

Virtual Consultation of Councillors

ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao

9 June 2020

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking all of you for making this virtual consultation possible, from the input that you provided following my informal consultation back in April to the letter sent by our Chairman last month to the tests and rehearsals in which you took part over this period. Thank you for your support!

I want to give a special thanks to the Chair of the ITU Council, Dr. Elsayed Azzouz. I also want to acknowledge the Vice-Chair, Saif Ghelaita, who has agreed to conduct our debates and has been instrumental in facilitating regional consultations to reach an agreement on the draft agenda for this virtual consultation. Thank you to the regional coordinators for their wonderful contributions to this draft agenda.

I am also pleased to note that we are seeing a better gender balance representation among all participants registered so far.

Early in the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we held the first-ever virtual Radio Regulation Board meeting. And in the last weeks, several Study Groups held virtual meetings, and both the Radiocommunication Advisory Group and the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group meetings took place online – and in six languages!

ITU has seen the world change and overcome many global crises in our 155-year-old history, and we have always come out stronger. ITU Members have stepped up and engaged in activities that have proven essential in saving lives and keeping the economy working during today's crisis.

Global digital cooperation has a major role to play in delivering critical digital services at a time when we need them the most. Now more than ever, the world needs to be able to rely on information and communication technologies and ITU's leadership in promoting universal, reliable, and affordable connectivity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased that you have always placed your confidence in us and demonstrated your support to ITU.

I am calling on you to continue to work together to ensure ITU's business continuity.

We hope to have a physical meeting of Council as soon as the sanitary situation allows all Council Member States to travel to Geneva and all conditions for your safe participation are met.

Let us continue the important work of strengthening our Union. And let us reaffirm our commitment to leveraging digital technologies to help make the world safer, stronger, and more connected.

I wish to thank the UAE for their sponsorship of the Interprefy platform and for enhancing remote participation in ITU meetings. And I wish you all a very successful consultation.

Thank you.