
Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday 1 October 2020
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (EAT)
Online Meeting

Agenda Item 2: Consultation on the timing and format of UNEA-5 in view of COVID-19.

This document, entitled “Overview of virtual/hybrid decision-making processes by UN Bodies due to the covid-19 pandemic” serves as a background document for agenda item 2 Consultation on the timing and format of UNEA-5 in view of COVID-19. It outlines measures and decisions taken by various members of the UN Governing Bodies Secretariat Network to carry out virtual/hybrid decision making within their respective Governing Bodies as a consequence of meeting restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and builds on a survey to the Secretariats of various UN and other intergovernmental bodies undertaken by the OECD.

In summary, the survey concludes that:

1. With regard to meetings, a significant number of intergovernmental meetings of Governing Bodies have taken place, either in a fully virtual format or in “hybrid” format which in the latter case has included a limited number of in-person participants who have attended the meeting while observing necessary COVID-19 preventative measures and restrictions such as wearing of masks and adhering to social distancing measures, combined with simultaneous remote connection via various web conferencing interfaces, in some cases also including interpretation when required.
2. With regards decision-making, several Governing Bodies have taken formal decisions during this period, in some cases limiting such decisions to procedural decisions. Such decisions have been taken through various processes, including by virtual means through silence procedure and through adoption at in-person “hybrid” meetings.

The findings may be relevant as background information for the subcommittee consultation on the timing and format of UNEA-5 in view of COVID-19.

OVERVIEW OF VIRTUAL/HYBRID DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES BY UN BODIES DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

<p align="center">QUESTION</p>	<p>1. Has your Governing Body met physically/virtually/in a hybrid manner since the beginning of the covid crisis in March 2020? Yes/No (if the meeting format has evolved over the period, please specify). (Yes/No)</p>	<p>2a. If virtually or in a hybrid manner, have these meetings been formal meetings? (Yes/No)</p>	<p>2b. If virtually or in a hybrid manner, have decisions been taken in session? (Yes/No)</p>	<p>Please indicate which technical solution your Governing Body is using (if the decision-making process has evolved over the period, for example shifting from written procedure following a virtual meeting to in-session decision making in a virtual/hybrid meeting, or if the technical solution has changed, please specify)</p>	<p>3. Will virtual decision-making continue in your governing body until the end of the year/in early 2021? (Yes/No)</p>
<p>INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODY</p>					
<p>1) Secretariat of Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS</p>	<p>Yes—virtually.</p>	<p>Yes, we have had both formal and informal meetings.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>zoom (meeting format)</p>	<p>Our last Board session of the year was 31 Aug-4 Sept. and that had virtual negotiations for the decisions (fyi, we don't say 'virtual decision making'), so that will be all for the rest of the year. Our next Board session is in Feb. 2021, and it will be determined later whether that session will be</p>

					physical, virtual, or a hybrid approach.
2) World Bank	Yes, all virtual (spring and annual meetings as well as meetings with the resident Board of Directors)	Yes	Yes	Virtual meeting. Used Webex for spring meetings and will use zoom for our fall annual meetings	Yes, at least till end of October 2020
3) WFP	<p>The WFP Executive Board has held two formal virtual sessions in April and June and a number of informal consultations and briefings in between since the 9 March lockdown in Rome and since the First Regular Session of the Executive Board, which was to take place 24-25 February, was postponed on 23 February due to the alarming COVID-19 situation in northern Italy.</p> <p>From 24 July to 30 July, WFP began hybrid meetings, with several informal consultations open to a limited number of delegates who came in person (between 2-4 delegates) while the rest connected virtually.</p>	Yes	Substantive approvals took place including country strategic plans, organizational restructuring, etc., as well as the election of the 2020 Bureau in April.	The Estreemo platform was created and tailored to WFP's Bosch multilingual conference system used for Board meetings (for formal sessions or evaluation round tables, the President of the Board chairs from his seat in the Board room) while MS Teams is used for Bureau meetings (the Bureau is comprised of the Convenors and Alternates of the five Electoral Lists and is led by the President of the Board).	Overall, the general sentiment is to continue more with a hybrid set-up the Second Regular Session taking place 16-20 November.

