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To: Union member countries

For information to:

Designated operators

Restricted unions

Berne, 20 July 2021

Reference: 2101(DPRM.URS)1105

Subject: 27th UPU Congress – Additional information concerning anticipated consequences of the potential adoption of certain Congress proposals on remote participation, accreditation of Union member country delegations and voting

Dear Sir/Madam,

By means of circular letter 2102(DPRM.URS)1066 of 7 June 2021, you were informed of the procedures for procuring the necessary powers (delegates' credentials) for taking part in the 27th UPU Congress, including, as appropriate, the right to speak, vote and sign the Acts of the Union.

Through circular letter 2101(DPRM.URS)1101 of 12 July 2021, you were also informed of the procedures for registration, and the circumstances surrounding the need for Congress to meet physically on the opening day in order to decide whether to authorize a combination of physical and remote participation ("hybrid" participation), including remote electronic voting.

This circular letter provides additional information on the anticipated consequences of the potential adoption by Congress, at its first plenary session, of certain proposals to amend or suspend the Rules of Procedure of Congresses (RoPC) with regard to the remote participation and accreditation of Union member country delegations. For more detailed information, please see Council of Administration (CA) document CA 2021.1–Doc 12c.

I would also inform you that the CA held an exceptional session on 30 June 2021, at which it discussed and subsequently adopted a resolution entitled "Special procedures concerning the traditional voting system at the 27th UPU Congress" (document Exceptional CA 2021–Doc 6), which referred to a number of proposals that will be submitted to the 27th Congress for exceptional approval. Among other aspects, this resolution calls for secret ballots to be taken using the traditional system (i.e. paper ballots) for:

- a the elections of the Director General, Deputy Director General and of the members of the Council of Administration and Postal Operations Council, respectively; and
- b substantive matters in respect of which a request has been made by one delegation and supported by a majority of the delegations present at Congress and voting, in accordance with article 18.2 of the RoPC.

If this proposal is approved by Congress (along with the relevant proposals on remote representation), voting according to the traditional system will be carried out physically in the host city Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (Rep.) and also at a secondary polling location in Geneva, Switzerland (with this secondary polling location to remain accessible to all Union member country delegations duly registered and credentialed for the 27th Congress).

As yet, there is no confirmation as to whether the proceedings of the 27th Congress will allow for remote representation, since this decision can only be taken by Congress itself. Likewise, Congress will decide whether any secret ballots in relation to the situations described in points a and b above will be undertaken fully remotely, or using both the electronic voting platform and the traditional system.

Accordingly, it is imperative that all Union member countries plan their participation in the 27th Congress in the light of one of the possible three scenarios that will be approved by Congress. These scenarios are outlined in the paragraphs below.

a Scenario 1 – No approval of remote participation

It is possible that, despite the CA's recommendations, the 27th Congress may reject any proposals necessary to allow for remote participation and voting. In this instance, participation and voting will be possible only if a Union member country is physically present in Abidjan (or has given a proxy to another Union member country as per the existing procedures).

Accordingly, depending on their particular circumstances, Union member countries may wish to ensure that they have a delegation physically present in Abidjan, including, as appropriate, officials/diplomats who are stationed in Abidjan or will be able to travel to Abidjan. Union member countries should also ensure that all members of their delegation are registered on the UPU's Event Management Platform (EMP), and duly listed in and empowered by the credentials instrument to be deposited in due and proper form in accordance with article 3.2 of the RoPC.

Alternatively, if a Union member country is unable to have a delegation physically present at the 27th Congress, it may wish to consider giving another Union member country a proxy to act on its behalf during the proceedings of that Congress.

