

RESOLUTION 167 (REV. BUCHAREST, 2022)

Strengthening and developing ITU capabilities for fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, and the electronic means to advance the work of the Union

The Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (Bucharest, 2022),

considering

- a)* the enabling environment thematic priority, identified in the strategic plan for the Union for 2024-2027, seeking a policy and regulatory environment conducive to sustainable telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT) development that encourages innovation and investment in infrastructure and ICTs and that increases adoption of telecommunications/ICTs to reduce the digital divide and promote a more inclusive and equal society;
- b)* the rapid technological change in the field of telecommunications and the associated policy, regulatory and infrastructure adaptations required at the national, regional and global levels;
- c)* the consequent need for the widest possible engagement of the ITU membership from around the world to address these matters in the work of the Union;
- d)* that developments in technologies and facilities for the holding of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation and the further development of electronic working methods (EWM) will enable more open, faster and easier collaboration between participants in the activities of ITU;

e) that ITU has been gaining experience in the holding of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation,

recalling

a) Resolution 64 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of this conference, on non-discriminatory access to telecommunication/ICT facilities, services and applications, including applied research and transfer of technology, and e-meetings, on mutually agreed terms;

b) Resolution 66 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of this conference, on documents and publications of the Union, regarding the electronic availability of documents;

c) Resolution 123 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of this conference, on bridging the standardization gap between developed and developing countries¹;

d) Resolution 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of this conference, on telecommunication/ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

e) Resolution 32 (Rev. Hammamet, 2016) of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, on strengthening EWM for the work of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and the implementation of EWM capabilities and associated arrangements in the work of ITU-T,

recognizing

a) that remote participation has been producing significant benefits for the Union's membership, by reducing travel costs, and has facilitated wider participation, particularly from developing countries;

b) that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has led to the holding of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation through the use of existing technology platforms, which have shown encouraging results in serving the aims of the Union;

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

- c) that numerous ITU meetings are already available as audio and video webcasts and that use of videoconferencing, audio conference calls, real-time captioning and web-based collaboration tools for remote participation in certain types of meetings have been advanced in meetings of the Sectors and the General Secretariat;
- d) the budgetary difficulty that delegates from many countries, and in particular developing countries, have in travelling to participate in face-to-face ITU meetings;
- e) that the current status of interactive remote participation allows "remote intervention" rather than "remote participation", insofar as a remote participant cannot take part in decision-making;
- f) that the regional offices are an extension of ITU as a whole and, therefore, EWM will serve to build up the effectiveness of the Union's activities, including project implementation;
- g) that the expected role of the regional offices is essential in order to fully comply with the basic mandates of the Union and, to this end, it is necessary that these offices be able to rely on affordable means of communication (videoconferencing), such as those that can be accessed over the web, to hold fully virtual meetings or physical meetings with remote participation with the Member States,

recognizing further

- a) the annual reports by the Secretary-General to the ITU Council on the implementation of this resolution;
- b) the report from the 2022 session of the Council to this conference;
- c) the financial, legal, procedural and technical difficulties of providing remote participation to all, particularly with respect to:
- the difference in time zones among regions and in relation to Geneva, and particularly with the Americas and Asia-Pacific regions;
 - the costs of infrastructure, broadband, equipment, software applications and staff, especially in developing countries;

- the different rights and legal status of physically present and remote participants;
 - the limitation in terms of formal procedures available to remote participants in comparison with physically present participants;
 - the telecommunication infrastructure limitations in some countries due to unstable or inadequate connections;
 - increased accessibility for people with disabilities and specific needs;
- d) the need to clarify the roles, rights and procedures for participation and decision-making in fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation,

