governance processes, and that it must strike a balance between, on the one hand, the needs of the Council in terms of information and engagement and, on the other, sufficient flexibility for the secretariat to perform its duties effectively. A further councillor said that the Council should remain mindful of the challenges of accommodating the already heavy agendas of the Council working group cluster, particularly for smaller administrations and developing countries.

1.7 In light of the discussion, the Chair suggested that the Council adopt the revision to Council Resolution 1332 (C11, last amended C23) contained in Document C24/DT/6(Rev.1), while taking into account the comments formulated by councillors and observers.

1.8 It was so **agreed**.

# 2 Report on Resolution 214 (Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on artificial intelligence technologies and ICTs (*continued*) (Documents [C24/67](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0067/en), [C24/85(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0085/en) and [C24/DT/6(Rev.1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-240604-TD-0006/en))

2.1 Noting that the consensus outcome of the informal discussions on AI led by the Councillor from China had already been taken into account in the approval of Document C24/DT/6(Rev.1) under the previous agenda item (§ 1 above), the Chair said that it only remained for the Council to note the report in Document C24/67.

2.2 It was so **agreed**.

# 3 Conclusions from the third meeting of the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group on the use of the term “chair” instead of “chairman” in ITU-T Recommendations (Documents [C24/65](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0065/en) and [C24/84](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0084/en))

3.1 The Deputy to the Director of TSB said that Document C24/65 informed the Council of the outcome of the third meeting of the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) held on 22-26 January, advising the Director of TSB to seek instructions from the Council on the use of the term “chair” instead of “chairman” in new or revised ITU-T Recommendations in the English language.

3.2 The observer for the Russian Federation, introducing Document C24/84, said that the aim of the contribution was to identify a solution for discussing and deciding on the advisability of introducing terminology that was not contained in the ITU Constitution and Convention, replacing the terms "chairman” and “vice-chairman". Those terms were widely used in the basic texts of the Union and, according to a note to the Constitution and Convention, the language used in the basic instruments of the Union was to be considered as gender neutral. PP-22 had not instructed the Council to revise the basic instruments. During Council-23, no Member State had proposed a review of the terminology in the instruments and no decision had been taken on the matter; although several councillors had suggested that it should be followed up by the Council Working Group on the use of the six languages of the Union (CWG‑LANG). Notwithstanding, without the Member States’ agreement, the terms “chair” and “vice-chair” had been introduced in ITU working documents. The Russian Federation considered that the abrogation of Council Decision 500 (C2000) and the related contents of the seventh and last plenary meeting of the ITU Council (Document [C23/112](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0112/en)) were not justification for amending the ITU English-Language Style Guide and subsequently replacing the terms "chairman” and “vice-chairman" with "chair” and “vice-chair" in ITU documents. Any changes to terms that were not accepted by Member States were not in line with the Constitution and Convention and undermined the legitimacy of the documents in which they were used. He therefore proposed that existing and revised texts should remain unchanged with regard to the use of the terms "chairman” and “vice-chairman” until a corresponding decision was adopted by the Plenipotentiary Conference. Furthermore, in order to identify a solution, the Council should instruct CWG-LANG to study the matter on the basis of contributions from Member States, with a view to preparing a report and possible recommendations for PP-26.

3.3 One councillor, noting that the Council had already concluded on use of the term “chair” at Council-23 and that the legal and moral justification for that decision had not changed, such that there was no need for further debate in the Council, CWG-LANG or elsewhere, and urging the Council to uphold that conclusion so as to avoid discrediting itself and putting ITU unacceptably out of step with United Nations guidelines on gender-neutral language, proposed that the Council address the request in Document C24/65 very straightforwardly by approving the following conclusion:

 “In accordance with the abrogation of Decision 500 and the corresponding update to the ITU English-Language Style Guide, the Council instructs the Directors of the Bureaux to henceforth use “chair” instead of “chairman”.”

3.4 Many councillors agreed with that view and supported the proposal. They said that the Council had already concluded on the matter at its last session, and there were no grounds to re-open the debate on what was an unambiguous and very positive decision. Re-discussing the validity of the previous decision would be a waste of time and an obstacle to progress. Use of the term “chair” was in line with modern, gender-neutral language used in the United Nations and worldwide and would help ensure consistency with other United Nations organizations in terms of documentation and communications and make ITU more modern, accessible and understandable for the outside world. More importantly, it was imperative as part of ITU’s commitment to genuine gender equality: the gender-insensitive term “chairman” gave the impression that functions were reserved for men at a time when ITU was making a concerted effort to increase the number of women in leadership posts. Gender-neutral language aligned with the organization’s values of equality and inclusivity. There was no legal impediment. As “chairman” and “vice-chairman” were not among the terms specifically defined in the basic texts of the Union, there was constitutional flexibility to use the fully equivalent terms “chair” and vice-chair” in order to reflect changes in language usage in an evolving world. The linguistic change would not affect the legal norms or their implementation. The change pertained only to the English language and did not affect the other official languages.

