Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of arrangements for the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference (14-18 June 2021). It outlines the special arrangements and procedures to be used, on an exceptional basis, for the virtual modality of the Session, including alternative voting procedures for secret ballot elections. The document also contains proposals on the Provisional Agenda and Timetable for the Session, the topic for the General Debate, the Biennial Theme for 2022-23, elections, resolutions and invitations. The Provisional Agenda for the Session is given in document C 2021/1 and the Timetable in C 2021/INF/1.

The Conference is requested to decide on:

a) The special arrangements and procedures to be used on an exceptional basis for the virtual modality of the Conference;
b) Voting option for secret ballot elections;
c) The establishment of two commissions:
   • on Substantive and Policy Matters (Commission I);
   • on Programme and Budgetary Matters (Commission II);
d) Candidates proposed by Council for the following officers of the Conference:
   • Chairperson of the Conference;
   • Chairperson of Commission I;
   • Chairperson of Commission II;
   • Three Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference;
   • Seven elected Members of the General Committee; and
   • Nine Members of the Credentials Committee.
e) The main topic for the General Debate on the State of Food and Agriculture, and a five-minute time limit for statements made by Heads of Delegation under this item;
f) Invitations to observers to attend the Session in an observer capacity; and
g) The Biennial Theme for Governing Body sessions to be held in the 2022-23 biennium.
Queries on the substantive content of document may be addressed to:
Rakesh Muthoo
Secretary General of the Conference and the Council
Email: CSG-Director@fao.org - Tel: +39 06570 55987

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Introduction

1. The Conference is the ultimate decision-making body of the Organization, determining its overall policy and strategy and taking the final decisions on objectives, strategy and budget. The Conference focuses on ensuring coherence in global policy issues and regulatory frameworks, acting on the recommendations of the FAO Regional Conferences and Technical Committees and, where appropriate, the FAO Council. More specifically, the Conference approves the Organization’s priorities, strategy and budget, having considered the recommendations of the Council.

2. As decided by the 166th Session of the Council (26 April-1 May 2021), in light of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the 42nd Session of the Conference will be held from 14 to 18 June 2021. The Council at its 166th Session also agreed to hold the 42nd Session of the Conference in virtual modality, on an exceptional basis, in light of the constraints surrounding the pandemic and cognisant of the need to uphold the principle of equal participation of all Members.

Special Arrangements for the Session and Voting

3. In light of the virtual modality of the 42nd Session of the Conference, the 166th Session of the Council recommended that the Conference adopt, on an exceptional basis, the special procedures and arrangements outlined in Appendix B.

4. The Conference will address this under item 3, Adoption of the Agenda and Arrangements for the Session, following their consideration by the General Committee of the Conference at its first meeting. Any measures recommended by the General Committee and adopted by the Conference shall be implemented on an exceptional basis and without creating precedent for any of its future Sessions.

5. In addition, the 166th Session of the Council recommended the Secretariat to pursue preparations of alternative voting procedures for a secret ballot election, as set out in Appendix C.

6. A Note is included in Appendix D providing guidance on modalities for decision-making at the Conference regarding holding this Session in virtual format and the working arrangements and voting procedures for decisions on its Agenda, upon which the Legal Counsel has been consulted. A Draft Resolution prepared by the Legal Office on special procedures for implementation at the 42nd Session of the Conference, on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent for any of its future Sessions, for consideration by the General Committee and the Conference, is also contained in Appendix E.

Agenda, Topic for the General Debate, Biennial Theme

7. A provisional agenda for the Conference is found in document C 2021/1.

8. Two Commissions will be established:
   • Commission I on Substantive and Policy Matters; and
   • Commission II on Programme and Budgetary Matters.

9. Each session of the Conference has one major topic for general debate. In this regard, the Council at its 166th Session (April 2021) proposed that the topic for the General Debate of the Conference under Item 9: Review of the State of Food and Agriculture, be “Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: From Strategy to Action”.

