Council Working Group
for strategic and financial plans 2028-2031
Second meeting – From 20 to 21 February 2025

Document CWG-SFP-2/2
21 January 2025
English only

Report by the Secretary-General

RESULTS OF THE 1ST ONLINE CONSULTATION ON THE UNION'S STRATEGIC AND FINANCIAL PLANS 2028-2031

Purpose

This report presents the inputs received from ITU membership through the online consultation conducted as part of the revision and development process for the ITU Strategic and Financial Plans for the 2028–2031 period. Closed-ended question responses were analyzed using statistical methods, while inputs from open-ended questions were consolidated with the assistance of Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT 4.0.

Action required

The Council Working Group on Strategic and Financial Plans is invited to **consider** this report as part of its mandate to guide the revision of the current Strategic Plan and the development of the new Strategic and Financial Plans, which are to be presented to the Council for endorsement in 2026.

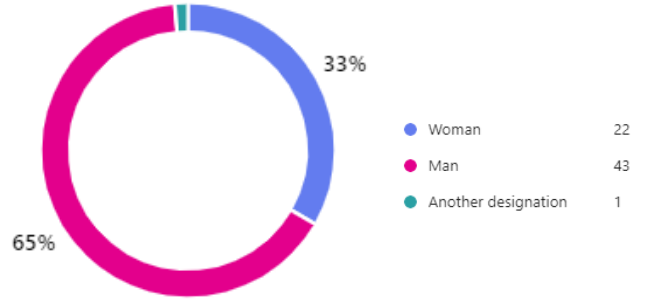
Results of the 1st Online Consultation on the Union's strategic and financial plans 2028-2031

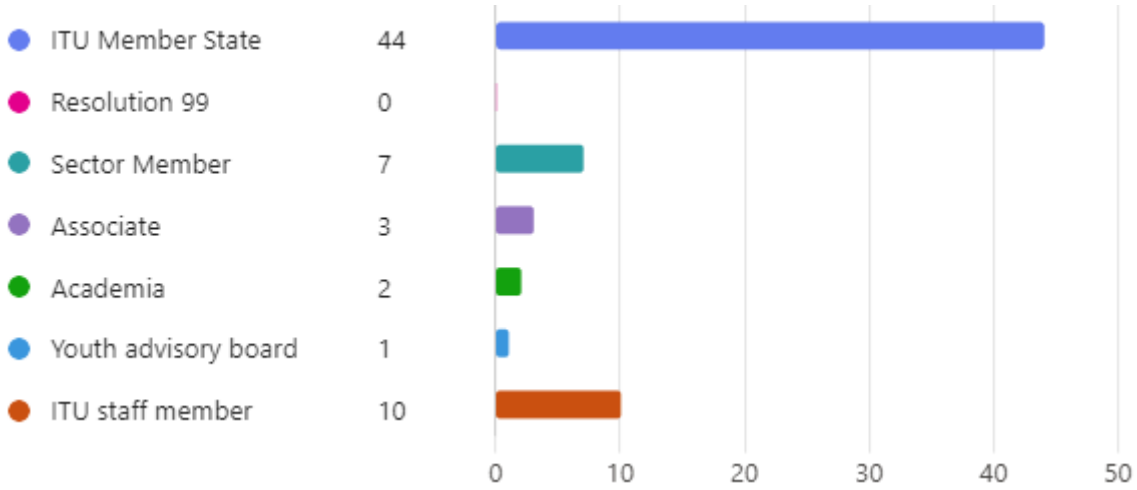
Council Working Group for strategic and financial plans 2028-2031
Second Meeting – 20 and 21 February 2025

