

Internet Society Background Paper on ITU Plenipotentiary 2018

This background paper is intended to provide the Internet Society community and interested parties with a general overview of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference and our perspectives on some of the main issues which may be discussed.

Summary

The International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference (Plenipot or PP-18) is the main decision-making body of the ITU that provides overall strategic and financial guidance from an administrative, budgetary, and operational perspective. It is an international treaty conference where government delegations represented by Member States can negotiate changes to the two primary basic instruments of the Union: the Constitution and Convention (CS/CV); they can also adopt Resolutions, which are not treaty-level agreements. While many Resolutions are expected to be revised at PP-18, it is not expected that there will be any changes to the CS/CV. The Plenipotentiary occurs every four years and will be held from 29 October to 16 November in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Background

The ITU is a U.N. specialized agency headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The ITU has been around for over 150 years making it one of the oldest international organizations in the world. It plays an important role in forging cooperation in the global communications system, telecommunications infrastructure development and the allocation of radio frequency spectrum.

The ITU includes three sectors that carry out the activities mandated by the Plenipotentiary Conference:

- Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R);
- Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T); and
- Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D).

Sector work programmes are defined by an assembly or conference held every four years (WTSA, WTDC, WRC). Plenipotentiary and the ITU Council provide high-level governance for the overall function of the ITU. ITU Council serves as the governing body during the intervening years between Plenipotentiary conferences, and is composed of one-fourth of the ITU's Member States, elected on a regional basis during Plenipotentiary. ITU Council addresses decisions that do not involve changing treaty text or elections.

Who Participates

Only ITU Member States and invited observers can participate at the Plenipotentiary Conference. The membership of the ITU is comprised of government delegations that participate as Member States, by private industry and other approved organizations that participate as Sector Members, and Academia. At Plenipotentiary only Member States can make formal contributions and vote. While Sector Members participate in ITU conferences, assemblies and meetings, they do so as observers in a non-advisory capacity.

Other invited observers such as the United Nations and specialized UN agencies participate in an advisory capacity.

Internet Society's role at Plenipotentiary

The Internet Society is a Sector Member of the ITU-T and ITU-D Sectors and intends to participate at Plenipotentiary. As a Sector Member, we follow the activities and engage in discussion as it relates to the Internet's technical, social and economic development. We support the open Internet model for its continued success. We advocate for using collaborative multistakeholder approaches for decision making in a globally distributed network environment.

Main objectives of the Plenipotentiary

Plenipotentiary has specific objectives to accomplish that are outlined in its Constitution. Amongst its work, Plenipotentiary includes these activities:

- Sets the ITU's general policies;
- Considers Council Reports (2015 to 2018);
- Adopts the Union's four-year strategic and financial plans (2021-2025);
- Elects the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary General and Directors of the three Bureaus;
- Elects Member States to ITU Council and Members of the Radio Regulations Board;
- Revises, modifies or proposes new Resolutions related to telecommunications;
- Considers proposals for amending the Constitution and/or Convention (CS/CV); and
- Deals with membership issues (Set contributory units, consider Membership Structure, fees, reciprocity).

Inputs to Plenipotentiary

The CS/CV provides general [deadlines](#) for Member State inputs to the Plenipotentiary. The Plenipotentiary receives information from various sources that drive its work, principally:

- **ITU Council Reports:** PP-18 will consider Council reports issued after Plenipotentiary 2014. ITU Council governs the ITU during the intervening period between plenipotentiaries. Essentially, ITU Council, working with ITU elected officials and staff, manages activities required by Plenipot Resolutions that should be carried out by the Union. ITU Council generally meets once a year, but exceptionally meets twice during the year of Plenipotentiary. Council is composed of one fourth of the Member States elected on a regional basis at Plenipotentiary. Council can take decisions on a range of issues, however, they cannot make changes to the Constitution and Convention which is a task reserved only for a Plenipotentiary.
- **Draft Strategic and Financial Plan (Strat-Plan):** the "Strat-Plan" guides the activities of the ITU and lays out its vision, mission, and values, and reflects a wide set of strategic goals and targets, and ITU Sector objectives and outcomes to be achieved in the next 4 years. The Strat-Plan process is initiated by the Secretary General by providing input to the Council. In 2017, Council set up the Council Working Group on Strategic and Financial Planning (CWG-SFP) for the elaboration of the draft Strat-Plan. The CWG-SFP receives input from WTSA-16, WTDC-17, TDAG, [open public consultations](#) and input from

Member States, Sector Members, and Sector Advisory Groups (TDAG, TSAG, and RAG). The top technological trends identified in the initial stakeholder consultation for the ITU to consider in planning its strategy were 5G/IMT-2020, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Big Data, and Standards development.

