|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Agenda item: ADM 1** | **Document C25/84-E** |
| **3 June 2025** |
| **Original: English** |
|  |  |
| Contribution by Switzerland (Confederation of) | |
| CLARIFYING THE ROLE OF ITU’S GOVERNING BODIES IN THE ORGANIZATION’S STRUCTURES FOR IT GOVERNANCE AND DATA/INFORMATION GOVERNANCE | |
| **Purpose**  On issues crucial to the proper functioning of the organization, the roles of Plenipotentiary Conferences (PP) and Council should be to decide, approve, and endorse. However, for IT governance and data/information governance at ITU (vital functions of today's businesses), this is not currently the case. Indeed, the ITU Council is only informed in a piecemeal and unsystematic manner, even on strategic aspects related to these areas. This contribution aims to ensure that the ITU Council assumes its responsibilities in these areas essential to the proper functioning of the ITU.  If ITU aspires to be the United Nations’ specialized agency for information and communication technologies/digital technology, it must be exemplary in its internal management of IT and data/information. This requires the involvement of ITU’s governing bodies in the elaboration, determination, and revision of key elements (e.g. strategies, finances, transversal challenges) of IT governance and data/information governance beyond mere punctual subsequent information.  The restructuring of the Information and Communication Technology Committee (ICTC), renamed the ICT Governance Committee (ICTGC)[[1]](#footnote-1), of which Council was informed at its 2024 session, falls, in our opinion, short of giving a solid basis to IT management and data management at ITU, especially as it does not acknowledge a role for the governing bodies of the Union.  **Action required by the Council**  First, it is proposed that all significant information – from the perspective of governing bodies – related to IT management and data management at ITU is communicated to PP and Council sessions in an aggregated and comprehensive fashion. PP and Council have to champion IT and data governance systems that are mature (whilst refraining from micromanaging the IT activities of the organisation). These two bodies must assume their roles and responsibilities in these crucial fields for the functioning of the Union. The current proposed optimisation should lead amongst other things to an improved and more transparent strategic and financial planning for essential IT and technology projects of the organization that will ultimately ensure greater planning certainty to these projects. An exemplary list of aspects of IT governance and data governance to **be reported** to ITU Council for information or endorsement, as appropriate, in an aggregated and comprehensive fashion is:  – Documentation of strategic nature:  • IT Strategy  • information and data management strategy  • AI use strategy  • “enablers” of the strategic plan associated with IT management and data/information management  – Service orders relating to IT Governance and Data Governance (drafts & in force)  – Specifications relating to the new website project (graphic charter and requirement specifications)  – Information on the transformation of the core business processes in the organization relating to digital tools, using innovative technologies  – Digital risks at the strategic level and in core business processes  – Management, capitalization and protection of the organization's data in harmonized fashion  – Alignment of the IT architecture with the strategic orientation and challenges  – IT assets/portfolio of digital solutions and management of their evolutions as well as information on IT projects that have been initiated  – Multi-year rolling IT budget and budget relating to data/information management (of the organization as a whole and in the sectors).  Second, Council should **instruct** Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR), in close collaboration with the Advisory Groups of the three Sectors of the Union and the Independent Management Advisory Committee (IMAC), to elaborate a concept clarifying and strengthening the responsibilities of Plenipotentiary Conferences and Council with respect to the organization and harmonization of IT management and data management of ITU. These reforms in the fields of IT management and data management of ITU should achieve improved value delivery, proper strategic alignment, higher performance management, more efficient resource management, and strengthened risk management. CWG-FHR should report on this matter to Council at its 2026 ordinary session.  Third, Council should **instruct** Secretary-General to prepare a report to be submitted to the September meeting of CWG-FHR, providing complete information on the organisational aspects relating to IT and data/information governance in the whole of the organization (including the three sectors) and specifics about the documents enumerated in the exemplary list (and those of similar nature but of which the contributors are not aware of). | |

Context

Nowadays, ICT and data/information governance have become critical aspects of the management of any corporation/organization. If they intend to be competitive and appealing, today’s businesses cannot be conducted the way they were two decades ago with respect to IT management and data management. IT governance is an element of corporate governance, aimed at improving the overall management of IT, deriving improved value from investment in information and technology, enabling the management of IT risks effectively, and ensuring that the activities associated with information and technology are aligned with the overall business objectives. Data governance is a holistic approach to managing corporate information by implementing processes, roles, controls and metrics that treat information as a valuable business asset, aimed at making information assets available to those who need it, while streamlining management, reducing storage costs and ensuring compliance.