4) UNODC	<p>Our section acts as Secretariat to the two governing bodies of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). The last regular session of the CND was held in March, just before the lockdown. The regular session of the CCPCJ, scheduled for May, had to be postponed due to COVID. Both Commissions continued their work remotely, since March, including Extended Bureau meetings, meetings of the working group on governance and finance of the Office, informal briefings, special events and training sessions on the use of platforms for Members States, etc. Until September all meetings were held online – or hybrid (with only the Secretariat and the Chair of the body in the meeting room and the participants joining virtually). We have now started with the first hybrid meetings with delegations in the meeting room (respecting the social distancing and hygiene requirements applicable in the host country and the Vienna International Centre).</p>	<p>No, all meeting held so far were of informal nature</p>	<p>No formal decisions have been taken during online or hybrid meetings.</p>	<p>Decision making has so far happened in writing, through a silence procedure. Some of the upcoming hybrid meetings (with in-person participation) will be formal meetings, during which consensus decision-making will be possible.</p>	<p>While e-voting was discussed, there was not support from all Member States to further explore the option of electronic voting. Hence, for the moment the Commissions will continue to take decisions in person. While voting is not the usual form of decision taking (the Commissions work predominantly consensus-based), the CND is expected to take a vote under the three international drug control conventions during its reconvened session early December, which is planned to be in person (53 members of the Commission would be eligible to vote).</p>
5) UNEP BRS	<p>No, but we had several virtual subsidiary body meetings including a large open-ended working meeting</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes, but only decisions that were time sensitive and absolutely necessary</p>	<p>Virtual in-session decision making only thus far.</p>	<p>Yes, but only in subsidiary bodies, our next COPs are in July 2021</p>

	<p>1. Has your Governing Body met physically/virtually/in a hybrid manner since the beginning of the covid crisis in March 2020? Yes/No (if the meeting format has evolved over the period, please specify). (Yes/No)</p>	<p>2a. If virtually or in a hybrid manner, have these meetings been formal meetings? (Yes/No)</p>	<p>2b. If virtually or in a hybrid manner, have decisions been taken in session? (Yes/No)</p>	<p>Please indicate which technical solution your Governing Body is using (if the decision-making process has evolved over the period, for example shifting from written procedure following a virtual meeting to in-session decision making in a virtual/hybrid meeting, or if the technical solution has changed, please specify)</p>	<p>3. Will virtual decision-making continue in your governing body until the end of the year/in early 2021? (Yes/No)</p>
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<p>6) Human Rights Council</p>	<p>We have resumed our sessions back in June with the normal agenda and programme of work. Stringent measures were taken (strict 2 meters physical distancing and mandatory wearing of masks in the room) enabling us to resume in person meetings with possibility of remote participation either by videomessages or live feeds. We do not rely on interprefy or other similar platforms which have we felt were unstable and problematic. Accordingly, while most statements are delivered in persons, a large number (300 in July) were delivered by videostatements. Those panelists or experts who could not travel to Geneva could interact with the Council via live feed. Almost all delegations participated in person. Delegates who wanted to explain their votes or make general comments without coming into the room were also authorized to do so via videostatements. We left it open for delegations to designate proxies from other delegations for casting their votes on their behalf. The vote itself was carried using the normal electronic system with delegates (and proxies) pressing the buttons from their seats.</p> <p>We had contemplated authorizing delegates to also provide their voting instructions remotely but we rejected this option. First, I was not sure about the stability of the system (what if the live feed with the concerned delegation freeze right in the middle of the vote?). Second, I was also worried about the security of the system (if the vote was to be carried by instructions given over the phone how could we be sure that the interlocutor was the right one?). Third, our electronic system would have had to be adjusted to allow for manual inserts which I also felt was risky.</p>	<p>Yes. Formal in-person meetings with possibility of remote participation</p>	<p>Yes. We adopted around 35 resolutions in June and 30 in July. We are once again going to adopt a similar amount of resolutions in September.</p>		
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7) WTO	Yes. The WTO General Council has met twice since March 2020, in hybrid format.	yes	yes	<p>The WTO is using the virtual platform « Interpretrefy ». Delegates are free to choose between physical presence in the building and remote participation. In case of physical presence, strict limitations apply to the number of delegates allowed in the room. Other COVID-related measures and restrictions apply to the entry into and circulation in the WTO buildings.</p> <p>Written procedures were only used at the early stage of the lockdown, and mainly to confirm the appointment of chairpersons to certain Committees.</p>	The decision-making will continue in hybrid format. Note that the number of delegates participating remotely has been larger than the number of delegates physically present in the Council room. The limit to the number of delegates physically present was not reached in the recent formal meetings.
8) ESA	Virtually (Administration and Finance Committee), Council has met virtually and hybrid in presence meeting in Germany in June	yes	yes or by written vote following day	webex, does not affect decision-making	Yes, with hybrid or in presence meetings, health situation permitting
	1. Has your Governing Body met physically/virtually/in a hybrid manner since the beginning of the covid crisis in March 2020?	2a. If virtually or in a hybrid manner, have these meetings been	2b. If virtually or in a hybrid manner, have decisions been	Please indicate which technical solution your Governing Body is using (if the decision-making	3. Will virtual decision-making continue in your governing body until the end of

