Independent Management Advisory Committee
IMAC 41ˢᵗ meeting

Geneva, 25-28 February 2025

Summary Report of the 41ˢᵗ IMAC meeting

Present: Mr. Niel Harper (remote connection), Mr. Christof Gabriel Maetze, Mr. Bassam Hage, Ms. Chitra Barth-Radhakishun, Mr. Henrique Schneider, Mr. Honore Ndoko

1-Opening Session

The quorum and the absence of conflict of interest were confirmed and recorded. The agenda was reviewed and adopted with minor adjustments to accommodate sessions with the Secretary-General. The committee also refined the meeting structure and session timing. A briefing on the 9th Meeting of the Chairs of UN Oversight Committees highlighted best practices in oversight across UN agencies. Members debated the benefits of formalizing these meetings versus maintaining flexibility to enhance collaboration. The Committee pursued its reflection on IMAC own methods of work.

2- Session with the Chief of Staff

The Chief of Staff conveyed the ITU Secretary-General's commitment to close collaboration with IMAC. Discussions focused on ITU's organizational transformation, ITU priorities and challenges for 2025, and efforts to increase the efficiency of the IMAC interaction with ITU Senior Management including responsiveness to oversight recommendations.

3- IMAC Internal Meeting

Effectiveness and selectivity

Members reflected on the evolving nature of IMAC reporting and its influence on ITU's internal processes. A broader discussion emerged on ITU's increasing focus on artificial intelligence (AI), emphasizing the importance of maintaining ITU's core mission of bridging the digital divide while ensuring AI initiatives complement rather than overshadow existing priorities.

Review and update of IMAC Recommendations

The Committee reviewed a documented update of the implementation status of IMAC recommendations. Members noted that while ITU has acknowledged past recommendations,

implementation remains inconsistent. Some members suggested that a stronger assessment and follow up could reinforce IMAC's findings and encourage greater responsiveness from ITU leadership. The committee agreed to propose to close recommendations assessed obsolete or implemented, to redefine overlapping recommendations, and continue monitoring the others. Out of 21 outstanding recommendations as of February 2025, 7 will be closed. The revised recommendations will be submitted to Council 2025 as an annex to the IMAC report for approval.

IMAC In-Camera Briefing on Ongoing Matters

The committee held a closed session to discuss sensitive and ongoing issues. This session allowed for frank exchanges on challenges within ITU's governance, financial management, and operational efficiency.

4- Financial Management and Budget

The financial session covered several key topics, including the closing of the 2024 financial year and the preparation of financial statements. The Committee noted with appreciation that the preparation of the 2024 financial statements was well on track.

ITU's financial position and outlook for 2025 were reviewed, with discussions focusing on cash flow management, contributions from member states, and potential budgetary constraints.

The committee discussed effectiveness of fraud prevention and detection, emphasizing the importance of strong first- and second-line roles in financial oversight.

Updates were provided on actuarial assumptions for the After-Service Health Insurance (ASHI) liability, with members noting the need for careful financial planning to manage long-term obligations. A discussion on treasury management and contribution levels for 2025-2026 highlighted concerns about sustainability and resource allocation.

IMAC also followed up on previous recommendations regarding financial governance, noting some progress while emphasizing the need for continued monitoring to ensure long-term improvements.

The Committee will reemphasize its recommendation about the financing of ASHI liabilities with a budget complement for new hires effective January 2026

5-Session with Strategic Planning and Membership Department

The Chief of Strategic Planning and Membership Department, provided an overview of department's role, functions, and accountability mechanisms. Updates were given on 2024 activities, key performance indicators (KPIs), and planned engagements for 2025-2026.

Efforts to strengthen partnerships and improve efficiency were noted, particularly in stakeholder engagement and cross-sectoral collaboration. However, challenges remain, including staffing limitations and the need for streamlined decision-making processes. Members emphasized the importance of aligning ITU's strategic objectives across sectors and

strengthening intersectoral collaboration to ensure strategic initiatives translate into concrete outcomes.

