

ETHICS OFFICE GUIDANCE NOTE 17-01:¹
ETHICAL ASPECTS OF CERTAIN CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO THE 2018 PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE

The Ethics Office (the “ETO”) has received multiple requests for advice concerning ethical aspects of certain campaign activities prior to the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference. Several Member States have indicated an intended candidature of individuals for positions as elected officials of the International Telecommunication Union (the “ITU” or the “Union”). Furthermore, promotional activities in support of such candidatures have already begun. Additional activities are likely to begin shortly, often coinciding with the occurrence of significant Union events. These circumstances—and the queries they trigger—are expected to become increasingly frequent in the lead-up to the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference.

There are currently no published ITU guidelines on this topic. In response to specific requests, the ETO has offered advice to certain individuals. To promote transparency and legitimacy for the election process, the ETO is now providing a set of general principles, along with guidance on practical application of such principles to specific circumstances.² The ETO will be actively considering further development of guidelines in this area, in light also of the request from Council in this regard.³

The guidance provided in the document is based on the current framework and practice. It is relevant primarily to candidates with a current role in the Union—this includes appointed staff members as well as Elected Officials.

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In addition to basic principles such as fairness, equity, transparency, good faith, dignity and mutual respect, individuals who must balance an existing role in the Union with a candidature should be particularly mindful of general principles in the following three key areas, described further below: (A) Use of Union resources; (B) Campaign activities around Union events; and (C) Engagement with Member State representatives.

¹ The document does not carry the legal authority or effect of an ITU rule, regulation or Service Order. Similar to an “Office Memorandum” – as defined in Service Order No. 00/1 (Policy in Respect of the Preparation and Publication of Service Orders, Office Memoranda and Information Circulars) – this Guidance Note has neither statutory nor prescriptive force. It is intended to offer guidance, based on the views of the ITU Ethics Officer, an office that is independent of ITU management. Failure to follow this Guidance Note does not in-of-itself establish a violation of any rule, regulation, or other provision governing the conduct of ITU staff.

² In principle, ETO considers that campaign activities of candidates should be limited until the steps to formalize a candidature have taken place.

³ See Summary Record of the Eighth Plenary Meeting, ITU Council (Document C17/130-E), at 8.1.

A) Use of Union Resources

General Principle:

- **The resources of the Union may only be used for the purpose of delivering the organization's mandate and advancing its best interests.**

Application: Candidates should be mindful not to use any Union resources or their current position—including personnel support, official travel and expense reimbursement, or any office resources—for the purpose of advancing their candidature. Doing so may provide those with access to such resources an undue advantage and allow them to improperly draw a personal benefit from resources that are intended for official use only.

For example:

- Official travel for a mission or event should not be undertaken or authorized if the traveler would not typically attend such event in the normal course of their official duties for ITU. Conversely, if a staff member in active service would typically attend an event in the course of their official duties, their candidature should not preclude attendance. For further guidance on conduct while at an official event or during a mission, see below.
- There should be no use of any Union symbols (i.e., the ITU flag and/or emblem or the logos for specific conferences arranged by ITU) in any materials to promote a candidacy. This may improperly create the appearance of an official endorsement of a candidate. The ETO is available to review draft materials and advise on any specific cases.
- ITU Computers, printers, communications channels—including, ITU social media accounts—and ITU letterhead should not be used for any campaign activities. A private email account (not on the ITU corporate system) should be used for correspondence relating to campaign activities. To the extent an individual is contacted on their ITU corporate account regarding their candidature, the correspondence should be forwarded to the private account and further correspondence should occur through that channel.
- Candidates should not seek the support of ITU staff responsible for communications activities of the Union (or any other ITU staff) to prepare any promotional materials for their candidature. This includes requests for advice, pictures, assistance or feedback with any promotional materials.

B) Campaign Activities Around Union Events

General Principle:

- **Campaign-related activities should not interfere with the conduct of Union affairs at official events.**

Application: Union events—and the informal and social occasions that surround these events—are an opportunity to engage with Member State representatives. Some candidates may be in attendance at such events due to their official responsibilities with ITU. Others may be in attendance as they currently serve on the delegation of a Member State. Still others may not have an official reason to attend the event, but wish to use the opportunity of stakeholders being convened in a single location.