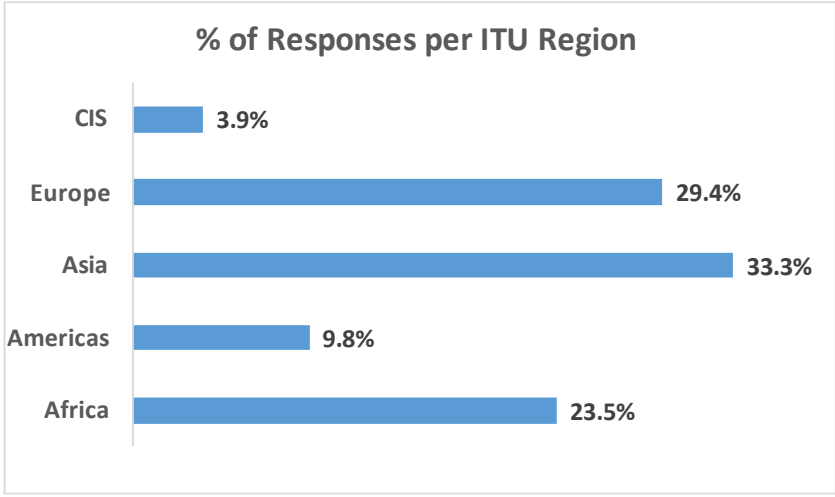
1st Online Consultation on the strategic and financial plans 2028-2031

(25 Oct / 9 Dec 2024)

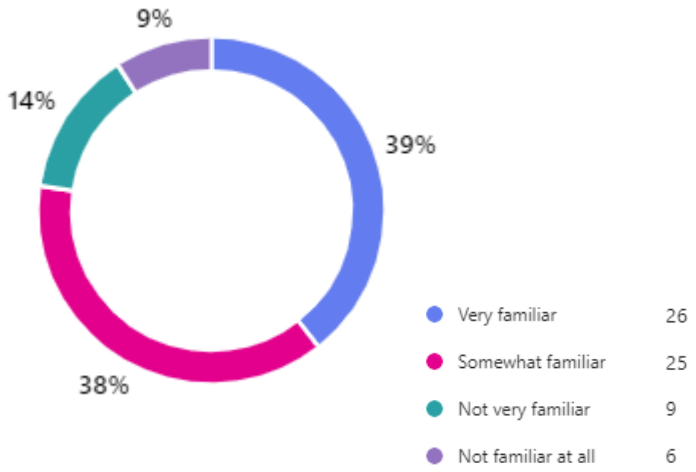
67 responses received



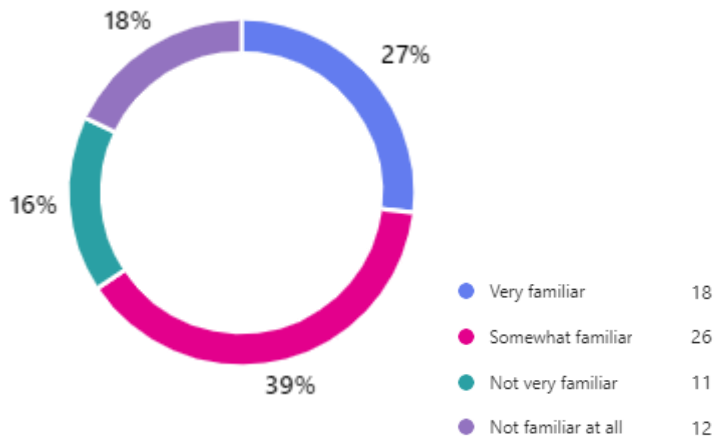




How **familiar** are you with the current ITU strategic plan 2024-2027 and the ITU strategic framework?

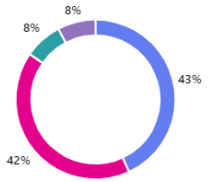


How **familiar** are you with the current ITU financial plan 2024-2027?

