



ITU Backgrounders

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HOW IS ITU GOVERNED?

Held every four years, the Plenipotentiary Conference is the supreme governing organ of ITU, and the event at which ITU Member States decide on the future role of the organization. The 2014 Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-14) will be held in Busan, Republic of Korea from 20 October to 7 November.

The term 'plenipotentiary' refers to the full powers which must be accorded to Member State representatives heading national delegations to allow them to sign the Final Acts of the Plenipotentiary on behalf of their governments. The part of the Final Acts containing amendments to the ITU Constitution and Convention serves as an international treaty.

The Plenipotentiary Conference elects the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Directors of the Radiocommunication, Telecommunication Standardization and Development Bureaux as well as the members of the Radio Regulations Board. The conference also agrees two key documents: the Strategic and Financial Plans that will govern the Union's activities and budget for the next four-year period.

ITU Member States are represented at Plenipotentiary Conferences by their national delegation. There is no restriction on the size or composition of Member State delegations, with ITU encouraging Member states to include a range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors and civil society, and to strive to ensure a good gender balance.

In addition to electing ITU's five top managers, the Plenipotentiary Conference also elects the Member States (currently 48) that will constitute the next [ITU Council](#), which serves as the governing body of the Union in between Plenipotentiary Conferences.

ITU Council normally meets once a year, where delegates from the 48 Council Member States consider broad telecommunication policy issues to ensure that the Union's activities, policies and strategies fully respond to today's dynamic, rapidly changing telecommunications environment as well as administrative issues.

ITU Council sets up specialized [Working Groups](#) to deal with specific issues as needed. Council also takes all steps to facilitate the implementation of the provisions of the ITU Constitution, the ITU Convention, the Administrative Regulations (International Telecommunications Regulations and Radio Regulations), the decisions and resolutions of Plenipotentiary Conferences other conferences and meetings of the Union.

ITU Council membership comprises representative countries from five regions, each of which are accorded a number of seats according to the total number of ITU Member States in each region. The number of Council seats is based on 25 percent of the total number of ITU Member States per region. The number of Council seats was increased from 46 to 48 by the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference to reflect ITU's growing membership, now with a total of 193 Member States.



PLENIPOTENTIARY 2014

BUSAN KOREA



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Current Council Members (2011-2014)

- **Region A — Americas (9 seats)** Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay, United States, Venezuela
- **Region B — Western Europe (8 seats)** France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey
- **Region C — Eastern Europe (5 seats)** Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation
- **Region D — Africa (13 seats)** Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia
- **Region E — Asia and Australasia (13 seats)** Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Kuwait, Malaysia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates

The [Council Troika](#) was established in 2001 based on the recommendation of the Council Working Group on Reform and outlined in Council Resolution 1181. It consists of the past, current and future Chairs of the Council. The Troika ensures a smooth transition between acting Chairs.

The [Independent Management Advisory Committee](#) (IMAC), a subsidiary body of the ITU Council, serves in an expert advisory capacity and assists the Council and the Secretary-General in fulfilling their governance responsibilities, including ensuring the effectiveness of ITU's internal control systems, risk management and governance processes. The IMAC is selected by a panel comprising of five experts each from the Americas, Europe, CIS, Africa, Asia and Australasia according to the Terms of Reference laid out in and [Annex to PP-10 Resolution 162](#). IMAC members serve terms of four years.

Who can vote at PP-14?

Because of ITU's strong – and long – culture of consensus, voting is relatively rare at ITU conferences, with the exception of the election of ITU's top management and the members of the Radio Regulation Board and ITU Council.

That said, a vote *may* be called in any meeting of the Plenipotentiary, ranging from small Ad Hoc groups to the substantive Committees (for PP-14, these are Committees 5 and 6), the Working Group of the Plenary, and full Plenary sessions. A vote can take the form of a request for a show of hands (delegations having the right to vote raise the 'paddles' coloured white with a red spot), a roll call vote (names of countries having the right to vote are read out, and countries indicate whether for, against or abstention, or a secret ballot – the room is 'sealed' during the vote, and countries are called one by one to submit an anonymous ballot paper).

Only Member States can vote – Sector Members as well as observers are not entitled to vote.



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To have the right to vote, Member States need to have their 'credentials' in order (meaning that delegation has been accorded full decision-making powers by the administration of the country they represent), need to have ratified the ITU Constitution and Convention, and must not be in arrears with their financial contribution to the Union if the amount in question is equal or exceeds the amount of the contribution due by the Member State concerned for the two preceding years. Countries may vote on behalf of one other Member State (proxy vote) if they have the proper credentials authorizing them to do so.

Countries may choose to vote or not to vote. Those who choose to vote can vote for, against, or abstain. Choosing not to vote is not counted as an abstention – countries need to formally abstain.

Any country which does not agree with the outcome of a vote can submit a formal Reservation/Declaration on the decision when it signs the Final Acts of the Conference.