- **Common Regional Proposals¹:** Some of the main Plenipotentiary contributions will come from Regional Telecommunication Organizations (e.g., APT, ATU, CITELE, CEPT, RCC) preparatory processes. Common proposals are the consolidated views from the regional organizations on Plenipotentiary Resolutions (modifications, “no-change”, deletion, or new), the Draft Strategic Plan and/or amendments to the rules and procedures for ITU Conferences and Assemblies.
- **Member States Contributions:** Member States proposals can include proposed amendments to the Constitution and Convention, new resolutions, modifications, and/or revisions to Plenipotentiary Resolutions and proposals to amend the rules and procedures for ITU Conferences and assemblies.

Regional Preparatory Meetings

Regional telecommunication organizations began preparations in mid 2017, and, while the timetables vary, these preparations will run through September 2018 at the regional and national levels.

The regional preparatory process main objectives are to:

- Determine the regional priorities and objectives for Plenipotentiary;
- Facilitate consolidation of views at the regional level;
- Develop common proposals for the conference; and
- Coordinate preparations amongst the regional telecommunication organizations to help build consensus prior to the conference.

Meeting Dates (2018)

Regional Organization	Dates
Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT)	Jan 29-Feb 1, Vietnam; June 18-21 Melbourne; August 21-24, Kuala Lumpur
League of Arab States (Arab States)	March 3-8, Khartoum; July 25-28, Muscat; Sept 24-28, Riyadh; Oct 28, Dubai
Africa Telecommunication Union (ATU)	March 13-15, Abuja; June 18-21, Algiers; August 13-14, Nairobi

¹Some Regional Groups refer to Common Proposals by other names; e.g. Arab States; Arab States Common Proposals (ASCPs); Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) / Asia Pacific Common Proposals (ACP); Africa Telecommunication Union (ATU) /Africa Common Proposals(AFCP) Inter America Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) /Inter America Common Proposals (IAP); etc.

European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT)	March 26-29, Copenhagen; May 8-11, Romania; June 12-15, Prague; August 30, Web-meeting; September 19-21, Berlin
Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)	March 15, Buenos Aires; May 22-25, Lima; August 20-24, TBC
Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC)	2 February, Kazakhstan, and 28-29 August 2018, Kyrgyzstan

Internet Considerations

The ITU's mandate has been focused on international telecommunications and the scope of its activities is specifically stated in [Article 1 of the ITU Constitution](#). The Internet resolutions (in particular Resolutions 101 and 102), Cybersecurity (in particular Resolution 130) and Internationalized Domain Names, amongst others, have established a certain role for the ITU in the Internet governance realm. However, some Member States want the ITU to do more in the Internet Governance realm and others want it do less. Member States are struggling to agree on what the proper role for the ITU should be. Differences in views have emerged in the various technical study group meetings and conferences (e.g., WTSA, WTDC). The issues discussed and the tone at these meetings forecast the issues and set the tenor for the debate expected at Plenipotentiary 2018.

