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Online participation at the Executive Council meeting

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Presentation by Australia

Executive Council Meeting
Bangkok, Thailand
14 - 18 August 2023

Online participation - documents



- The Reform Working Group considered the facilitation of online participation in Executive Council meetings.
- The Reform Working Group has prepared the following documents:
 - EC 2023 Doc 19 - Online participation in 2023 Bangkok Executive Council Meeting
 - EC 2023 Proposal 01 – Facilitation of remote viewing of Executive Council Meetings
 - EC 2023 Proposal 19.2 – Rule of Procedure of Executive Council



Online participation - practicalities

- The APPU Treaties do not discuss hybrid or virtual participation in meetings. At the 2022 Congress, an amendment was made to the Rules of Procedure of Congresses to facilitate virtual participation in the meeting as a ‘one off’.
- This amendment was considered and agreed by in-person attendees only.
- Following the approval of the amendment, a connection was established with virtual participants who could then participate in the rest of the Congress.
- A similar approach needs to be taken to the issue before us today – that is only in-person attendees are allowed to decide whether to allow online participation. If the EC members approve the proposals, then online participation will be enabled.
- If approved, online participants will connect during the coffee break to the meeting.
- There are some limitations to online participation that differ from the UPU. These are *treaty limitations*.



Online participation - background

- In considering whether to develop a proposal to facilitate online participation in Executive Council meetings, the Reform Working Group considered:
 - The relevant provisions in the APPU treaties
 - The advantages of in-person attendance at meetings
 - That some APPU members can have difficulties in attending meetings in-person
 - The approach of the UPU
- The Reform Working Group considered that limited online participation was permissible under the treaties and struck a balance between increasing accessibility while maintaining the benefits of an in-person gathering.
- This matter was subject to detailed discussion and consultation within the working group and with the Bureau.
- Further detail can be found at EC 2023 Doc 19.



Online participation - proposals

- There are two options for consideration by the Executive Council to facilitate online participation:
 - **Proposal A** (at EC 2023 Doc 19, Add 1) is a resolution which facilitates the livestreaming of the EC meeting through a suitable platform, and only enables observation of the meeting by APPU members and invited observers.
 - **Proposal A and B as a package** (at EC 2023 Doc 19, Add 2) consists of the livestreaming element of Proposal A and a new provision to be inserted into the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council which facilitates online attendees to speak during discussions where technology allows and unless the Council otherwise decides.
- If approved, the proposal will function until the next Congress. The Bureau and the Reform Working Group will review the effectiveness of the arrangement. At this time, Congress can consider the outcomes of the review and decide whether the arrangement should be extended, adjusted or ceased.



Online participation - proposals

- The Executive Council has three options:
 - Approve **Proposal A** which would allow online participants to watch the EC Meeting only (similar to UPU TV)
 - Approve **Proposal A and B as a package** which would allow online participants to watch and speak during the EC Meeting
 - Approve no proposal and only in-person attendees may participate in the meeting

Online participation – proposal A key features



Is a resolution that instructs the Bureau to:

- livestream EC meetings on a suitable platform
- manage access to the livestream
- meet any costs associated with the livestream
- work with the RWG to review the livestreaming experience

Facilitation of remote viewing of Executive Council Meetings

The Executive Council,

considering the practices of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) to livestream committee and plenary meetings of the Councils and of the Congress as agreed by UPU Congress Resolution C 18/2016,

noting that there are differences in the membership and participation contexts of the UPU versus those of the APPU,

agreeing that the Union should take all reasonable steps to support participation in the Union's work by member countries and observers,

recalling the decision of Congress to permit hybrid participation to the 13th APPU Congress on an extraordinary basis,

aware of the benefits of physical participation of member countries in Executive Council meetings and the measures already adopted in the General Regulations to facilitate this,

noting Article 109 (1) of the General Regulations requires the Bureau to make preparations for meetings of the Union,

supporting the use of technology to facilitate, where necessary, participation,

Instructs

the Bureau to:

1. livestream meetings of the Executive Council using a suitable platform as determined by the Bureau after consultation with the relevant host country,
2. manage access to the livestream to enable member countries and invited observers to observe proceedings,
3. ensure that any closed meetings or closed agenda items of the Executive Council are not livestreamed unless otherwise agreed to by the Chair of the Council, and
4. meet any local (Bangkok) costs associated with facilitating the livestream.