IMAC recommended strengthening stakeholder engagement and optimizing resource allocation to align ITU's strategy with global digital trends.

6-Updates on the Oversight Unit (OU)

IMAC reviewed the Internal Oversight Unit's 2025 work plan and commented on the risk universe and risk-based approach of the Internal Audit work plan. The Committee took note of key features and trends in the presentation on the Investigation function and suggested to do a root cause analysis in due course . The Committee renewed its advice to commission most of the evaluation program from external provider of evaluation services.

The Committee look forward to reviewing by early 2026 a paper on the harmonized approach of evaluation across ITU. While taking note of the recruitment underway the Committee emphasized the need to provide an adequate level of resources in support of the work program and expected outputs from the Internal Oversight Unit. The Committee reaffirmed its support to the functional independence of the Internal Oversight Unit while encouraging consultation and coordination as appropriate with other departments.

7- New ITU Building Project

The Committee took note of the updating briefing, the revised schedule of the project and the updated financing structure based on the repurposing of the core Swiss loan of CHF 150 million and grants or pledges from members States. The Committee sought clarification about the handling of the grants from members States tied to features that are not included in the revised projects. The Committee also sought to verify the funding source of the capital expenditures of CHF 22.2 million written off in 2024 following the approval of the revised project.

The project has a complex governance structure, reporting to multiple ITU bodies and external authorities. The Committee urged streamlining decision-making while maintaining accountability.

Transparency is key and timely identification and escalation of unpredicted difficulties will help to avoid future hindrances and damages to the project.

The Committee encouraged the project team to take a less exposed contracting approach based on lessons learnt. A dynamic risk review should be in place to manage financial and regulatory uncertainties.

The Committee emphasized funding risks, governance efficiency, and long-term planning. Key priorities include simplifying oversight, securing financial sustainability, and ensuring ITU's infrastructure meets future needs. The Committee renewed its recommendation of a multiyear programme of annual internal audits to support the oversight and ensure that the project remain on track.

The Committee will advise ITU management to define harmonized universal ITU minimum office standards applicable at HQ and in all other regional and country offices. This will entail a stocktaking assessment of the quality office accommodation and a multiyear program of convergence and compliance in all ITU offices around the World.

8- Session with the External Auditors

The external auditors confirmed that they have all indications from the interim assessment that the audit schedule was on track. The 2024 financial statements will recognize and will include a write-off of the building project capital expenditures flagged in the "Emphasis of Matter" in the 2023 audit certification.

In addition to the key focus areas of financial risk assessments and the compliance with funding agreements, the committee discussed the updating of ITU's asset valuation policies, particularly for intangible assets and construction expenditures. Auditors supported ITU's review efforts and recommended greater clarity and consistency. Internal financial oversight mechanisms were also reviewed, with suggestions for strengthening governance and transparency.

A discussion on unpaid contributions, particularly those affected by financial restrictions, explored alternative payment solutions while ensuring compliance with regulations.

The final 2024 audit report is expected by end of May. A review by IMAC will be scheduled mid-May before the certification. The committee reminded of the importance of timely financial reporting and governance improvements to strengthen ITU's oversight.

The committee held a closed session with the external auditors to discuss audit concerns and define common methods for improving ITU's activities.

9-Courtesy Session with the Chair of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources (CWG-FHR)

The Committee acknowledged with appreciation the excellent overview presentation of the role of the CWG FHR and the key outcomes of its February 2025 Meeting. IMAC renewed its dedication to provide effective advisory contribution to Council governance oversight.

10-Session with the Chief of Administration and Finance (A&F)
The Chief of A&F provided updates on ITU's restructuring efforts. Discussions centered on efficiency gains, administrative function realignment, and workforce planning strategies. IMAC reviewed key recommendations and proposed complementary support measures to enhance institutional performance.

11- Information Services and Information Security

The Committee appreciated the comprehensive and multitopic presentation made by a team led by the acting Chief of the Information Services department. The Committee took note of progress in the transition from on-premises IT systems to cloud-based solutions. While progress has been made, challenges remain in ensuring secure migration and comprehensive IT

disaster recovery. ITU is working on centralizing business continuity plans, consolidating them into a unified document to standardize contingency strategies across field offices and headquarters.