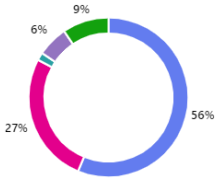


The ITU **strategic plan** can benefit from…

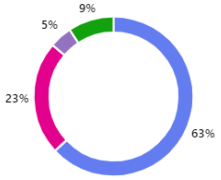
… more focus of the activities of the organization



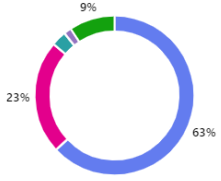
… better reflecting the needs of the ITU membership

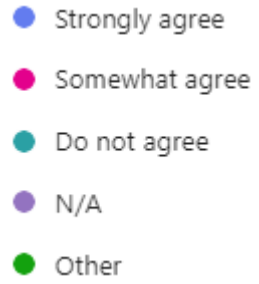


… adapting the vision and mission of the ITU in the evolving environment

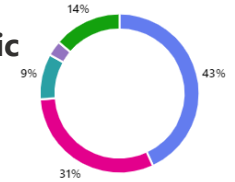


… further simplification and clarity

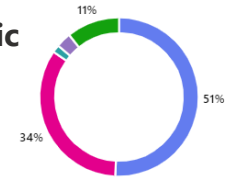




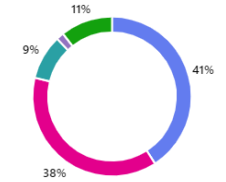
… revisiting the strategic goals



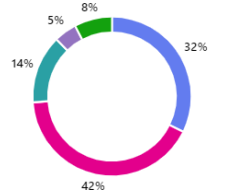
… revisiting the thematic priorities



… revisiting the product and service offerings



… revisiting the enablers

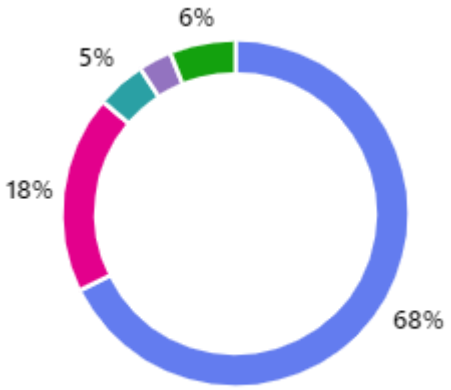


More than 85% of responses agrees the SP can benefit from:

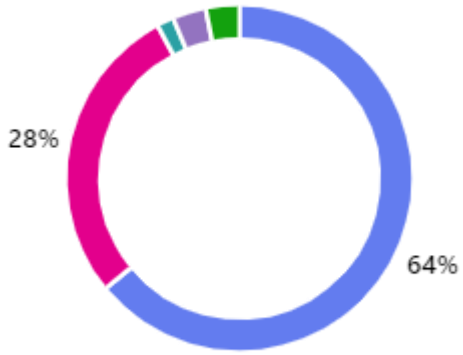
- ✓ more focus of the activities of the organization
- ✓ adapting the vision and mission of the ITU in the evolving environment
- ✓ revisiting the thematic priorities
- ✓ further simplification and clarity

The ITU **Financial plan** can benefit from…

… better reflecting the allocation of financial resources to achieve the Union's strategic goals