Further instructs

the Bureau and the Reform Working Group to review all aspects of the livestreaming experience at the 2023 Executive Council meeting to identify issues, opportunities and any other relevant factors.

Reasons – See EC 2023 Doc 19.

Date of Entry into force: immediately for the period until the next Congress (or Extraordinary Congress).



Online participation – proposal B

Amends the EC Rules of Procedure to create a new Article 1bis that:

- facilitates livestreaming
- allows online participants to speak, technology permitting, and as the Chair allows
- clarifies the application of quorum and voting

Article 1bis

Livestreaming

1. The Council may permit the livestreaming of its proceedings by electronic means, i.e., via web/video/audio conferencing facilities made available by the Bureau and / or the host country, subject to any conditions agreed to by the Council.
2. Notwithstanding any other Article in these Rules, the Chair of the Council may invite any person availing themselves of the livestreaming function who would otherwise have the right to “take part”, “participate”, “represent”, or “attend”, to speak during discussion on any agenda item. In the absence of technical difficulties, the Chair will permit such participation unless, for an agenda item, a majority of members of the Council otherwise decides.
3. Union member countries availing themselves of the livestreaming possibility, with no physical attendees, shall not be counted for the purposes of the quorum required under Article 12 of the present Rules, nor be entitled to vote.

Reasons

The proposal to create new article 1bis makes it possible to have online participation at Executive Council Meetings for both members and observers, while maintaining the in-person nature of the Executive Council.

The ability for online participants to engage in the proceedings of Council by taking the floor is provided on a ‘best efforts’ basis, noting that technology can be unreliable. Recognising this, an online participant (if eligible) will not be able to participate in a vote. During a vote the livestream will continue but virtual participants will not be permitted to speak.

Refer EC 2023 Doc 19 for further details.

Date of entry into force: immediately, for the period until the next Congress (or Extraordinary Congress).



Online participation – limitations

- In any scenario, online participants may not count towards quorum, provide a proxy to an in-person attendee or vote.
 - Quorum: the APPU treaties require an in-person meeting for the Executive Council OR a fully remote meeting (e.g. by correspondence). As such, online participants in a *hybrid* meeting cannot count as attending the Executive Council meeting for the purposes of quorum.
 - Voting: as the online participant does not count towards quorum, they cannot be considered present and able to vote (regardless of whether the vote is an open or secret ballot).
 - Proxy: the APPU treaties do not allow for proxy votes at the Executive Council as is available for the Congress.
- If members wish, changes can be made to the treaties to allow for more fulsome online participation at a future Congress. However, we must work within the current treaty framework until the issue can be further studied and amendments approved.



Online participation - recommendation

- The Reform Working Group recommends the Executive Council approve Proposal A and B as a package.
- The Reform Working Group considers this creates the maximum amount of participation available in the APPU treaties, meeting member expectations and facilitating participation.
- The Reform Working Group also considers this arrangement creates minimal cost and administrative obligations on the Bureau and ensures the experience is consistent across EC meetings.



Online participation - decisions

For decision:

- **note** the background material that has been prepared for the two online participation options for the 2023 Bangkok EC
- **note** that Option A is for livestreaming for observation only by APPU members and invited observers
- **note** that Option B includes livestreaming (as in Option A) and an amendment to the EC RoP to permit online attendees to speak under specified conditions
- **note** that neither Option A nor Option B results in online participants being included in the quorum or being able to vote
- **note** that both Options instruct the Bureau and the Reform WG to study the online experience at the 2023 EC meeting to identify issues, opportunities and other relevant factors
- **note** the additional matters arising from the Reform WG activity which may be considered further by the Bureau and the WG in line with the directive for further study
- **note** that the Reform WG recommends the EC adopt Option A and Option B as a package
- **approve** the adoption of Option A and Option B