3.5 Four councillors, while wholeheartedly supporting all ITU efforts to ensure gender inclusivity, expressed concerns that what was essentially a procedural matter should not be being discussed at the level of the Council, but referred back to TSAG. The other two Sectors and Bureaux did not appear to have a problem, so the matter should be treated in the advisory groups. The language in the basic instruments should be upheld. Moreover, the change was unnecessary in view of the footnote which appeared at the beginning of the Constitution and the Convention to the effect that “the language used in the basic instruments of the Union (Constitution and Convention) is to be considered as gender neutral”. The term “chair” posed problems of intelligibility and translatability for the other languages and risked introducing ambiguity. The change to “chair” would require a proposal to the Plenipotentiary Conference to modify the Constitution and Convention.

3.6 Responding to a request from two councillors, the Legal Counsel gave the opinion that the debates during the previous session of the Council showed clearly that the intention of Council-23 was to opt for more modern, neutral language in ITU texts and therefore use of the word "chair". Use of the word "chair" in new ITU documents did not create any legal conflict with the term "chairman" found in the Constitution and Convention, because both terms had exactly the same meaning, and their use was simply a case of updating the linguistic terminology. It should also be pointed out that the drafters of the footnotes to the Constitution and Convention had never expressed the intention to prohibit the updating of other ITU documents to make sure that such documents were brought into line with more modern linguistic standards. The transition from "chairman" to "chair" was simply a linguistic update, and the change did not alter in any way the legal interpretation of ITU texts. The transition to the term "chair" was not contrary to the Constitution or to the Convention.

3.7 The Chair, responding to a question from the councillor from Saudi Arabia, said that the Council had the authority to take the decision to use “chair” in new ITU documents; indeed, it had already done so at its previous session. Saudi Arabia’s concerns would be noted in the summary record.

3.8 In conclusion of the discussion, the Chair noted that there was no support for the proposal in Document C24/84. He recalled that at its 2023 session the Council had decided to abrogate Decision 500 (C2000) in order to use the neutral term “chair” in English to designate the function and role and to apply it in ITU documents in the future, without retroactive effect. In regard to the request from TSAG in Document C24/65, he noted the broad support for the proposal put forward during the discussion and took it that it could be adopted.

3.9 It was so **agreed**.

3.10 Accordingly, in accordance with the abrogation of Decision 500 (C2000) and the corresponding update to the ITU English-Language Style Guide, the Council **instructed** the Directors of the Bureaux to henceforth use “chair” instead of “chairman”.

# 4 List of chairs and vice-chairs of the Council working groups and expert groups (Document [C24/21(Rev.5)](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0021/en))

4.1 The Secretary of the Plenary introduced Document C24/21(Rev.5), containing the list of chairs and vice-chairs of the Council working groups (CWGs) and expert groups (EGs), drawn up pursuant to Council Resolution 1333 (C11, last amended C16). The newly established Informal Expert Group (IEG) on the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF) and CWG for elaboration of the Strategic and Financial Plans (CWG-SFP) had been included.

4.2 Appointment of the new candidates for the posts of chair and vice-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on WTPF; vice-chairs of the Council Working Group for elaboration of the Strategic and Financial Plans; vice-chair of the Council Working Group on Child Online Protection; vice-chair of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources; vice‑chair of the Expert Group on the International Telecommunication Regulations; and vice-chair of the Expert Group on Decision 482 were **approved**.

4.3 In regard to the vice-chair of the Council Working Group on use of the six official languages (CWG‑LANG), the Chair understood that, following informal consultations with the different regions, no consensus had been reached.

4.4 Many councillors, one speaking after gathering the views of all the Council Member States from the Europe region, and an observer said that, in order to maintain a constructive approach on the many important issues addressed by the Council and the Union, the work of the CWGs must be guided by the principles of sincere cooperation and trust, and that a candidate from a Member State whose actions were in clear breach of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the overall mission of ITU should not be accepted. In the context of the large-scale destruction of telecommunication infrastructure in Ukraine brought about by the actions of the Russian Federation, the appointment of a candidate from the Russian Federation to a vice-chair position on CWG-LANG would harm the Union and should not be approved. As CWG-LANG remained open to the participation of any country, that course of action would not undermine the work of CWG-LANG or affect the work of ITU in the Russian language.