In this scenario, please note the following:

- a Delegates physically present in the meeting hall will still be required to use the UPU's virtual conferencing platform, with their own laptops and headsets. Access to the virtual conferencing platform will only be granted to those delegates physically present and appropriately credentialed. Please note that the Congress Secretariat is not in a position, from a technical, logistical and sanitary standpoint, to provide in-room audio (i.e. without use of the UPU's virtual conferencing platform) in the event that Congress decides to allow only physical presence;
- b Voting will take place via a closed electronic system or, as appropriate, the traditional system, with such votes to take place within the meeting halls of Congress;
- c Anyone not physically present in Abidjan will not have access to the UPU's virtual conferencing platform and may only follow Congress proceedings through the UPU's Web TV platform.

b Scenario 2 – Remote representation with electronic voting only

If the 27th Congress approves the necessary measures to allow for remote participation with electronic voting only, then the procedures previously communicated regarding registration, credentials and voting will apply. Delegates of Union member countries who are registered and appropriately credentialed, whether physically present or participating remotely, will be able to participate in the proceedings of the 27th Congress through the UPU's virtual conferencing platform, and to vote (open or secret votes, including for all elections) through the electronic voting platform.

Please note that remote participation through the virtual conferencing and electronic voting platforms will be made available only from the second day of Congress onwards (i.e. from 10 August 2021), when the substantive proceedings of the various committees are scheduled to begin. This is to provide the Congress Secretariat with sufficient time from a technical standpoint to facilitate the transition from a fully physical meeting to a "hybrid" format, and also to ensure the appropriate on-boarding of those Union member countries not physically represented on the first day.

c Scenario 3 – Hybrid format with electronic voting and traditional system option for certain secret votes (two polling stations)

Under this scenario, the 27th Congress may approve remote participation as well as allowing for the traditional system to be used for secret votes for all elections, as well as for any substantive matters in respect of which

a request is made by a delegation and supported by a majority of the delegations present and voting (referred to below as “traditional secret votes”).

In this scenario, please note the following:

- a It is expected that all open votes as well as the majority of secret votes (other than the traditional secret votes referred to above) will be undertaken on the electronic voting platform. This means that the procedures previously communicated regarding registration, credentials and voting will continue to apply;
- b In the case of traditional secret votes, if the delegation of a Union member country cannot be physically present or represented in Abidjan to cast such votes, it should ensure that its officials/diplomats based in Geneva (or traveling to Geneva from elsewhere) will be available to cast such votes as and when necessary for the entire duration of the 27th Congress. Please ensure that these officials/diplomats are also registered on the EMP and duly listed in and empowered by the credentials instrument to be deposited in due and proper form in accordance with article 3.2 of the RoPC.

For such a scenario, the International Bureau (IB) has arranged for a second polling station composed of one room (known as the “*Espace polyvalent*”) at the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG). This room will have a ballot box as well as a live video feed to the meeting hall in Abidjan. Voting in respect of traditional secret votes will take place simultaneously in the Abidjan plenary hall and at the CICG. In this case, Union member countries eligible to vote will be called in French alphabetical order by the Congress Secretariat, at which point the Union member country called must indicate where it intends to cast its traditional secret vote – Abidjan or Geneva – and then proceed to do so.

As noted above, delegates taking part in a traditional secret vote on behalf of a Union member country in Geneva must be registered on the EMP and properly credentialed. They must carry with them appropriate identification (their passport or diplomatic identity cards) to be able to access the secondary polling station in Geneva. The Congress Secretariat will be verifying their identity and credentials prior to their gaining access to the polling station and being able to cast a traditional secret vote.

The counting of votes to take place in the dedicated vote counting room in Abidjan and in the *Espace polyvalent* at the CICG (following the close of voting) will also be connected by a live feed. This is to allow the Congress Secretariat, tellers and candidate representatives (as appropriate) in both Geneva and Abidjan to simultaneously oversee the counting of traditional secret votes, and for the final tallied result to be announced in the plenary hall in Abidjan.

