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|  | **Document C25/107-E** |
| **15 August 2025** |
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| **SUMMARY RECORD****OF THE****FIRST PLENARY MEETING** |
| Tuesday, 17 June 2025, from 1430 to 1740 hours**Chair**: Ms C. Flutur (Romania) |

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|  | **Subjects discussed** | **Documents** |
| 1 | Annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union, 2024 | [C25/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0035/en%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) |
| 2 | Draft four-year rolling operational plan for the Union for 2026-2029 | [C25/28](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0028/en) |
| 3 | Draft biennial budget of the Union for 2026-2027 | [C25/47](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0047/en) |
| 4 | Update on ITU transformation process and roadmap | [C25/55](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0055/en) |
| 5 | Efficiency measures implemented in 2023-2024 and future plans | [C25/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0062/en) |
| 6 | Statements by councillors | – |

# 1 Annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan and the activities of the Union, 2024 (Document [C25/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0035/en%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank))

1.1 The Deputy Secretary-General introduced Document C25/35, containing the annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan for 2024-2027 and the Union's activities. For the first time, the reporting period aligned with the calendar year, matching the financial cycle and supporting results-based management. Despite progress, digital divides remained, and issues of affordability and environmental impact persisted. Activities on emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum and metaverse, involved collaboration across the United Nations system. Capacity-development and technical-assistance activities had a direct impact in countries, while platforms such as AI for Good enabled multilateral engagement. Implementation of the Radio Regulations and processing of filings remained core activities and supported cost recovery. The new Radio Regulation Navigation Tool and Maritime Manual were aids to compliance. He welcomed Palau as the Union's 194th Member State and noted with satisfaction the increase in Sector membership.

1.2 Guided by Council decisions, a high-level roundtable on the role of digital technologies in climate action had been held at the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 29) and work on environmental sustainability now included the Early Warnings for All Initiative. Partnership work in 2024 had included the first Space Sustainability Forum and the launch of the Digital Infrastructure Investment Initiative and the International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience. The Partner2Connect Digital Coalition continued to grow, with the goal of collecting USD 100 billion in commitments within reach. Reaffirming continued commitment to resource optimization, he noted that human resource and organizational reforms had strengthened the organization and supported talent renewal. He concluded by stating that a robust plan for website modernization was in place.

1.3 Councillors welcomed the comprehensive report and its alignment with strategic priorities and a results-based approach, as well as the progress made in implementing the strategic plan. One councillor proposed including references to advisory group reports for more detail. A second requested information on implementation challenges to inform the next strategic plan. A third suggested expanding the thematic priority on international numbering resources in the next strategic plan to cover development of international standards more broadly.

1.4 Two councillors emphasized ITU's pivotal role in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and telecommunications within the multilateral ecosystem. Councillors endorsed ITU's AI initiatives, including AI for Good, recognizing AI's key role in addressing global development challenges. One councillor expressed support for Quantum for Good, noting both the challenges and the opportunities associated with quantum technologies. Several councillors welcomed the transformation process and promotion of partnerships. Councillors highlighted the persistent issue of affordability and the digital skills gap, in particular in least developed countries, with one welcoming the proposed Americas regional initiative to support national digital skills assessment and another praising the focus on gender equality, youth engagement and accessibility.

1.5 Several councillors highlighted the critical role of ITU in developing international standards and balancing security and governance concerns with innovation. The ITU‑D commitment to universal, meaningful and affordable accessibility was welcomed; however, one councillor emphasized the need for resource mobilization and capacity building tailored to small economies, including scalable, adoptable and regionally coordinated solutions.

1.6 One observer emphasized that ITU should not grow the General Secretariat at the expense of its technical Sectors or pursue international symposia at the expense of core technical work. Member States relied on ITU to develop consensus recommendations and technical standards on specific technical issues. The lack of an international legal mechanism agreed within ITU on the regulation of rapidly emerging technologies meant countries were developing conditions for their use at national level without agreed international recommendations or criteria. He called for the establishment of an independent high-level expert group to develop proposals to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of the Union's operations.

1.7 The observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran took the floor to condemn acts of State aggression against its critical telecommunication infrastructure, disrupting civil services and jeopardizing the health and safety of civilians. The observer for Palestine said an urgent rethink of the connection situation was needed to ensure that no one was left behind, in conflict and in peace time. The observer for Israel warned against politicization of the Union as a technical institution.

1.8 The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that the progress reported had been achieved in concert with Member States. He noted requests for improved reporting and incorporation of Sector data and welcomed calls to identify implementation challenges to inform future planning; that would be addressed in the Council Working Group on strategic and financial planning. Acknowledging the existence of competing priorities in countries facing challenging economic situations, he said that sustainably progressing universal digital development required ITU and its unique mandate to be at the forefront, as digital issues spanned multiple organizations. The secretariat was both pursuing internal efficiency and transformation measures, as detailed in Documents [C25/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0062/en) and [C25/55](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0055/en), and participating in collaborative efforts across the United Nations system.