- World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA 2016):** WTSA-16 set the work program for the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) for the next four years. The mandate for this Sector is the "development and use of interoperable international standards for telecommunications." Some of the Internet issues discussed at WTSA-16 included the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Data Privacy, Cybersecurity, IP-Addressing, Digital Object Architecture and Over the Top Services and Applications. The WTSA-16 outcomes resulted in a consolidation of issues in ITU-T Study Group-20 (IOT).
- World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC 2017):** WTDC-17 set the development agenda for the Development Sector for the next four years and provided input into the Strategic and Financial Plan 2020-2023. Some of the topics from WTSA-16 emerged at WTDC-17 and were equally as controversial there as they had been at WTSA-16. Member States debated whether or not to include privacy and cybersecurity policy considerations in areas within the work of ITU-D and in the draft Strategic Plan. Additionally, Member States discussed whether the ITU could forge or facilitate international agreements on issues such as cybersecurity. These issues are expected to come up at PP-18. Note: Good progress was made on resolutions related to international Internet connectivity and IXPs with collaborative support from developing and developed countries.
- Expert Group on International Telecommunication Regulations (EG-ITRs):** the ITU began a review of the [International Telecommunication Regulations](#) (ITRs) in 2017 through an [Expert Group on the ITRs](#) (EG-ITR). The group's fourth meeting took place in Geneva on April 12 and 13, 2018. The review takes into account new trends in telecommunications/ICT, emerging issues and obstacles that may arise from the implementation of the 2012 ITRs and WCIT-12 Resolutions and Recommendations. Two distinct views emerged during the review process: those that view the ITRs are unnecessary due to

market competition, national regulatory policies and bilateral agreements for the global provision of telecommunication/ICTs; and those that view the ITRs as necessary as they set common principles for the global provision of telecommunication/ICTs. Plenipotentiary will consider the EG-ITRs report and could decide that a revision or update is not needed, or convene a WCIT to partially or fully revise the ITRs.

Some of the Internet related issues likely to be discussed at Plenipotentiary:

- Cybersecurity and a possible treaty instrument or international agreement for cybersecurity;
- Data privacy and protection with renewed efforts for an international privacy framework for cross border data flows; and possibly efforts to include privacy in standardization activities;
- Convergence technologies and impact on traditional telecommunications networks and revenues;
- Artificial Intelligence and its role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and ITU’s role on AI including inclusion in the work of ITU-T;
- Role of governments in International Internet public policy with renewed efforts to expand the ability of CWG-Internet to make recommendations and to have decision-making authority. Additionally, opening up the CWG-Internet either to Sector Members or any stakeholders; and
- Standardization activities on IoT particularly identifier technologies for IoT, e.g. the Digital Object Architecture (DOA).

Note: The exact issues to be discussed at PP-18 will become known once the proposals emerge in the preparatory processes in the coming weeks and the Internet Society will provide updates accordingly.

Internet Related Resolutions

Issues	Plenipotentiary Resolutions
Internet-related public policy issues	<p>RES 101: Internet Protocol-based networks</p> <p>RES 102: ITU's role with regard to international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and the management of Internet resources...;</p> <p>RES 133: Role of administrations of Member States in the management of internationalized (multilingual) domain names</p> <p>RES 178: ITU role in organizing the work on technical aspects of telecommunication networks to support the Internet</p> <p>RES 180: Facilitating the transition from IPv4 to IPv6</p>
Cybersecurity: Confidence and security in the use of ICTs (incl. SPAM & CIRTs)	<p>RES 130: Strengthening the role of ITU in building confidence and security...</p> <p>RES 181: Definitions and terminology relating to building confidence and security...</p> <p>RES 196: Protecting telecommunication service users/consumers</p>
Child Online Protection and access to illegal information on the Internet	<p>RES 174: ITU's role with regard to international public policy issues relating to the risk of illicit use of information and communication technologies</p> <p>RES 179: ITU's role in child online protection</p>
WSIS+10 and SDGs	<p>RES 140: ITU's role in implementing the outcomes of the WSIS...</p> <p>RES 200: Connect 2020 Agenda for global telecommunication/information...</p> <p>RES 201: Creating an enabling environment for the deployment and use of</p>

	information...
Role of Standardization	<p>RES 122: The evolving role of the WTSA</p> <p>RES 123: Bridging the standardization gap between developing and developed countries</p> <p>RES 135: ITU's role in the development of telecommunications/information...</p> <p>RES 178: ITU role in organizing the work on technical aspects of telecommunication networks to support the Internet</p>
Digital Inclusion (Youth, Gender, PWDs)	<p>RES 70: Mainstreaming a gender perspective in ITU and promotion of gender equality...</p> <p>RES 175: Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs</p> <p>RES 198: Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information...</p>
Access and infrastructure	<p>RES 137: Next-generation network deployment in developing countries¹</p> <p>RES 203: Connectivity to broadband networks</p>
Emerging technologies (IoT)	RES 197: Facilitating the Internet of Things to prepare for a globally connected world