Please also note that, under this scenario (as under Scenario 2), remote participation through the virtual conferencing and electronic voting platforms will be made available only from the second day of Congress onwards (i.e. from 10 August 2021), when the substantive proceedings of the various committees are scheduled to begin.

d Tellers and representatives of the candidates for Director General and Deputy Director General

In the case of Scenario 3, and pursuant to article 18.3.3 of the RoPC, the Chair of the meeting will have to appoint three tellers, one from each of three member countries, to oversee the counting of traditional secret votes, having regard to equitable geographical representation and the level of economic development of the member countries.

Kindly note that tellers may *not*, in so far as traditional secret votes for elections are concerned, come from Union member countries that are candidates for membership of the Council of Administration or Postal Operations Council, or whose nationals are candidates for the positions of Director General or Deputy Director General.

Given that under Scenario 3 there will be two polling stations, two tellers each will be required from each of the three appointed Union member countries – a teller each to be physically present in Abidjan and Geneva and available for the entire duration of Congress in the event that a traditional secret vote is called for. These tellers must also be registered on the EMP and have the appropriate credentials from their respective Union member countries.

Any Union member countries wishing to volunteer the two tellers required for the traditional system are requested to send the details of these proposed tellers to CA.Secretariat@upu.int **no later than 4 August 2021, and also confirm their credentials status.**

Pursuant to article 21.6 of the RoPC, representatives of the candidates for Director General and Deputy Director General may also be present for the counting of the votes related to the elections of these officials. In the event that Scenario 3 is approved by the 27th Congress, any Union member country fielding a candidate for either of these positions and wishing to have representatives present for the vote count should plan to have two representatives available – one each in Abidjan and Geneva respectively. The representatives must also be registered on the EMP and have the appropriate credentials from their respective Union member countries. Interested Union member countries are requested to send the details of their representatives to CA.Secretariat@upu.int **no later than 4 August 2021, and also confirm their credentials status.**

Alternatively, in the event that Scenario 2 is approved by the 27th Congress, it is expected that the notified representative, remotely or present in Abidjan, will work with the Congress Secretariat (in the presence of the Union's Internal Audit service as an observer), to oversee the voting process undertaken using the electronic voting platform.

e Proxies

In the event that the 27th Congress approves remote representation, and a Union member country that has initially given a proxy intends to participate remotely, that Union member country may, provided it has submitted credentials in due and proper form, and its delegates are registered on the EMP, revoke its proxy so that its delegates are able to participate and vote remotely.

A proxy may be revoked in writing by the same authority that gave the proxy in the first place. Another possibility is for a Union member country to already state, in its original proxy instrument, that such a proxy is automatically revoked if/once its own credentials for the 27th Congress are properly submitted and its delegation is taking part in Congress – in this case, the Congress Secretariat would immediately consider, from that moment onwards, the proxy as null and void and take account of the properly submitted credentials.

A Union member country wishing to avail itself of this possibility should include in its proxy instrument wording to the following effect:

“The present proxy instrument shall be automatically revoked with immediate effect in the event that the delegation of [name of the member country giving the proxy] takes part in the aforementioned Congress, in accordance with the relevant requirements set forth in the Rules of Procedure of Congresses of the Universal Postal Union.”

Without prejudice to the above and in order to more promptly enable Union member country participation (in the event that a country ultimately decides to physically attend Congress or participate remotely, if the latter possibility is adopted by Congress), Union member countries may also submit their own credentials concomitantly with the proxy instrument which, as mentioned above, would become valid once their delegates were registered on the EMP and able to participate at Congress (physically or remotely as the case may be).

f Reminder to submit copies of credentials in advance to the IB

In view of these circumstances, I would like to reiterate that it is imperative for Union member countries to submit their draft credentials instruments to the IB for confirmation that the instruments are correctly prepared as soon as possible, with a view to having the finalized and executed instruments physically deposited in original form at the opening of Congress (or, alternatively, provided to the IB **no later than 4 August 2021**; please contact the Credentials Committee secretariat at credentials@upu.int to discuss this option).

The IB will continue to work closely with the Ivorian Government to help ensure the success of the 27th Congress.

Yours faithfully,



Bishar A. Hussein
Director General