|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Document CWG-FHR-21/23** |
| **27 August 2025** |
| **English only** |
|  |  |
| Contribution by the United States |
| CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORMAL PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES FOR BIDDING TO HOST ITU CONFERENCES & ASSEMBLIES |
| **Purpose**This contribution proposes that the ITU conduct the bidding process for hosting ITU conferences and assemblies via a Request for Proposals (RFPs). It highlights some considerations for key elements of RFPs and proposes next steps to finalize bidding processes and procedures by the 2026 session of ITU Council.**Action required**The Council Working Group on financial and human resources is invited to **consider** this document and **take appropriate action**.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**References***Council Documents* [*C25/101*](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0101/en)*,* [*C25/113*](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.itu.int%2Fmd%2FS25-CL-C-0113%2Fen&data=05%7C02%7CDekanicE%40state.gov%7C95f342907cc1406842ea08ddd5b641ce%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C638901700944190883%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BBq5c8jOGGr8yqPOxlEu6D9GXhnI65svcGmtBY1Ru%2BI%3D&reserved=0)*,* [*C22/INF/9*](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/22/cl/inf/S22-CL-INF-0009%21%21PDF-E.pdf)*;* [*C07/22(Rev.1)*](https://www.itu.int/md/S07-CL-C-0022/en) *(Model Host Country Agreement); CWG-FHR Documents* [*CWG-FHR-21/7*](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/25/cwgfhr21/c/S25-CWGFHR21-C-0007%21%21MSW-E.docx)*,* [*CWG-FHR-21/8*](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/25/cwgfhr21/c/S25-CWGFHR21-C-0008%21%21MSW-E.docx)*;* [*ITU-R WRC C23/05*](https://www.itu.int/md/R23-WRC23-C-0005/en)*.* |

**Background & Summary**

At the 2025 session of ITU Council, the United States proposed the need for the development of a formal, collaborative, and transparent bidding process for hosting future ITU conferences, and for selecting among multiple bids (Document [C25/101](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CL-C-0101/en)). Council decided that CWG-FHR would take up this task (Document [C25/113](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.itu.int%2Fmd%2FS25-CL-C-0113%2Fen&data=05%7C02%7CDekanicE%40state.gov%7C95f342907cc1406842ea08ddd5b641ce%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C638901700944190883%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BBq5c8jOGGr8yqPOxlEu6D9GXhnI65svcGmtBY1Ru%2BI%3D&reserved=0)), and the Secretariat has provided initial information to this meeting to assist in this effort (Document [CWG-FHR-21/7](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/25/cwgfhr21/c/S25-CWGFHR21-C-0007%21%21MSW-E.docx)).

To progress this work, this contribution proposes that the ITU conduct the bidding process for hosting ITU conferences and assemblies via a Request for Proposals (RFP), a common and well-known mechanism for soliciting bids. (In other words, of the other UN agencies included in the benchmarking exercise in Document [CWG-FHR-21/7](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/25/cwgfhr21/c/S25-CWGFHR21-C-0007%21%21MSW-E.docx), we propose a process most similar to that of the World Bank.) It highlights some considerations for key elements of RFPs (including the relationship to Host Country Agreements) and proposes next steps to finalize bidding processes and procedures by the 2026 session of ITU Council.

**Discussion**

Typical RFPs commonly contain elements such as deliverables and specifications, payment terms and financial obligations, deadlines, and proposal format (among others).

* ***Deliverables and specifications:*** The Secretariat already maintains much, if not all, of this information as part of Host Country Agreements (HCAs) and related processes, such as the factors assessed during site visits. HCAs, however, are negotiated directly between the ITU and the prospective host country, and only *after* the prospective host country is already selected. Sharing overall requirements in advance as part of the RFP will increase transparency and accountability and build greater understanding among potential bidders as to the responsibilities associated with hosting an ITU conference.