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1 Conference Resolution 7/2009.
2 CL 166/REP, para. 28 (a).
3 CL 166/REP, para. 28 (b).
4 CL 166/REP, para. 28 (c).
5 CL 166/REP, paras 29-30.
6 CL 166/REP, para. 41.
10. Under Item 9, delegations will have the option to deliver their statements either orally in plenary or in digital format, following the decision of the 165th Session of the Council. Heads of Delegation may opt to deliver their statement in digital format in one of two ways:

a. Text-only statements, limited to 1250 words in length for single-Member statements and 2000 words in length for multi-Member statements, may be submitted to Conference-Statements@fao.org three weeks ahead of the opening of the Conference Session and at the latest by Monday 7 June 2021. These statements will be published on a dedicated webpage on the 42nd Session of the Conference website.

b. Video-statements may be submitted with a maximum length of three minutes for single-Member statements and five minutes for multi-Member statements. Delegations may prepare pre-recorded video statements and submit these to Conference-Statements@fao.org three weeks ahead of the opening of the Conference Session and at the latest by Monday, 7 June 2021. Video statements will be published on a dedicated webpage on the 42nd Session of the Conference website.

11. As only five days are available for substantial work in plenary meetings, and as the Heads of Delegation present at the Conference will make statements under Item 9, the Council recommended that statements be limited to a maximum of 5 minutes each.

12. The Council at its 166th Session endorsed the following Biennial Theme for Governing Body sessions to be held in the 2022-23 biennium: “Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: From Strategy to Action”.

13. The election of the Independent Chairperson of the Council and of Members of the Council, and the vote on the budget level are scheduled to take place on Thursday, 17 June 2021.

14. In order to streamline procedures and to focus debate, documents for the Session include an executive summary and highlight matters requiring decision by the Conference. Where feasible, this will be done primarily by presenting draft decisions to be taken by the Conference in a form ready for approval and inclusion in the final report of the Session.

Composition of Delegations

15. Delegations are normally headed by Ministers. In accordance with Article III of the Constitution (Appendix A), each Member of the Organization may be represented by one delegate who may be accompanied by alternates, associates and advisers. Online registration is accessible through the password-protected FAO Members Gateway at http://www.fao.org/members-gateway/en/. Instructions for online registration can be found on the same site. Members of the Delegations will receive the link for accessing the virtual meeting platform directly on the email account indicated at the registration.

Constitutional Duties of the Conference

16. In addition to adopting amendments to the Constitution, Rules and Regulations of the Organization, and approving conventions and agreements, the Conference has the following specific constitutional duties:

Admission of New Members

17. The Conference, as the supreme authority of the Organization, admits new Members and deals with all matters relating to membership. At the date of preparing this document, no application for membership had been received. Under Rule XIX.2 of the General Rules of the Organization (GRO), applications are receivable up to 30 days before the opening of the Conference session, i.e. Friday, 14 May 2021. The admission of new Members is decided by secret ballot and requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast, provided that the total number of affirmative and negative votes cast

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7 CL 165/REP, para. 33 (a)
8 CL 166/REP, para. 41
9 CL 166/REP, para. 40
shall be more than one half of the Member Nations of the Organization. Membership becomes effective on the date on which the Conference approves the application.

**Appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council**

18. In accordance with Article V.2 of the Constitution and Rule XXIII.1 of the GRO, the Conference appoints the Independent Chairperson of the Council.

19. Rule XXIII.1(b) of the GRO provides that the Council determines the closing date of submission of nominations for the office of Independent Chairperson of the Council by Member Nations to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Council. Likewise, the Council also sets the date by which the Secretary-General circulates these nominations to all Members of the Organization. In this regard, the Council at its 165th Session established 12.00 hours on Monday, 5 April 2021 as the closing date for submission of nominations for this appointment, and Monday, 12 April 2021 as the date by which such nominations were to be circulated by letter and through the FAO Members Gateway by the Secretary-General (see document C 2021/9).

**Election of Council Members**

20. In line with Article V.1 of the Constitution, the Conference elects the Members of the Council. In accordance with Rule XXII.10(a) of the GRO, the Conference decides the date of the election and the date by which nominations for election to the Council must be submitted. It is proposed that the election be held on Thursday, 17 June 2021.

