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| **Agenda item: ADM 3** | **Document C25/60-E** |
| **19 May 2025** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| BUSINESS CONTINUITY MODALITIES FOR ITU MEETINGS 2028-2029 | |
| **Purpose**  This report is submitted at the request of the Chair of the Council Working Group on financial and human resources (CWG-FHR) following the presentation of an initial document on business continuity modalities for ITU meetings during the construction period of the new Varembé building in 2028 (and potentially in 2029) at the twentieth meeting of CWG-FHR (Document [CWG-FHR-20/9](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGFHR20-C-0009/en)).  At that meeting, further information was requested on all available options, including a mapping of ITU meetings in terms of modality and the feasibility of using the conference facilities of other international organizations in Geneva (Document [CWG-FHR-20/32](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGFHR20-C-0032/en)). This report aims to enable the Council to provide clear guidance for the way forward on business continuity for meetings, including the acceptability of different modalities, noting that the Palexpo option requires financial commitment by the end of 2025.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **consider** the report and **provide** **guidance** on the way forward.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Convening platforms.  **Financial implications**  All business continuity options in Geneva require funding which is not covered by current financial plans. Estimated costs for holding all ITU meetings in 2028 include CHF 4.6 M for Palexpo, Geneva.  **References**  *Document* [*CWG-FHR-20/9*](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGFHR20-C-0009/en)*; Council Decision* [*640 (C24)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0132/en)*;* [*Summary Report of the 20th meeting of CWG‑FHR*](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGFHR20-C-0032/en) | |

# 1 Executive summary

Based on current budget estimates and proposals for the level of the contributory unit ([C25/54](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0054/en)), no additional funds at present are expected to be available within the financial plan 2028-2031 to enable ITU meetings to be held in Palexpo facilities in 2028 and 2029. The contract with Palexpo at the preferential rates set out in this document must be signed by 31 December 2025. While some meetings may be held on an ad hoc basis in Geneva in a variety of potential venues, there availability cannot be guaranteed earlier than six months in advance. In addition, a budget allocation would also be necessary for the reservation of rooms and services on an ad hoc basis. No estimates of rental costs are available at this stage.

Alternative options include the ITU Meetings Hub proposal, which would require Council confirmation, and holding fully virtual meetings for an exceptional period, requiring further Council guidance.

As the building project progresses, the secretariat will be able to more accurately estimate the limitations of the use of ITU headquarter premises for meetings, including more exact details of the periods when the ITU headquarter premises will be unavailable and of the disturbances that may need to be accepted if meetings are held there during the period of construction of the New Varembé building.

The secretariat will develop a detailed business continuity plan, including costs based on the preferences identified and guidance provided by this Council.

# 2 Background

Approximately 60 to 65 meetings are held each year in ITU headquarters, supplemented by additional capacity in CICG/CCV. These meetings comprise technical meetings for all sectors, Advisory Group meetings, Council, and Council Working Groups.

New building project

The project milestones set out in Decision 640 on the new Varembé building project establish 2028 as the initial year for the execution of the project. Provided that all activities continue in accordance with the schedule, ITU meeting rooms will remain available until the end of 2027. In 2028 (and potentially in 2029), however, meeting rooms in the Tower, Montbrillant and Varembé may not be available due to construction work. As the construction schedule cannot be confirmed before finalization of planning (mid-2026), it should be assumed that these meeting rooms may remain unavailable throughout 2029.

CICG

CICG will be unavailable for use throughout 2028 due to renovation work currently planned to begin in 2028 and will have limited availability at best in 2029.

ITU has previously benefited from the host country’s financial subsidy, allowing international organizations to rent meeting space at CICG free of charge. However, ITU was informed in March 2025 that rental fees at a reduced rate will now be charged for all new bookings at CICG with immediate effect. Meeting spaces will be charged a rental fee on a sliding scale from 5 per cent to 20 per cent of the total rental cost, in addition to a fixed cost amount and a percentage of the fixed technical services in rooms rented.

Given the large number of meetings per year, holding all ITU technical meetings on an ad hoc basis in different host countries is not feasible at an operational or logistical level at this scale.

# 3 Mapping of ITU meetings

Approximately 60 to 65 technical meetings are held at ITU headquarters each year. The number and nature of meetings vary across sectors and departments but follow a broad four-year cycle dependent on the timing of major conferences or assemblies (PP, WRC, WTSA, WTDC).