The Committee noted that ITU is advancing an Enterprise Architecture strategy to align IT investments with business priorities. The approach will cover business processes, applications, infrastructure, and data architecture, starting with the General Secretariat before expanding to the ITU sectors. The committee highlighted that the lack of a centralized IT governance framework remains a challenge, as multiple IT departments operate independently within sectors, creating security and coordination risks.

The ITU has modernized its Security Operations Centre (SOC), now fully operational as of January 2025. A hybrid SOC model is in place, where first and second-level monitoring is outsourced, while incident response is managed in-house. Efforts to enhance identity and access management (IAM) are ongoing, with a focus on multi-factor authentication, privileged access monitoring, and security audits.

The lack of a formal data classification framework was identified as a significant risk, limiting ITU's ability to prevent data leaks. Cyber threats are rising, particularly during IT conferences, prompting discussions on enhancing cybersecurity monitoring during major events. Training compliance remains an issue, with low participation rates in mandatory cybersecurity training. The committee discussed implementing stricter enforcement measures, including potential access restrictions for non-compliant staff.

12-Session on Risk Management and Internal Controls

ITU's risk management framework, aligned with the COSO model and the Three Lines of Defense approach, was reviewed. The updated risk register now includes cybersecurity, financial risks, and data governance concerns. IMAC recommended deeper integration of risk management into ITU's decision-making processes to enhance accountability and preparedness.

13- Session with the Ethics Officer

The Ethics Officer provided updates on the annual disclosure of interest program, the training, and on the analysis of ethics-related inquiries. Low participation in mandatory ethics training prompted IMAC to recommend stricter enforcement mechanisms. The Ethics Officer informed the Committee that she will soon move to the IOM on a one-year loan arrangement. The Committee took note and wished her well.

14- Human Resources and Workforce Planning

The Committee noted with appreciation that a comprehensive ITU staff engagement survey recommended by the Committee was eventually conducted in January -February 2025. The Committee encouraged a transparent dissemination of the survey multilevel outcomes and analysis as well as a strong inclusive mobilization for the determination of follow up action plans. With this very first survey there is an opportunity to establish a credible baseline for future ITU staff engagement surveys which should be conducted every other year. The Committee looks forward to receiving an update briefing of the survey outcomes and analysis.

The Committee received a briefing on the opportunities and limitations of the Voluntary Separation Program and suggested a phasing of the program over multiple years to accommodate budget constraints while ensuring smooth workforce transition.

The Committee noted that ITU is developing a workforce planning strategy which should be aligned with transformation initiatives. A succession planning framework aiming to identify key roles and ensure leadership continuity is also in progress. The Committee proposed a structured succession plan, requiring managers to nominate three potential replacements for each critical role to ensure continuity and career development.

The Committee took note of ITU efforts to reduce recruitment time to four months, but concerns remain that this is still too long compared to private sector benchmarks. A review of ITU's hiring process is underway, focusing on classification, system improvements, and streamlining decision-making.

The Committee appreciated a real-time presentation of the workforce analytics dashboard, providing insights into staff distribution, contract types, gender balance, and retirement projections. Members emphasized the need for stronger data utilization in workforce planning and streamlining HR structures to improve efficiency.

The Committee renewed its emphasis on the development of a comprehensive program addressing staff well-being and mental health challenges.

15- Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB) Updates

The Committee welcomed the excellent and well-articulated briefing from the TSB Director and his team. The TSB Director introduced the main areas of responsibility for ITU-T sector and the priorities for this year. ITU-T leads global digital standardization, ensuring interoperability, security, and sustainability across emerging technologies. It plays a key role in AI, cybersecurity, digital public infrastructure, and next-generation networks.

Key Highlights :

- AI for Good, ITU's largest platform, was born in ITU-T and is now the most significant global initiative on AI, engaging 40+ UN agencies and thousands of stakeholders.