… further clarity in reporting and communicating the financial statements

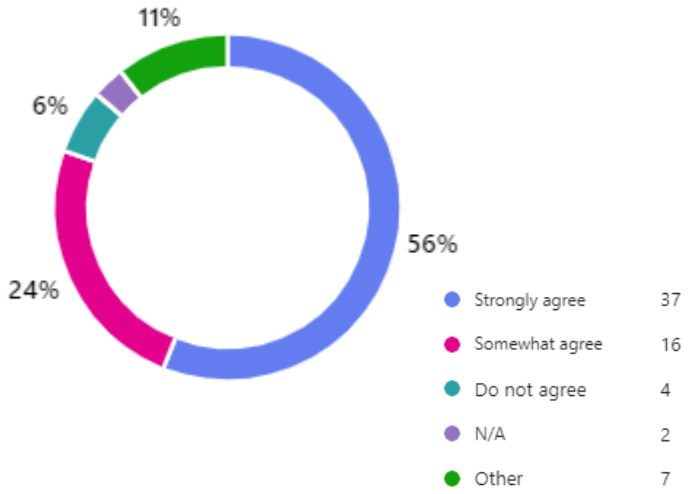


- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Do not agree
- N/A
- Other

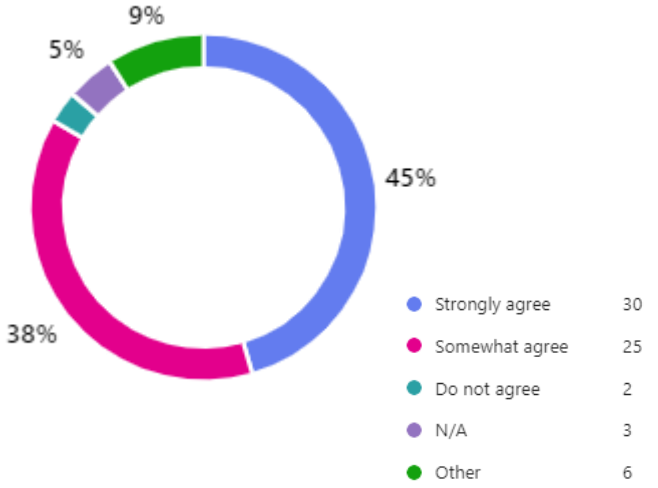
What suggestions do you have to **improve the clarity** of financial reporting?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Increased Transparency in Expenditures:** Detailed explanations for large expenditure items should be provided with clear deadlines after respective meetings.
- **Regular Updates and Feedback:** Financial reports should be regularly updated and include space for member feedback to enhance understanding and engagement.
- **Explanation of Key Financial Indicators:** Brief explanations of key financial indicators should be offered to help members understand their significance more easily.
- **Improvement of Financial Reporting Clarity:** The clarity and explanations in the financial reporting can be improved, especially in connecting financial information with the strategic plan and using illustrations.
- **Use of Proposed Benchmarks:** Benchmarks such as UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget 2022-2025 and WHO's Programme Budgets should be considered for evaluation and improvement.

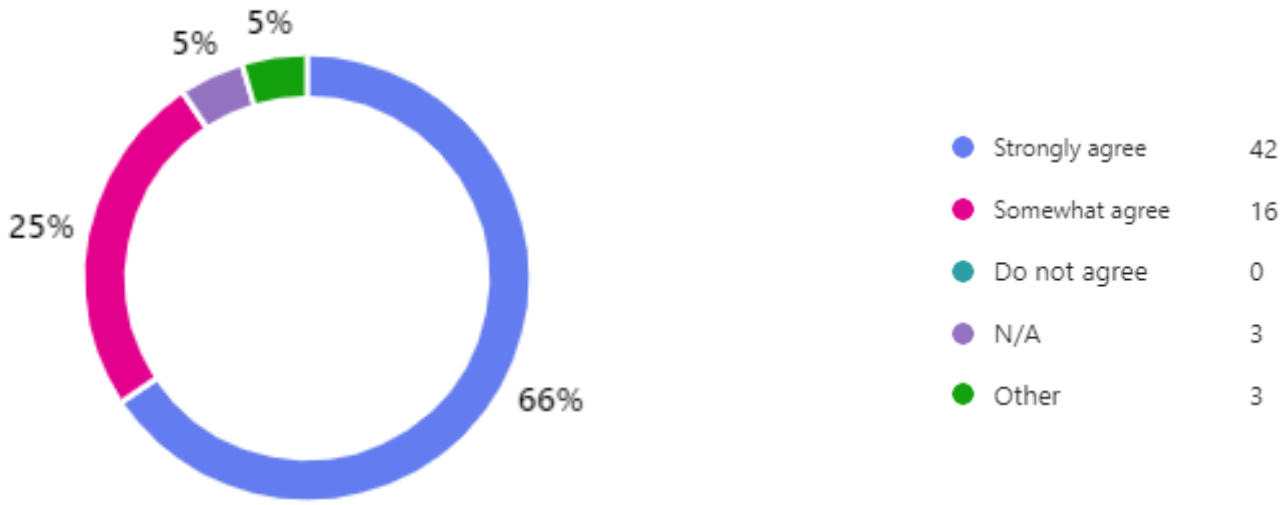
Would the ITU strategic plan benefit from **better reflecting the role of the ITU regional presence**?