noting

- a) that the existence of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, with well-documented rules and procedures, will help ITU in widening the involvement of potential stakeholders, such as both member and non-member experts, particularly from developing countries, who are unable to participate in face-to-face meetings;
- b) that EWM have made important contributions to facilitating the work of Sector groups, such as rapporteur groups, and of Council working groups, and that work, such as the development of texts, has been progressed in various parts of the Union through electronic communications;
- c) that different modes of participation are suitable for different types of meetings;
- d) that the work of the three Sectors is distinct, and that each of the Sectors has its own working methods and procedures;
- e) that managing fully virtual meetings from the regional offices can facilitate regional coordination, in order to promote greater participation by Member States in the work of the study groups of the three Sectors;
- f) that there needs to be a coordinated and harmonized approach to the technology used,

emphasizing

- a) that there is a need for procedures to ensure fair and equitable participation by all;
- b) that fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation can contribute to bridging the digital divide;
- c) that the implementation of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation is beneficial to ITU's role in leading coordination on ICTs and on accessibility,

resolves

- 1 that ITU should continue to develop its facilities and capabilities to organize and conduct fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation by electronic means for the meetings of the Union;
- 2 that ITU should develop high-level guidance for the management and governance of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation;
- 3 that the Union continue to develop EWM, within budget availability, for the participation of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, which may include, *inter alia*, captioning for persons with hearing impairments, audioconferencing for persons with the visual impairments and webconferencing for persons with restricted mobility, as well as solutions and facilities to address other similar challenges;
- 4 that the Union further study the impact of remote participation on existing rules of procedure, especially regarding decision-making in different types of meetings;
- 5 that ITU should provide facilities and capabilities for EWM at ITU meetings, workshops and training courses, particularly to assist developing countries that have bandwidth limitations and other constraints;
- 6 to encourage remote participation of developing countries in meetings, workshops and training by providing simplified facilities and guidelines, and by waiving, within the appropriations that the Council is empowered to authorize, any expenses for those participants, other than the local call or Internet connectivity charges,

instructs the Secretary-General, in consultation and collaboration with the Directors of the three Bureaux

- 1 to implement the adopted high-level guidance for the management and governance of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation considering the legal, technical, security and financial implications;
- 2 to involve the advisory groups in the further evaluation of the use of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, including the legal aspects;
- 3 to report to the Council on an ongoing basis on the developments made with regard to fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, in order to assess progress in their use within ITU;
- 4 to report to the Council on the feasibility of extending the use of the official languages of the Union² in fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation,

instructs the Secretary-General

to share information about developments and progress made with regard to fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation with the United Nations and other specialized agencies, for their consideration,

instructs the ITU Council

- 1 to study and develop high-level guidance for the management and governance of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, taking into account Annex 1 to this resolution;

² Resolution 154 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.

2 to consider the financial requirements to implement this resolution and allocate the necessary financial resources, within the limits of the resources available and consistent with the financial and strategic plans;

3 to report and provide recommendations to the plenipotentiary conference in 2026.

(Guadalajara, 2010) – (Rev. Busan, 2014) – (Rev. Dubai, 2018) – (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)

ANNEX 1 TO RESOLUTION 167 (REV. BUCHAREST, 2022)

Issues to be considered for the management and governance of fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation

- 1 Review current applicable policies and practices for fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation.

- 2 Establish general high-level guidelines for fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation, including but not limited to:
 - Rights of different categories of members participating remotely in terms of decision-making in different types of meetings;

 - Interpretation services;

 - Technology neutrality, to the greatest extent possible, and cost effectiveness, in order to allow as broad participation as possible, satisfying the necessary security requirements;

 - Adequate notice of meetings with a clear statement as to the type of meeting, e.g. physical meeting, fully virtual meeting or physical meeting with remote participation;

 - Whether fully virtual and/or remote participants have the opportunity to engage in offline discussions (e.g. ad hoc sessions);

 - Practical measures to support equitable opportunities for participation, in particular for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs;

- Flexibility in the length and timing of meetings bearing in mind the time zones of participants;
- Training, as appropriate, for ITU meeting organizers, regional office staff, chairmen, rapporteurs, editors and delegates, with particular attention to chairing and effectively managing remote participation;
- Collection of statistics regarding trends in remote participation across all Sectors.