A detailed analysis of these meetings, undertaken at the request of CWG-FHR, looked at the number and size of rooms, technical requirements, the typical number of participants, meeting modalities, and any specific additional requirements. The list of meetings expected to be held in 2028, based on 2024 data, is available as part of the information for potential ITU Meetings Hub hosts [here](https://council.itu.int/2025/en/hosting-itu-meetings/).

Meetings in this list include many that are statutory, that is, mandated by sector constitutional documents, with decision-making functions in some cases, as well as strategically important in feeding into assemblies or conferences. Meetings such as ITU-T Focus Groups and workshops or the ITU-R Space Sustainability Forum are not included.

It should be noted that the next WTSA will take place in 2028, all ITU-T meetings, including TSAG, will be held in the first eight months of the year in preparation.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Council and Article 4.51 of the Convention, the ITU Council must be held physically once a year in Geneva.

# 4 Business continuity modalities

The following possible modalities for holding ITU meetings in 2028 and 2029 have been identified.

## 4.1 Holding meetings in Geneva

Palexpo

Thenewly extended Palexpo conference centre offers the most practical alternative to hold the majority of ITU meetings in one location in Geneva in 2028 (and 2029 if necessary).

Palexpo has provided a quote of CHF 558 980 for the rental of 12 meeting rooms on an exclusive basis, managed autonomously by ITU, for a period of 12 months. Additional rooms will be required and may be rented, subject to availability, with a discount of 40% on standard costs.

Additional costs would be incurred for technical services, security, cleaning, and any change to room set up (from classroom to boardroom style, for example). Indicative costs for cleaning services provided by Palexpo are CHF 260 per day; cleaning services may be outsourced if required. Security services are costed at CHF 58 per hour and must be provided by one of Palexpo’s three official partners. These costings are based on 2024 rates and are indicative only.

Indicative costs of hosting all meetings in Palexpo for one year

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| Item | Cost (CHF)/year |
| Rental (12 meeting rooms) | 558 980 |
| Rental for additional rooms (subject to availability) | 500 000 |
| Technical services & room set-up | 3 000 000 |
| Security | 500 000 |
| Cleaning | 60 000 |
| **Total** | **4 618 980** |

Terms and conditions

Palexpo requires any contract for 2028 to be signed by 31 December 2025 at the latest, and for 2029, by 31 December 2026 at the latest. Cancellation costs of 100 per cent apply after the date of signature.

Other international agencies as venues

There is increased pressure on meeting spaces in international Geneva in the period up to 2030 as several major construction projects are taking place in parallel, demand is very high and very few meeting rooms are available for external use.

In general, other international agencies do not accept external reservations for meeting spaces or can only make rooms available on a limited ad hoc basis at short notice. It is difficult to make use of facilities in other international agencies within Geneva given the lead time needed for delegates to plan their attendance, security requirements linked to differences in membership between organizations, and differences in infrastructure and services offered.

WHO and UNOG may have a limited number of rooms available for rent in 2028 on an ad hoc basis. Confirmation of availability can be provided at a maximum of six months in advance of meetings.

UNOG

As part of the ongoing renovation of its conference facilities, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) has built a temporary conference structure which may be available for lease and use by ITU as from 2028.

The structure offers a meeting space for 600 participants with the possibility of reconfiguring as 3 × 200 participant rooms. It is fully fitted with interpreter booths, audiovisual and technical equipment to enable webcasting, captioning and remote participation. However, even if leased for an entire year, the full structure could accommodate only a limited number of ITU meetings during 2028 as it can be used only for one meeting at a time, noting that sessions of an individual meeting cannot be split between venues due to the distances involved. For this reason, the majority of rooms at Palexpo would therefore still be required.

The UNOG space could be rented for individual meetings on an ad hoc basis, but confirmation of availability can only be made six months in advance of the meeting.

A number of details on the use of the UNOG structure remain open:

– Availability: the UNOG General Assembly will decide on the budget for the renovation project in June 2025. The decision (whether to go ahead with the full renovation project or rescope) will affect the timelines of the renovation and therefore when the temporary structure could be released for ITU between the end of 2027 and mid-2028.

– Cost: full details of the cost of leasing the structure, including the use of all equipment, technical services, cleaning and security services, are yet to be provided by UNOG.

– Additional costs: the fees for dismantling the structure would pass to ITU if it took on the lease of the full structure and are estimated at CHF 0.5 M.

– Security: the feasibility and cost of establishing a separate security process via the Peace Gate and secure perimeter to the temporary structure to be determined.