Could the **concept of One ITU** be further strengthened in the new ITU strategic plan?



Would the strategic plan **benefit from an improved linkage and alignment with the financial plan**, in terms of strategic priorities and allocation of financial resources?



What would be **one key suggestion to improve the current strategic plan**?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Introduce Dynamic Feedback and Adjustment Mechanism:** Implement a mechanism to ensure the strategic plan remains agile and responsive to changes in the digital landscape through regular updates based on trends and member feedback.
- **Streamline and Prioritize Strategic Goals:** Focus on the most critical global challenges by narrowing the scope and allocating resources efficiently to priority areas, enhancing ITU's impact and alignment with the evolving ICT sector.
- **Incorporate Results-Based Management (RBM) Framework:** Embed relevant indicators, establish targets, track progress, and use root cause analysis to contextualize strategic objectives, outcomes, and outputs.
- **Define Results Chain and Focus Areas:** Clearly define the results chain from needs to desired impact, highlight specific regional or group focus areas, and link strategic priorities with action plans of ITU sectors.
- **Strengthen Strategy and Resource Allocation Linkages:** Ensure the strategic plan is closely linked with the financial plan/budget and provide a preliminary document on resource allocation to guide the refinement of the financial plan.

What is the **main strength** of the ITU?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Global Collaboration:** The ITU's unique ability to unite governments, industry, and stakeholders worldwide to shape the future of information and communication technologies.
- **Neutral Platform:** As an unbiased forum, the ITU excels in standard-setting, policy development, and addressing global challenges, ensuring inclusivity and technological benefits for all regions.
- **Expertise and Technical Assistance:** Skilled workforce and technical proficiency in developing telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, spectrum management, and promoting digital connectivity and transformation.
- **Consensus Building:** The ITU's capacity to build consensus on sensitive matters, such as the allocation of scarce resources, while maintaining a technical perspective.
- **SDG Facilitation:** The ITU's role in accelerating technological innovation and advancing digital connectivity directly contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What is the organization **doing well** and what should it **continue doing**?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Radio Spectrum Harmonization:** The ITU excels in the rational, equitable, efficient, and economical use of the radio-frequency spectrum across all radiocommunication services. This harmonization ensures seamless communication and effective spectrum management.

- **Development of Telecommunication/ICT Standards:** The ITU is instrumental in developing telecommunication and ICT standards, which are crucial for global interoperability and standardization. This effort supports the broader goal of universal and meaningful connectivity.

- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** The organization provides valuable technical cooperation and assistance to close the digital divide. These initiatives help enhance cybersecurity, resilience, and sustainable development, especially in developing countries.

- **Innovation in Digital Transformation and Green Transition:** The ITU actively contributes to innovation in emerging fields, such as digital transformation, green transition, and artificial intelligence. These efforts are vital for addressing global challenges, including climate change.

- **Inclusive Participation and Shared Outcomes:** The ITU facilitates the fair participation of different members, particularly developing countries, ensuring an inclusive process and equitable outcomes. This approach promotes shared success and broad-based engagement.