21. As laid down in Rule XXII.10(c) of the GRO, nominations must be supported in writing by the delegates of two Member Nations to the Conference, other than the delegate of the Member Nation nominated, and must be accompanied by a formal written acceptance of the nomination by the delegate of the Member Nation nominated. Conference document C 2021/11 contains information regarding the election of Council Members, including a Nomination Form which reflects the above requirements. Rule XXII.10(d) further specifies that the General Committee shall communicate the valid nominations received to the Conference at least three working days before the date selected for the election. The Council at its 166th Session recommended that the deadline for the receipt of nominations be set at 12.00 hours on Monday, 14 June 2021.

**Officers of the Conference**

22. In accordance with Rule XXIV.5(b) of the GRO, the Council nominates candidates for the offices of: (i) Chairperson of the Conference; (ii) Chairpersons of the commissions of the Conference; (iii) three Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference; (iv) seven elected Members of the General Committee to the Conference; and (v) nine Members of the Credentials Committee.

23. At its 166th Session, the Council nominated Mr Michal Kurtyka, Minister of Climate and Environment of Poland, as Chairperson of the Conference. This nomination will be submitted for endorsement by the Conference at its opening Session, along with nominations for the three Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference. Nominations for the two Vice-Chairpersons of both Commission I and Commission II will be approved by the Conference through the General Committee.

24. Following past practice the members of the Credentials Committee will commence their work in the 15 days leading up to the Conference.

**Invitations**

25. The United Nations, its Specialized Agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency may be represented at sessions of the Conference, without the right to vote. Other intergovernmental organizations having concluded an agreement with FAO which contains specific provisions to this effect have a right to attend as observers. Non-governmental organizations which have consultative

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10 CL 165/REP, para. 31.
11 CL 166/REP, para. 32.
12 CL 166/REP, paras 33-38.
13 CL 166/REP, para. 33.
14 C 2021/13.
status are also entitled to send observers to Conference sessions. Other intergovernmental organizations, including non-governmental organizations having specialized consultative status or liaison status, may be invited on a provisional basis by the Director-General.

26. Appendix F contains the above-mentioned provisions as set out in Rule XVII of the GRO and the FAO Policy Concerning Relations with International Non-Governmental Organizations (FAO Basic Texts, Volume II, Section M).

27. The 165th Session of the Council recommended that, following previous practice, Palestine be invited to attend the 42nd Session of the Conference in an observer capacity\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{15} CL 165/REP, para. 32.
Appendix A

Extract from Article III of the Constitution of FAO

The Conference

[Provisions regulating composition of delegations]

1. There shall be a Conference of the Organization in which each Member Nation and Associate Member shall be represented by one delegate. Associate Members shall have the right to participate in the deliberations of the Conference but shall not hold office nor have the right to vote.

2. Each Member Nation and Associate Member may appoint alternates, associates and advisers to its delegate. The Conference may determine the conditions for the participation of alternates, associates and advisers in its proceedings, but any such participation shall be without the right to vote, except in the case of an alternate, associate, or adviser participating in the place of a delegate.

3. No delegate may represent more than one Member Nation or Associate Member.

4. Each Member Nation shall have one vote. A Member Nation which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the Conference if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years. The Conference may, nevertheless, permit such a Member Nation to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member Nation.
Appendix B

Special Procedures and Arrangements for the virtual 42nd Session of the Conference

1. The special procedures outlined in this Appendix apply on an exceptional basis to the 42nd Session of the Conference in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting virtual modality of this Conference Session. The adoption of such procedures shall not create a precedent for the working methods of the Conference for its future Sessions.

2. The virtual modality of the 42nd Session of the Conference does not alter any of the functions and/or authority of the Conference outlined in the Constitution and General Rules of the Organization, in particular Article IV of the Constitution of FAO.

3. In the context of its mandate, the General Committee will be invited to recommend to the Conference that it endorse the special procedures and arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference, as outlined in this Appendix and adopt the draft resolution in Appendix E setting out Special Procedures for the 42nd Session of the Conference16.

4. The Report of the 42nd Session of the Conference shall record the Conference’s endorsement of exceptional special procedures, in order to ensure the integrity of the Report and all decisions and recommendations contained therein.