These principles should also apply to the ITU that so far has been successful despite the principles and organisational structures of governance of IT and of data that could be qualified as hazy. Though the criticality of the management of IT and data for the Union seems to be acknowledged, the approaches employed by the Union regarding inter alia the organization and harmonization in these fields seem not up to date and progress seems very slow. Amongst other things, organization and harmonization are unsatisfactory from the perspective of the strategic guidance and oversight functions of the governing bodies. Questions relating to IT and data governance were of late considered *piecemeal* at ITU conferences, assemblies and the Council. Despite OneITU, these questions are spread over the different ITU Sectors and addressed in an unstructured way at conferences, assemblies, and advisory groups of the sectors. Furthermore, at the Council, the information associated with ICT and data/information governance is patchy.

Plenipotentiary conferences (PP) and the Council are the governing bodies of ITU with an essential role in giving directions to the Union and overseeing the activities of the organisation. It flows from the critical importance of IT and data/information for the activities of the Union that these bodies must be informed, consulted and take decisions, as appropriate, on strategic crosscutting matters relating to IT and data (e.g. information security, data policy, pluriannual investments). Consequently, a clarification of the roles of the various actors, including PPs and Council, is needed with respect to IT governance and data governance in the ITU, especially when they relate to vital aspects of the organization, namely funding, information security, and risk management.

There are many examples for the lack of involvement of the governing bodies on key aspects of the organization’s ICT and data/information governance and for the incoherence of the governance in these fields. At this session, Council is informed (implicitly) that transformational IT system and service upgrades and improvements, including data management improvements and AI adoption initiatives, are not funded[[2]](#footnote-2). In another document, the Council is informed that a balance of CHF 250K necessary for the implementation of the New Website Project are still not identified[[3]](#footnote-3). It is worth noting that funding of both these elementary projects for ITU could be put in place if the Council approves the use of savings from the 2024 budget implementation[[4]](#footnote-4) – however in our eyes the ad hoc funding of such essential projects is lacking rigor. Apparently, IT governance in ITU is now overseen by the Information and Communication Technology Governance Committee (ICTGC) based on Service Order 24/10 on 20 September 2024[[5]](#footnote-5). There is still an absence of information of the Council about the revision and the details of the service order on ICT and data governance whose elaboration has been recommended by IMAC[[6]](#footnote-6). Council also instructed the Secretary-General to report regularly to CWG-FHR and the ITU Council on the implementation of the IT strategy[[7]](#footnote-7). At the 17th meeting of CWG-FHR in February 2025, it appeared that the IT strategy of ITU is still in the process of being elaborated[[8]](#footnote-8) – an elaboration that takes place without any involvement of the Council and/or CWG-FHR. A point in case is that Councillors need to consult Document [C25/55](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0055/en) “Update on ITU Transformation Process and Roadmap” in order to pick up titbits on the facts that the first guidelines for the use of Generative AI at ITU have been drafted (§ 3.1.2), that an ITU Information Governance Strategy has been developed (§ 3.2.3), that there are plans to establish an ICT Governance Committee Working Group to address Information Governance and Management issues (§ 3.2.3) and to get an update on progress of the new website project (§ 3.2.5). The latter topic is also addressed in the report of the Council Working Group on the use of the six official languages of the Union (CWG‑LANG)[[9]](#footnote-9). It is also unclear to us in how much depth and how regularly IMAC can address IT governance and data/information governance in ITU. It is worth highlighting that the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) and the Radiocommunication Advisory Group (RAG) each dealt with a wide range of questions related to IT and data/information governance at their meetings.

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

1. Document [C24/54](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0054/en). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Document [C25/9](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0009/en), section 2.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Document [C25/12](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0012/en), chapter 2, letter f). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Document [C25/43](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0043/en), sections 5.2 and 5.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Document [C25/50](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0050/en), para. 15.2. At its 2024 session, Council was merely informed of the restructuring of the Information and Communication Technology Committee (ICTC) (Doc. [C24/54](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0054/en)). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Document [CWG-FHR-17/24](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CWGFHR17-C-0024/en) (pp. 14-15); see also Document C24/22, chapter 15, and Document [C23/22](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0022/en), chapter 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Revision 1 to Document [C24/109](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0109/en). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Document [CWG-FHR-20/32](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGFHR20-C-0032/en), chapter 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Document [C25/12](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0012/en). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)