What is the **main weakness** of the ITU?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Lack of Coordination:** There is a notable lack of coordination between the General Secretariat and the Bureaux, leading to duplication, lack of synergy, and inefficient use of resources.
- **Slow Adaptability:** ITU sometimes struggles to adapt quickly to rapidly evolving technological landscapes, which can hinder its ability to stay aligned with trends and meet the diverse needs of its members.
- **Management and Decision-Making:** The organization's slow management processes, particularly in the development of resolutions and recommendations, and the long cycles needed to address emerging challenges, such as space sustainability with LEO and MEO satellites, are significant weaknesses.
- **Resource Constraints:** ITU faces challenges with revenue, funding constraints, and limited resources, which exacerbate its already stretched work program and severely impact the workload and well-being of its staff.
- **Limited In-Country Presence:** Compared to other international/UN organizations, ITU has limited regional and in-country presence, which hinders its ability to support member states effectively with digital transformation initiatives.

What do you believe the organization **should stop doing**?
(Top 5 findings)

- Stop organizing so many events, workshops and forums, particularly those unrelated to core tasks; focus capacity-building efforts on study groups.
- Stop relying on traditional, bureaucratic processes that slow down decision-making; adopt a more agile approach to stay ahead of technological changes.
- Stop overgeneralizing initiatives and strategies; tailor programs for specific regions or demographic groups.
- Stop maintaining outdated processes or structures that hinder quick responses to emerging global challenges; streamline operations to better serve the evolving mission.
- Stop discussing and arguing excessively; focus on achieving tangible results and outcomes to improve overall efficiency and impact.

What would be the **main opportunities for improvement** for the ITU?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Enhance Project Viability Assessment:** Develop and improve the processes and criteria to assess the viability of projects before initiation, ensuring that resources are effectively utilized.
- **Strengthen Strategic Partnerships:** Improve strategic partnerships with regional organizations where they do not exist, or provide autonomy at the regional/area office level to establish these partnerships.
- **Increase Engagement with Standardization Organizations:** Foster stronger links with standardization organizations and improve communication with stakeholders to ensure coherence and alignment.
- **Focus on Priority Work Programs:** Prioritize work programs and areas within ITU's mandate and expertise, avoiding dilution of priority work with new activities and ensuring efficient resource mobilization.
- **Implement Good Governance and Oversight:** Improve governance and oversight mechanisms to ensure sustainable funding from Member States, find efficiencies within the Union, and avoid duplicative work among the Sectors.

What are the **main threats** ITU faces today?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Rapid Technological Change:** The fast pace of technological advancements can outstrip ITU's ability to adapt and provide timely solutions, risking the organization's relevance.
- **Digital Divide:** The gap between developing and developed countries, exacerbated by emerging technologies like AI, continues to widen, posing a significant challenge to global digital inclusivity.
- **Fragmented Global Digital Ecosystem:** Regional disparities and differing national priorities make coordination and engagement more difficult, threatening ITU's ability to maintain relevance.
- **Resource Constraints:** Insufficient financial resources to fulfil ITU's vision and mission, along with growing member needs and expectations, hinder its effectiveness.
- **Politicization and Inaction:** Politicization, double standards, and inaction in negotiations, particularly in areas like assistance to war-affected infrastructures, undermine ITU's role and commitments.

Who are the **main "competitors"** for the Union?

Other Organizations in the Sector

- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) - Active in developing global standards for technology.
- Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) - Focuses on developing and promoting internet standards.
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) - Engages in creating standards for a broad range of technologies.
- Large Tech Companies - Major players in telecommunications and digital infrastructure, driving industry-specific standards and innovation.

Standardization and Connectivity

- UNESCO - Involved in AI, digital platforms, and connectivity.
- Various SDOs - Engaged in faster standardization processes.

Sustainable Digital Transformation

- UNDP
- UNCTAD
- IDB
- World Bank Group
- UNESCO
- OECD

Collaboration and Capacity Building

- WHO and UNICEF - Collaborate with ITU on sector-specific digital transformation initiatives.