Additional sources of funding for meetings in Geneva

Call for voluntary contributions

Following the presentation to CWG-FHR of Document [CWG-FHR-20/9](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGFHR20-C-0009/en) on business continuity modalities, a circular letter was sent to all Member States and Sector Members on 28 March 2025, requesting expressions of interest in providing voluntary contributions to support holding events in Geneva during the construction of the new ITU headquarters building. As of 23 April 2025, the closing date for expressions of interest, no responses have been received.

Switzerland

Switzerland, ITU’s host country, has indicated its commitment to providing support to ITU during the period of CICG renovation within the limits of available resources to enable meetings to be held in Geneva. However, Switzerland was not able to give any guarantee at this stage.

# 5 ITU Meetings Hub

An initial call for expressions of interest in hosting physical ITU meetings during the construction period of the new ITU headquarters was sent to all Member States in October and November 2021 (Circular Letters [CL-21/47 and CL-21/47-Addendum](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-SG-CIR-0047/en)). This was followed by information sessions at Council in July 2023 and at CWG-FHR in February 2025, providing further details (<https://council.itu.int/2025/en/hosting-itu-meetings/>). Several Member States subsequently requested more comprehensive, tailored proposals with indicative costings. The expression of interest process remains open and ongoing, with concrete discussions continuing with China, Hungary, and Qatar. No further planning or decision can take place without the Council’s approval of the concept of the ITU Meetings Hub.

Concept

The basic concept of the ITU Meetings Hub is for a Host Country to cover the cost of venue, facilities, technical services and running of the Meetings Hub, in addition to ITU staff costs onsite, in line with Resolution 5 of the Plenipotentiary Conference and the respective Sector resolutions.

It may be possible for one Host Country to hold all 60 ITU technical meetings in one year, or meetings may be split between two or more Host Countries.

Assessment and selection

Assessment of suitability for an ITU Meeting Hub is based on accessibility of location, the readiness of venues and facilities, proven experience with international events of this nature, visa facilitation and costs. If the option of the ITU Meetings Hub as outlined above is accepted by the Council, the secretariat will establish the process with a timeline including end dates for expressions of interest, formal proposals from interested parties and assessment, with full transparency on the selection process and criteria. The final proposal will then be presented to Council 2026 for final approval.

# 6 Virtual meetings

Given the availability of platforms open to all and the familiarity of Member State delegates, ITU staff and technical support with online meetings following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is technically feasible to hold fully virtual technical meetings.

Further reference to the regulatory framework on holding fully virtual meetings is provided in the Draft guidelines on the management of fully virtual and physical meetings with remote participation is provided in Annex B to Document [C25/50](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0050/en), submitted for the endorsement of Council 2025.

Current practice allows for fully virtual meetings to be held for up to 3 hours per day around 1200 p.m. Geneva time. This will impact upon the flexibility and length of technical meetings, which are typically held over 5 to 8 days.

# 7 Conclusion

Based on current estimates, no additional funds are expected to be available within the financial plan to allow all ITU meetings to be held in Palexpo in 2028 and at present no extra-budgetary resources have been identified. The contract with Palexpo at the preferential rates set out in this document must be signed by 31 December 2025.

A combination of modalities between Palexpo/UNOG, Meetings Hubs and virtual meetings may be possible with the requirement of additional funding. However, the loss of economies of scale may make individual modalities more expensive and/or complicated. It may be possible to hold meetings on an entirely ad hoc basis in Geneva, combining Palexpo, UNOG, WHO, and other available space, but understanding there is no guarantee of availability earlier than six months in advance.

**An ITU Meetings Hub (or Hubs) hosted by a Member State or a number of Member States may be considered by Council as a viable option for hosting ITU meetings**. As noted previously, **hosting all ITU meetings fully virtually remains a fallback option.**

As the building project progresses, the secretariat will be able to more accurately estimate the limitations of the use of ITU headquarter premises for meetings, including more exact periods of unavailability of the ITU headquarter premises and disturbances that may need to be accepted if meetings are held there during the period of construction of the New Varembé building.

Council guidance

The Council is requested to provide guidance on acceptable options for holding ITU meetings in 2028 (and potentially in 2029, dependent on finalization of construction schedules). This may include confirmation of the ITU Meetings Hub proposal to enable concrete engagement with potential host countries, as well as any changes in guidance on fully virtual meetings for an exceptional and limited time period (2028-2029).

The secretariat will be able to develop a more detailed business continuity plan, including costs for ITU meetings in 2028, based on the option selected and guidance provided by the Council.

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