	Yes/No (if the meeting format has evolved over the period, please specify). (Yes/No)	formal meetings? (Yes/No)	taken in session? (Yes/No)	process has evolved over the period, for example shifting from written procedure following a virtual meeting to in-session decision making in a virtual/hybrid meeting, or if the technical solution has changed, please specify)	the year/in early 2021? (Yes/No)
9) UNESCO	<p>UNESCO's Executive Board held a 2-day virtual Extraordinary Board session in June 2020. With the evolution of the pandemic, we were able to hold a physical meeting of the Executive Board from 29 June to 10 July.</p> <p>The meeting was webcast and available to all Member States, etc., but only those present could take the floor. In order to abide by the COVID sanitary restrictions, the Board meeting was held in a larger conference room, appropriate to meet requirements.</p>	yes	yes	<p>For the Extraordinary Board session (held virtually), Informal working groups were organized prior to the session for consensus building, to assist negotiations and decision-making. The platform used to hold the virtual meeting was Interprefy. The meeting was held in EN/FR, it was quite slow in view that there were technical problems arising from connectivity issues for both the users and HQ.</p>	<p>The next Executive Board session (4 – 18 November 2020) will in principle, also be held in presencia – physical presence</p>

10) WHO FCTC	Bureau meetings elected by the Conference of the Parties and Meeting of the Parties met Virtually via zoom with interpretation. The COP9 and MOP2 were postponed from Nov 2020 to Nov 2021.	yes	yes majority of the items, but with a couple of resumed sessions on specific agenda items, plus a few items put on shared point with survey inputs	First make a decision which ones for in session discussion with the shorter duration of the meetings, followed by a few follow up resumed sessions to discuss specific agenda items, then a few on shared point to gather inputs, after a deadline the results were communicated.	Not very clear at this time. We are planning for both scenarios.
11) UNEP	Yes	Yes, for English only meeting we use Go-To meeting and for interpreted meetings we have used Interactio.	Yes. Adoption of UNEA's contribution to the HLPF on Sustainable Development and other procedural decisions		It is likely – though no definitive decision has been made in regard to this yet, our next Assembly is scheduled for February 2021.
12) ILO	<p>No. Two Governing Body sessions have been cancelled. The annual session of the ILO Conference has been deferred to June 2021. The Governing Body made these decisions through a vote by correspondence.</p> <p>In the context of the COVID 19, since March 2020, the Governing Body has also been taking a series of decisions by correspondence on urgent, non-controversial or routine matters. Draft decisions submitted to approval by correspondence were discussed and prepared by a smaller group of constituents through a series of virtual and hybrid meetings.</p>	yes	no		Yes, the next ILO Governing Body session will be conducted from 2 to 14 November virtually. Special arrangements and rules of procedures will be adopted for this virtual session.