What do you see as the **top value proposition** of the ITU for 2028 onwards?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Global Facilitator of Inclusive Digital Transformation:** ITU should lead in uniting governments, the private sector, and civil society to ensure technological advancements benefit all nations and communities, especially underserved regions.
- **Setting Standards for Emerging Technologies:** ITU's role in establishing international standards for new technologies will be crucial for maintaining universal, fair, and secure access to digital advancements.
- **Promoting Digital Inclusion:** ITU should advocate for equitable access to digital technologies to bridge the digital divide and support sustainable development worldwide.
- **Maintaining Trust and Transparency:** The organization must operate under values of efficiency, transparency, accountability, openness, universality, neutrality, and people-centric, development-oriented, innovation-driven, and results-based principles to maintain trust among its members and the public.
- **Fostering International Cooperation:** ITU should continue to be a neutral platform for global collaboration on transformative technologies, ensuring that digital transformation respects and enhances individual rights and needs

What would be the **key challenges** for the ITU as an organization in the 2028-2031?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Maintaining Focus Amid Technological Evolution:** Balancing the need to address last mile connectivity and digital inclusion with staying ahead of technological advancements such as AI, quantum computing, and the metaverse.
- **Funding and Resource Constraints:** Navigating the limitations posed by scarce financial resources and ensuring feasible implementation of activities and initiatives.
- **Geopolitical Polarization:** Managing the risk of growing geopolitical tensions that could politicize ITU's work.
- **Coordination with Other Organizations:** Addressing overlapping mandates and enhancing collaboration and coordination with other entities to avoid redundancy and improve overall efficiency.
- **Effective Standardization:** Ensuring that telecommunication standards, particularly those involving AI, are effectively produced and adopted, despite many being developed by private Standard Developing Organizations (SDOs) rather than the ITU.

How can the ITU **improve collaboration** among Sectors to create synergies and **achieve greater impact** for membership? (Top 5 findings)

- **Establish Cross-Sectoral Working Groups:** Create working groups that bring together experts and stakeholders from different sectors to address common challenges and identify overlapping priorities.
- **Encourage Regular Communication and Knowledge-Sharing:** Foster regular interactions between sectors to share knowledge and insights, facilitating the identification of synergies and collaborative opportunities.
- **Integrate Standardization with Capacity-Building:** Align ITU T's standardization efforts with ITU D's capacity-building initiatives to ensure technical standards are effectively implemented in regions lacking expertise.
- **Develop Joint Initiatives:** Promote joint initiatives that involve multiple sectors working together to create integrated solutions addressing both technological and policy challenges.
- **Define and Commit to "One ITU":** Provide a clear definition of the "One ITU" concept and commit to achieving it by identifying common themes, developing common strategies, and finding efficiency opportunities while respecting each sector's roles and responsibilities.

How can the ITU **improve collaboration with its membership** to create synergies and achieve greater impact? (Top 5 findings)

- **Create Regular Feedback Loops:** Implement surveys, consultations, and collaborative working groups to collect ongoing feedback from members. This will ensure that solutions are tailored to the actual needs of each member state.
- **Enhance Member-Driven Initiatives:** Increase opportunities for members to lead and co-create projects and strategies, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in ITU initiatives.
- **Ensure Greater Accessibility:** Provide equal access to documents, meetings, and discussions by exploring more inclusive platforms that accommodate technological limitations. This would promote transparency and encourage broader participation.
- **Develop Strategic Partnerships:** Strengthen partnerships with regional organizations and provide autonomy to regional/area offices. This will involve regional organizations in ITU's work and leverage their relationships to achieve greater impact.
- **Tailored Support and Sponsorships:** Offer customized sponsorship opportunities and support based on specific regional and national priorities. This includes mapping country trends and contributions to align ITU initiatives with member states' needs.

Where do you see potential **cost-saving opportunities** for the ITU without compromising its strategic goals? (Top 5 findings)

- **Optimizing Internal Processes:** Streamline administrative tasks, communications, and document management using advanced spend management tools and efficient technologies.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Explore partnerships with other international organizations or private sector partners to reduce costs through shared services or joint initiatives.
- **Resource Allocation Review:** Ensure funding is directed towards high-priority activities that directly contribute to strategic goals, reducing expenditure on less critical activities.
- **Artificial Intelligence Utilization:** Employ AI for interpretation and translation to improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- **Evaluation and Review Mechanism:** Implement mechanisms to review and learn from past projects, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of future projects and work.