1.9 The Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, responding to questions on steps taken to address data gaps, in particular for targets 2.3 and 2.4 for the Union's Connect 2030 Agenda, said that the secretariat was working with stakeholders to address such gaps. He noted collaboration with other United Nations entities through a partnership co-chaired by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs focused on measuring ICT development. A global connectivity project, co-financed by the European Commission, would provide insights into how connectivity was being used. The United Nations Statistical Commission, to which all system organizations belonged, maintained data collection standards and methodologies. The secretariat was actively implementing Resolution 8 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference and Resolution 131 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and encouraged Member States to enable expert participation in study groups to support credible data collection.

1.10 The Council **noted** the report contained in Document C25/35.

# 2 Draft four-year rolling operational plan for the Union for 2026-2029 (Document [C25/28](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0028/en))

2.1 The Chief of Administration and Finance introduced Document C25/28, which contained the draft operational plan for the Union for 2026-2029 and, in Annex A, a draft resolution for the approval thereof. The draft plan followed the structure of the strategic plan for the Union for 2024-2027 and addressed implementation of its five thematic priorities and 43 outputs. The draft operational plan set out how ITU would continue to apply its resources to its strategic initiatives, providing a detailed analysis for 2026 and a condensed one for the three subsequent years. The cost allocation methodology used was described in Council Decision 535 (C04, last amended C14). For 2026, ITU would attribute the largest share of its resources to thematic priority 1, spectrum and satellite orbits, followed by thematic priorities 5, 3, 4 and 2.

2.2 Councillors, noting the uneven allocation across the five thematic priorities, requested greater information on and transparency of prioritization mechanisms. An annual update on implementation of the operational plan would also improve transparency and provide Member States with an opportunity to remain informed and engaged. Councillors underscored the strong commitment to strategic alignment, financial discipline and results-based management outlined in the draft plan and supported the need for flexibility for the Secretary-General and the Directors in its implementation as stated in the draft resolution. One councillor suggested, however, that that "flexibility" be defined. While offering support for the draft plan, councillors underscored the need for much more detailed budgeting, as recommended in reports of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system, as that would provide clarity on cost structure and enable Member States to take more informed decisions, in particular as sacrifices had to be made. While commending the strong commitment to results-based budgeting, one councillor sought clarification on the upward trend in the allocation of resources to centralized administrative services and clearer links between operational activities and the regional initiatives.

2.3 The Chief of Administration and Finance, responding to questions, acknowledged the uneven allocation of resources to the strategic priorities which reflected the reality and nature of the work carried out in the different Sectors. Considering whether strategic priorities were right-sized, and making adjustments to relative priority, would be useful in future strategic planning if the distribution of resources was felt to be misaligned. Also, it would be important to anticipate more clearly the transition from strategic and financial planning to operational planning and then to budgeting. More information on alignment of the operational plan and budget was available in the draft biennial budget for 2026-2027 (Document [C25/47](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0047/en)). Prioritization involved assessing areas of need and requests from Member States, while considering the broader context and using statistical data, and then identifying, assigning and costing human resources to perform work. That process, performed largely in the secretariat, might benefit from clear guidance by Member States at the strategic level. There was already a focus within the ongoing strategic planning process on better measurement of activities and linking thereof to outcomes. Overall, the General Secretariat's costs had decreased in recent years, with significant cuts made through the transformation process. The apparent increase in the plan was attributable to there being two major conferences in the 2026-2027 period (PP-26 and WRC-27) that are resourced in large part through services provided by the General Secretariat.

2.4 The Chief of the Financial Resources Management Department (FRMD) said that regional programmes were implemented through ITU-D and efforts were made to ensure equitable distribution of resources and initiatives across the regions. The secretariat provided seed funding and otherwise issued calls for donors and voluntary contributions. He added that it was common practice to request "flexibility" for the Secretary-General and Directors of the Bureaux in resolutions approving draft budgets and operational plans.

2.5 The Council **approved** Document C25/28 and **adopted** the draft resolution contained in annex thereto.

# 3 Draft biennial budget of the Union for 2026-2027 (Document [C25/47](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0047/en))

3.1 The Chief of FRMD, introducing Document C25/47, which set out the draft biennial budget for 2026-2027, said that it had been prepared on the basis of the budgetary submissions from the three Sectors and the General Secretariat and in line with Decision 5 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. The draft budget was balanced, with revenue equalling expenses; it showed negative growth of 2.66 per cent in comparison with the budget for 2024‑2025, largely attributable to efficiency measures outlined in the document. Revenue from cost recovery for satellite network filings (SNF) was expected to rise to CHF 18 million, though the full cost of work in that area was estimated at CHF 22.8 million. The proposed methodology for calculation of SNF cost recovery could be found in Document [C25/64](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0064/en). The secretariat would continue to use results-based management in implementing the budget and to pursue efficiency measures. The draft budget provided detailed information on financial planning, the number of posts budgeted, the costs of language services and infrastructure.

3.2 The Chair proposed that discussion of the document be transferred to the Standing Committee on Administration and Management (ADM Committee).