- Cybersecurity & Digital Trust: Strengthening AI security, digital identity, fraud prevention, and metaverse safety.

- Sustainability & Climate Action: Developing standards for green ICT, energy efficiency, and e-waste management.

- Digital Transformation: Standardizing AI, IoT, blockchain, and quantum technologies to drive interoperability and innovation.

- Network Evolution: Advancing 5G, 6G, automation, and smart connectivity for seamless global communication.

- Bridging the Gap: Supporting developing countries with training, fellowships, and digital skills initiatives.

The committee concluded that ITU-T remains central to shaping global digital standards, driving innovation while ensuring security, sustainability, and inclusivity.

16-Procurement Update

The Committee welcomed the new Head of Procurement and took note of her presentation. The presentation introduced the main coordinates for the activity of the division. The procurement function ensures the timely and cost-effective acquisition of high-quality goods, services, and works while upholding fairness, transparency, and value for money. Governed by ITU financial regulations, policies, and manuals. ITU processed 1,770 purchase orders in 2024, amounting to CHF 20.5 million. Efforts are underway to improve procurement efficiency, reduce processing delays, and strengthen fraud prevention measures. IMAC recommended leveraging AI-driven procurement tools and aligning ITU's procurement policies with UN best practices.

17- Session on the Transformation Initiative

The Transformation Team Chief provided updates on AI-driven initiatives, digital process automation, and efficiency improvements. The Transformation Dashboard was launched to improve accountability. IMAC emphasized the need for continuous assessment of transformation outcomes to ensure strategic alignment.

18- Closing Session with the Secretary-General

The closing session provided a high-level reflection on discussions throughout the IMAC meeting. The ITU Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General acknowledged the progress made in financial oversight, HR reforms, and digital transformation

The succession planning process was discussed, with recommendations to institutionalize a structured system where each key position has three potential successors identified confidentially. The Young Professionals Program was praised, and there were discussions about rotations and structured mentorship to maximize its impact.

ITU's digital transformation strategy was reviewed, emphasizing the need for clearer governance and accountability. There were concerns about fragmented IT functions across different sectors, leading to inconsistent cybersecurity policies and inefficiencies. The committee reinforced the need for centralized oversight of IT functions to ensure harmonization and security compliance.

Procurement processes were discussed, with an emphasis on improving efficiency without compromising compliance. A new procurement framework proposal aims to reduce unnecessary approval steps while strengthening internal controls.

The Committee took note of ongoing efforts to arrange adequate interim succession scheme for the Ethics function and advised to ensure that documented handing over arrangements will be in place. The Committee also took note of progress in having a new ombudsman service shared with WIPO is being introduced to professionalize mediation and dispute resolution at ITU.

The Committee noted a positive shift in ITU's operational and financial governance, with clearer strategic direction and improved accountability mechanisms. While risks remain, particularly in HR, digital security, and financial sustainability, there is growing confidence in ITU's ability to address these challenges.

The session concluded with a commitment to follow up on outstanding recommendations, particularly in risk management, workforce planning, and digital transformation. The next IMAC will direct its focus on the measurement of progress against key governance initiatives to ensure continued improvements.

19- Other Matters

The Committee extends it appreciation to the ITU Secretary General, the ITU Management and staff, as well as its Executive Secretary for their contribution and participation to the 41st IMAC Meeting.

The Committee expresses its gratitude for the opportunity to engage with the Chair of the Council Working Group – Financial and Human Resource.

The 42nd IMAC Meeting is scheduled to take place in Geneva from May 14 to May 16, 2025, and the 43rd IMAC Meeting is scheduled from November 12 to November 14, 2025.

March 2025

ITU Independent Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Bassam Hage, Mr Christof G. Maetze, Ms. Chitra Barth-Radhakishun, Mr. Niel Harper,

Mr. Henrique Schneider (Vice Chair), Mr. Honore Ndoko (Chair) and,

Mr. Catalin Marinescu (Executive Secretary /ITU Staff).