What new **revenue generation strategies** should the ITU consider for the 2028-2031 period?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Fee-Based Consultancy Services:** Offering advisory services to governments and industries on spectrum management, digital policies, and ICT infrastructure.
- **Partnering with Private Sector:** Engaging in joint research projects and technology development initiatives with private sector entities.
- **Rental of ITU Space:** Leasing available space to events organized by other UN organizations.
- **Rigorous Management of Arrears:** Implementing strict measures for the collection and recovery of arrears, potentially restricting access to documents for long-term non-payment members.
- **Organization of Niche Events:** Hosting events that provide value to specific sectors within the digital ecosystem, thereby attracting targeted participation and sponsorship.

Which do you consider to be the **key financial risks** the ITU should prepare for in the 2028-2031 period?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Increased Operational Costs** – Rising global inflation along with costs related to digital transformation, cybersecurity, and compliance may strain ITU's budget, potentially exceeding the growth of available funding.
- **Financial Sustainability of Key Programs** – Long-term funding commitments are essential for high-impact programs. Lack of adequate financial planning could jeopardize these initiatives, particularly if there is a decline in donor interest or member support.
- **Unforeseen Costs of the New HQ Building Project** – Financial challenges during the construction of the new headquarters could disrupt business continuity and lead to unforeseen expenses beyond ITU's control.
- **Unclear Financial Impact of Key Activities** – As highlighted in the External Auditor's report (C24/144), activities such as the transformation initiative lack clarity regarding their financial impact and expected outcomes, posing risks to financial planning and long-term stability.
- **Increasing Litigation Expenses** – The rise in labor dispute cases has resulted in higher litigation costs, contributing to greater uncertainty in financial expenditures.

How can the ITU **mitigate** these risks?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Allow Hybrid Participation and Decision Making:** By enabling hybrid participation in major ITU conferences, travel and logistics costs can be significantly reduced.
- **Decentralize Administrative Tasks:** Shifting more administrative and operational tasks to regional offices can help minimize central overheads.
- **Build Financial Reserves:** Assessing and building financial reserves through flexible budgeting and forecasting can buffer against unpredictable funding gaps.
- **Strengthen Financial Oversight:** Implementing regular risk assessments, scenario planning, and strict budget controls ensures potential risks are identified and proactively addressed.
- **Diversify Income Sources:** Establishing a reserve plan and risk management plan, actively seeking expert advice, and reviewing capital structures can support financial stability.

Any further thoughts on **how to improve** the strategic planning and budgeting process?
(Top 5 findings)

- **Utilization of Advanced Analytics and AI:** Leveraging advanced analytics and AI tools to evaluate past programs' impact, efficiency, and forecast future trends and budgets.
- **Scenario-Based Budgeting:** Implementing scenario-based budgeting that evaluates economic, political, and technological uncertainties.
- **Results-Based Approach in Accountability Framework:** Adopting principles that emphasize clear, measurable objectives, performance indicators, and a results-based approach to planning, monitoring progress, and reporting.
- **Streamlining Guidelines and Prioritizing Activities:** Developing guidelines to prioritize activities, reviewing and streamlining resolutions and decisions to maintain a sound, priority-oriented framework.
- **Effective Consultation and Strategic Planning:** Ensuring the completion of CWG-SFP through effective consultation, strategic planning, and organized, efficient, and respectful handling of matters.

Notes

- ✓ The online consultation was carried out and processed using the Microsoft Forms tool.
- ✓ Open questions were analyzed and consolidated using AI tools.
- ✓ All responses received can be found on CWG-SFP-2/INF/2

Thank you for your participation and engagement!