3.3 It was so **agreed**.

# 4 Update on ITU transformation process and roadmap (Document [C25/55](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0055/en))

4.1 The Chief of the Transformation Team introduced Document C25/55, outlining ITU's efforts to achieve organizational excellence and efficiencies already achieved. Following discussions at the Council Working Group on financial and human resources (CWG-FHR) and the Council Working Group on the use of the six official languages (CWG-LANG), and in response to requests from Member States, a progress report on the website project had been provided in an annex. Since publication, a critical project milestone had been reached with technical and commercial evaluations completed, allowing implementation to begin.

4.2 Within the five pillars of the transformation process, six initiatives had been prioritized for accelerated action: performance management, recruitment, travel, internal mobility, internal AI implementation and leadership culture. Work also continued across the remaining initiatives across the pillars under the transformation roadmap. Strong and clear communication was deemed essential to transformation. The transformation team actively managed change impacts through the changemakers group and broader consultations with staff across the Bureaux. Such collaboration was central to progress and is to be pursued.

4.3 Councillors welcomed the report and stressed the importance of staff engagement in the process. They commend the Secretariat for the wide-ranging transformation initiatives being implemented across the organization Transformation was crucial to ensuring the Union's competitiveness and operational excellence, but it would be gradual and constantly evolving. They requested more detailed information on ongoing and emerging initiatives to ensure their alignment with the recent Council decisions. Information provided on prioritization and financial implications were particularly important. The use of completion percentages would improve visibility and facilitate tracking and measurement; evaluation of completed initiatives would help to assess long-term effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. A comprehensive roadmap, workplan and timelines remained necessary. One councillor requested that reporting clearly indicate when initiatives were linked to External Auditor recommendations. Another councillor suggested that, given the financial climate, priority be given to initiatives delivering rapid, tangible benefits. Consideration should also be given to the number, length, location and scope of meetings held annually.

4.4 Councillors and one observer reaffirmed the need for a modern, secure, well-structured, user-friendly and multilingual ITU website. One councillor said that the present outdated version hindered access to information. Several councillors requested clarification on project funding, as funding for full implementation appeared uncertain. An observer suggested developing an application for events, as other Geneva-based organizations had already done.

4.5 Multiple councillors stressed the importance of securing regular budget funding for transformation instead of savings accrued. Given its significance and ability to generate savings, the process needed predictable funding. One councillor observed that increased short-term investment could result in reduced long-term costs. Several councillors also supported funding the website project from the regular budget.

4.6 Responding to questions and comments, the Chief of the Transformation Team recalled that the fifth transformation pillar had been added following a proposal at the CWG-FHR meeting of February 2025 to group initiatives aimed at improving engagement. She agreed that transformation required a clear vision and effective prioritisation. She mentioned that the initiatives result in both tangible and intangible outcomes, such as shifts in mindsets and organizational culture. Initiatives were assessed and selected based on business readiness, resource requirements and anticipated impact, with progress tracked throughout a project's lifetime. Funding requirements for the website project had not changed. Of the approved CHF 600 000 budget, CHF 350 000 had already been allocated and the remaining CHF 250 000 had been requested from savings from 2024. The website was expected to launch in 2026. Staff engagement was indeed key to transformation, which extended beyond tools and systems and encompassed organizational culture. Upskilling had already begun, involving AI applications and leadership capacity building. AI would support, not replace, staff. An information session for Member States was being planned and specific content could be provided on request.

4.7 The Chief of Administration and Finance said that, in the absence of a large, upfront budget for transformation, a portfolio management approach had been adopted. That involved rigorous prioritization based on urgency, available internal resources and full implementation costs. While the approach did not align seamlessly with biennial budgeting, it did make effective use of savings. Following councillors' input, the secretariat would explore how to fund the transformation process from the regular budget, though that would require further prioritization and changes to the biennial budget. The secretariat could engage with Member States on prioritization through CWG-FHR; in the meantime, savings could be used for key initiatives for 2025.

4.8 The Council **noted** the report contained in Document C25/55.

# 5 Efficiency measures implemented in 2023-2024 and future plans (Document [C25/62](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0062/en))

5.1 The Chief of Finance and Administration introduced Document C25/62, outlining efficiency measures undertaken in 2023 and 2024 and future plans to sustain the Union's effectiveness amid tightening resources. That objective had driven reforms across ITU, notably the transformation initiative, which strengthened efficiency and accountability. Recent United Nations initiatives had placed the reforms in a broader, global context. The report detailed actions in structural and process optimization, financial transformation, information technology modernization and human resource management, all aiming to make ITU fit for purpose and for the future. The unqualified opinion issued by the External Auditor showed that the measures were already bearing fruit.

5.2 The Chair proposed that discussion of the document be transferred to the ADM Committee.

5.3 It was so **agreed**.

# 6 Statements by councillors

6.1 The councillor from the United Kingdom announced his country's candidacy for re‑election to the Council.

The Secretary-General: The Chair:

D. BOGDAN-MARTIN C. FLUTUR

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