The basic principles of fairness and equity suggest that candidates should have an equal opportunity to engage with Member State representatives when they are convening for such events. At the same time, it should be noted that the purpose of these events is to advance the Union's work in a specific area, not to serve as a forum for campaigning. Thus, individuals should refrain from engaging with Member State representatives to promote their candidature during the course of a Union event. Informal or social occasions surrounding these events—not in the event space itself—may be used by candidates for campaign activities. Overall, candidates should refrain from behavior that would suggest that the fullest care for Union affairs is being displaced by attention to campaign-related activities.

For example:

- *Actively* engaging Member State representatives to discuss a candidature during the course of official proceedings may detract from the ability to conclude official matters during that event. Thus, it would be best to avoid actively engaging Member State representatives on election issues during a Union event. Candidates who are approached during a Union event to discuss their candidacy should consider inviting the relevant party to discuss further outside of the official meetings. Preferably, this would be at a meeting scheduled after proceedings for the day have concluded rather than during a coffee or lunch break (which are frequently otherwise used to continue discussions on official matters).

- During ITU events, candidates are discouraged from using the event space for any campaign activities. This includes refraining from delivering any candidate campaign statements during event break sessions sponsored by the Member States advancing their candidacy. As noted above, candidates may engage in campaign activities at informal or social occasions (such as receptions hosted by Member States) outside of the ITU event space itself.
- Individuals travelling to the site of an event to promote their candidature—who would not otherwise attend the event in the normal course of their official duties—should do so while on leave from the Union. Furthermore, as noted above, costs for attendance at an event for such individuals should not be borne by the Union. Individuals are strongly encouraged to contact the ETO to inform of planned presence at an ITU event in a private capacity such that specific aspects of the relevant campaign activities can be discussed.

C) Engagement with Member States

General Principle:

- **The fundamental values of independence, loyalty to the Union and impartiality should be respected even while coordinating a candidature with a Member State.**

Application: A candidature will inevitably involve some level of coordination with a Member State. This type of engagement with a Member State should not jeopardize the independence and impartiality of the individual as an international civil servant and loyalty to the Union. Respect for these principles requires scrupulous attention to the possible perception that behavior taken in an official capacity will be viewed as reflecting the interests of a particular Member State and/or primarily intended to advance a candidature rather than serve the interests of the Union. There should be no suggestion that official acts on behalf of the Union—whether current or future—are, or will be, unduly influenced in exchange for support with a candidature.

For example:

- The coordination of a candidature should not involve sharing information with the Member State promoting the candidature that is not otherwise available to all Member States or not appropriate for public disclosure. This includes information related to the workplace performance of other candidates.
- Events organized by Member States to promote the candidature of an individual may involve a public speech by the candidate to outline their vision for the Union. There may also be written materials that are prepared in this regard. Those already serving the Union should endeavor to express their strictly personal views as candidate without calling into question their independence from Member States, impartiality, and loyalty to the Union. A message that would reasonably appear to be focused on criticizing the Union and/or any other candidates rather than presenting a positive vision would be inconsistent with the basic principles of good-faith, dignity, and mutual respect and may be contrary to the obligations of international civil servants to remain loyal to the Union and refrain from publicly airing grievances. In light also of provisions in the legal framework regulating outside activities (including statements to the press and submission of materials for publication which relate to the purpose, activities or interests

of the Union), the ETO is available, on a confidential basis, to review in advance and advise on any public remarks or publication materials.

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The ETO is available to provide further advice and guidance on this topic. Individuals seeking advice may do so on a confidential basis, consistent with the mandate of the ETO. The Ethics Officer can be reached at: Alessandro.Maggi@itu.int; Tel : +41227306324 | Mobile : +41792494855.

ITU personnel are also encouraged to visit the ETO intranet page - <https://intranet.itu.int/regulatory/Pages/ethics.aspx> - for further information on the ITU ethics frameworks and initiatives to promote a culture of ethics in the organization.

Further information on the general principles relevant to this topic may be found in the following sources: the ITU Staff Regulations and Staff Rules; the ITU Staff Regulations and Staff Rules Applicable to Elected Officials; the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service; and the Code of Ethics for ITU Personnel (Service Order No. 11/02).