13) WMO	<p>Not yet, but our Executive Council will meet at the end of this month (28/9-2/10), virtually.</p> <p>See the link :</p> <p>https://meetings.wmo.int/EC-72/SitePages/Session%20Information.aspx</p>	yes	yes	For the WMO Executive Council meeting at the end of September, we are using KUDO, with the interpretation in the six WMO (UN) languages.	yes, most probably
14) IFAD	<p>IFAD's governing body meetings have been held virtually since March 2020.</p> <p>As of 1 September, the format has evolved whereby some members of the Fund's senior management and Chairpersons of Committees have participated in virtual meetings from the Fund's conference centre at headquarters, e.g. Executive Board from 8 to 11 September.</p>	yes, both formal and informal	yes - decisions have been made during virtual sessions. However, in order to limit the length of virtual meetings and accommodate different time zones, the agenda for Executive Board sessions has been streamlined. IFAD has increasingly used the vote by correspondence procedure and e-discussion board for selected agenda items	Zoom application with interpretation in the Fund's official languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Interpreters working from headquarters (one per booth), connecting to Zoom through the console system	This is likely however management has not formally decided yet. This will depend on the evolution of the pandemic.
15) ITU	<p>The ITU Council has held a virtual consultation of councillors for three days in June, drawing only provisional conclusions for formal approval by the next physical Council session. However, some of those conclusions for which decisions were urgent were then subject to a written consultation for formal approval in line with our rules of procedure.</p>	Yes	No – see response to question 1 regarding provisional decisions. These provisional decisions were then subject to a written consultation for formal approval in line with our		Yes, another virtual consultation will be held in late November in the same manner.

			existing rules of procedure.		
16) OECD	<p>Yes, virtual meetings until the end of the lockdown in France in May 2020 and hybrid since then (with some delegations in the room and some participating remotely). However, the meetings of the highest governing body of the OECD, the Council, and its three Standing Committees preparing for its discussions and decisions, held since March have been informal meetings. The platform chosen for the virtual (part of) meetings, Zoom, while providing good meeting ergonomics as well as interpretation, raises security concerns for a number of Members. A Framework for Council Working methods during the COVID crisis has been established, whereby in the context of informal meetings, decision-making is ensured by written procedure following each meeting. The shift to virtual meetings has implied other changes in meeting configuration, with reduced duration and focus on priority agenda items. The Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM) that was due to take place in the end of May has been postponed to the end of October 2020 and will be held virtually. In the run-up to the October MCM meeting, a new meeting format has been tested at Ministerial level in the form of three fully</p>	No	No	zoom	The future approach is currently under consideration

	<p>virtual Ministerial Council Roundtables held in June, July and September, all Ministers participating from their respective capitals. All these different evolutions and the preparations for the Ministerial Roundtables have resulted in the holding of a large number of meetings and the management of an equally large number of written procedures, which has been rather heavy in administration. Efforts are being made to possibly return to fully physical meetings, sanitary conditions permitting, or at least to find an appropriate configuration for the holding of formal meetings as quickly as possible after September.</p> <p>In addition to the informal Council discussions, a number of virtual thematical briefings for Ambassadors on the OECD covid19-response have taken place since March</p>				
<p>17) UNIDO</p>	<p>Not yet. The session of the Programme and Budget Committee will take place in a hybrid format on 29 and 30 September 2020.</p>	<p>Yes formal hybrid meeting to be held</p>	<p>Yes, decisions are expected to be taken</p>	<p>Interprefy</p>	