4.5 Many other councillors and an observer considered that the appointment of the candidate from the Russian Federation should be approved. Politicization of ITU, which was a technical organization, must be avoided, in the interests of understanding, cooperation and compromise. Vice-chairs were appointed as individuals and should not be subject to what were effectively punitive measures for situations beyond their control. There was no legal basis for excluding candidates from one Member State; on the contrary, such an approach ran counter to the stipulations of the Constitution, Convention, resolutions, decisions and other rules and guidelines which directed that candidatures were to be evaluated on the sole criteria of competence, experience, gender parity, equitable geographical representation and promoting the participation of developing countries. On the basis of those objective criteria, the Russian candidate, who should be judged on merit, was clearly qualified and competent, especially as the vice-chair’s role was to represent the Russian language. A number of councillors sought clarification regarding what negative impact there might be on the work of CWG‑LANG of failing to appoint a vice-chair for the Russian language. An observer, citing a precedent in ITU‑R, suggested that the issue might be resolved by appointing “acting vice‑chairs”.

4.6 The observer for the Russian Federation made the following statement: <http://council.itu.int/2024/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2024/07/C24-Statement-Russian-Federation_PL11-e.docx>.

4.7 The Chair suggested that further informal discussion be conducted and that the matter be brought back to the plenary later that day.

4.8 It was so **agreed**.

# 5 Dates and duration of the 2025, 2026 and 2027 sessions of the ITU Council and Council working group clusters (Document [C24/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0002/en))

5.1 The Secretary of the Plenary said that Document C24/2 contained a draft new decision for approval by the Council on the dates and duration of the 2025, 2026 and 2027 sessions of the Council and of the CWG and EG clusters for those three years. It should be noted that, given the new schedule for the headquarters project, it would be possible to accommodate the Council sessions and CWG/EG meetings in the ITU buildings.

5.2 One councillor, noting a clash with a major national festival, requested that consideration be given to advancing the first CWG/EG cluster in 2027 by one week. Another councillor, noting that there was a general preference for holding Council sessions in June rather than July where possible, requested that consideration be given to advancing the 2025 session of the Council. That request was supported by a second councillor. In addition, noting the very high prices of hotels in Geneva, she wondered whether some arrangement could be found between the organizations and hotels.

5.3 The Secretary of the Plenary undertook to examine the two requests to modify the dates with the secretariat and report back to the plenary later that day. She said that the secretariat would also investigate the possibility of negotiating preferential rates with hotels.

5.4 The Chair suggested that the item be taken up again at the following plenary meeting.

5.5 It was so **agreed**.

# 6 Schedule of future conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union for 2024-2027 (Document [C24/37](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0037/en))

6.1 A representative of the General Secretariat said that Document C24/37 listed the ITU conferences, assemblies and meetings planned for the four-year period 2024-2027, in line with the ITU Sectors’ and General Secretariat’s schedule of activities. The calendar took due account of the various resolutions of the Plenipotentiary Conference, including Resolution 77 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and the principles contained in Resolution 111 (Rev. Dubai, 2018). In some instances, the proposed dates and periods remained indicative and might be subject to change, given the long time-frame and the Sector study group cycles.

6.2 Replying to a question from a councillor, she said that the name of the WSIS Forum would be made consistent throughout the schedule.

6.3 Replying to a question from another councillor, the Director of BDT said that tentative dates had been set for all the regional preparatory meetings for the upcoming World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-25) but were subject to confirmation with potential host countries. Ongoing discussions with the regional telecommunication organizations were at an advanced stage, and the confirmed dates would be posted on the BDT website shortly.

6.4 The Council **noted** Document C24/37.

# 7 Obsolete Council resolutions and decisions (Document [C24/3](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0003/en))

7.1 The Secretary of the Plenary, recalling that, after each ordinary session of the Council, the resolutions and decisions which had been implemented and/or become obsolete were abrogated and consequently deleted from the volume of resolutions and decisions of the Council, said that Document C24/3 contained the list of obsolete resolutions and decisions for abrogation by Council‑24.

7.2 The Council **approved** the list of Council resolutions and decisions to be abrogated set out in Document C24/3.

The Secretary-General: The Chair:

D. BOGDAN-MARTIN F. SAUVAGE

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