Building on the [Model Host Country Agreement (C-07/22(Rev.1))](https://www.itu.int/md/S07-CL-C-0022/en), recent HCAs with Romania (Document [C22/INF/9](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/22/cl/inf/S22-CL-INF-0009%21%21PDF-E.pdf)) and the United Arab Emirates ([ITU-R WRC C23/05](https://www.itu.int/md/R23-WRC23-C-0005/en)) have successfully demonstrated evolving best practices in host country support. Putting aside the question of revising the Model Host Country Agreement directly, the development of deliverables and specifications for the RFP also provides a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the protocols for conferences and help ensure safety, accessibility, and operational integrity for all participants. Using recent HCAs as a starting point, we propose that the draft RFP should build on best practices from recent conferences and address factors such as the venue and facility; visas (including entry and exit); safety, health and security; telecommunications access and cybersecurity; and media engagement.

* ***Payment terms and financial obligations:*** The RFP should clearly delineate the financial responsibilities of the host country and of the ITU. (The ITU budgets for its major conferences based on each being held in Geneva; when it is hosted outside of Geneva, the host country does not pay for all expenses; it just pays the difference in cost between Geneva and the host.)

We also emphasize the important linkage with related efforts underway to reduce financial burdens on host countries (Document [CWG-FHR-21/8](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/25/cwgfhr21/c/S25-CWGFHR21-C-0008%21%21MSW-E.docx)). The RFP should be designed in a manner that broadens the base able to bid. Given that increasingly fewer countries are in a position to bear the cost burden associated with hosting ITU conferences, we encourage exploring innovative funding solutions, such as cost-sharing between multiple co-hosts.

Relatedly, to guard against an ethos of “pay to play” and provide a level playing field, the RFP should also clearly describe funding and other incentives or perks that bidders *cannot* offer to provide.

* ***Deadlines:*** While we recognize that major ITU conferences require significant advance planning, the current “first-come, first-served” approach has increasingly incentivized prospective host countries to extend offers exceedingly far in advance. This approach was also clearly disregarded during the most recent WRC-27 decision. At the same time, many Member States face limitations as to how early they can make the necessary political and financial commitments, which then artificially narrows the field of potential candidates. Moreover, opening the bidding too early increases the chances that a prospective host country may need to drop out ahead of the conference due to a change in national circumstances.

Therefore, we propose that calls for bids should take place 3 years ahead of a conference; assuming six months for the RFP process, this would allow for the selection of a host country two years ahead of the event (halfway through the four-year cycle).

* ***Proposal format:*** We suggest the development of a standardized template that Member States should use to respond to the RFP. This will help ensure that all bids can be considered equally and evaluated against each other, and only on the basis of the information submitted in the RFP itself.

Alongside the content of the RFP itself, it is critical to develop objective criteria by which to evaluate proposals, which would also allow for consideration and selection among multiple competing bids. (We note that in the benchmarking exercise, the World Bank evaluates proposals “based on defined logistical and technical criteria.”) In recognition of the ITU’s longstanding commitment to geographic diversity and the principle of rotation among regions, such criteria could include, for example, whether a given bidder has previously hosted an ITU conference (so that ITU conferences are not always and increasingly held in the same handful of countries).

**Proposal**

In terms of next steps, we propose that CWG-FHR establish a correspondence group to expediently take forward this line of effort (following the model of other similar recent CWG-FHR correspondence groups), as follows:

* Establish the correspondence group at this meeting;
* Request the Secretariat to prepare the baseline draft of the RFP process ahead of the first meeting of the correspondence group, building on this contribution and the initial discussion at this meeting;
* Convene online correspondence group meetings between now and the next CWG-FHR meeting (during the January 2026 cluster of CWGs/EGs) to revise the draft RFP;
* Review and finalize at the next CWG-FHR meeting; and
* Submit to the 2026 session of ITU Council (in April 2026) for approval.

We recognize that this proposal accelerates the timeline suggested in Document [CWG-FHR-21/7](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/25/cwgfhr21/c/S25-CWGFHR21-C-0007%21%21MSW-E.docx) (in which the Secretariat would develop the initial proposed selection process for the consideration of CWG-FHR at its January 2026 session). However, we believe this critical topic warrants more immediate attention, given there are already pending bids awaiting the results of this work. A formal, collaborative, and transparent bidding process will provide Member States with the certainty and clarity required to submit, evaluate, and decide on host countries in the most well-informed way.

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