Conduct of Debate

5. All meetings of the 42nd Session of the Conference will be held on the Zoom videoconferencing platform, including meetings of Plenary, Commission I, Commission II and Drafting Committees of the Conference, as well as the meetings of the Credentials Committee and General Committee.

6. Members and Observers of the Conference will be granted equal accessibility and capability inside the Zoom meeting platform, ensuring their ability to be seen, and to view who is in attendance in the virtual meeting, and to address the Conference.

7. Given their restricted nature, meetings of the Credentials Committee, the General Committee and the Drafting Committees of the Conference will be held in private and separate Zoom meetings. The ‘share screen’ function on the Zoom platform will be used to facilitate participants’ consideration of the Reports of the Committees, where necessary.

8. Participants will be requested to indicate their identity inside the Zoom videoconferencing platform in the following format: [Member Nation/Member Organization name] [(M) – for member, or (O) for observer of the Conference]. This will enable the Chairperson of the Conference and the Chairpersons of the Commissions of the Conference and all participants to recognize the identity of the speakers. Participants will use the ‘raise hand’ function in the Zoom platform in order to request the floor.

9. Simultaneous interpretation in all six languages of the Organization will be provided for all virtual meetings of the 42nd Session of the Conference.

10. The time zone applicable to the Conference Session Timetable will be Central European Time (GMT +2) or Central European Summer Time (UTC +2). This is the time zone of the headquarters of the Organization, and the location of the meeting as if it were held as a physical meeting.

16 Rule XII 3(b) of the General Rules of the Organization
Documentation

11. All documents for the Session are prepared and disseminated by the Secretariat as per established practice, in all six languages of the Organization. A Journal of the Conference will be prepared and circulated to all Members and Observers of the Conference, in all languages of the Organization in line with established practice.

12. Verbatim Records of the meetings of Plenary, Commission I and Commission II will be prepared and circulated to all Members and Observers of the Conference in line with established practice.

13. The Draft Reports for Adoption of Commission I and II will be prepared by the Drafting Committees of the respective Commissions, and considered by the Conference in a virtual Plenary meeting at the end of the Session.

14. The Report of the 42nd Session of the Conference will record the Conference’s consensus on the amended modality of the Session and the special procedures applied to the Session on an exceptional basis, to ensure the integrity of all decisions and recommendations contained in the Report.

Written Correspondence Procedure

15. In light of the time constraints of a virtual 42nd Session of the Conference, a written correspondence procedure will be implemented to allow more time for the virtual discussions of the Conference in its meetings and to address all items on the Agenda of the 42nd Session of the Conference in a timely manner.

16. Under the written correspondence procedure, Members will receive all related documentation to items addressed through the written correspondence procedure at least six weeks before the opening of the Session (4 May 2021). This includes any related Secretariat introductions to items addressed through this correspondence procedure, provided in writing.

17. Members will be invited to submit written inputs to the Secretariat on items addressed through this correspondence procedure. Members may submit these inputs to FAO-Conference@fao.org, including in the subject line of the email “Written Correspondence Procedure” and indicating the Agenda Item for which the inputs relate. Members will have three weeks (4 May 2021 – 24 May 2021) to submit their written inputs.

18. The Secretariat will compile all inputs received from Members into a table and publish these on a dedicated webpage on the website of the 42nd Session of the Conference. All inputs will be published in (i) the original language and (ii) in English.

19. The Secretariat will provide responses to Members inputs in writing. These responses will be published on the same dedicated webpage on the website of the 42nd Session of the Conference, by 11 June 2021, in all languages. Members will be informed when the Secretariat responses are available online.

20. The written exchange between Membership and the Secretariat will substitute the oral debate in the relevant virtual meetings of the Conference. The Conference will then address the draft conclusions of items addressed through the written correspondence procedure in its virtual meetings.

21. The status of decisions and outcomes of agenda items addressed through a written correspondence procedure is identical to any other agenda item. All agenda items are therefore addressed on an equal footing irrespective of the procedure that is applied. Written comments submitted by Members on correspondence items will also be included in the Verbatim Records of the Session of the Conference.

22. The following items on the Provisional Agenda of the 42nd Session of the Conference shall be considered through the written correspondence procedure:
a. Item 11.1.1: Eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) by 2030 (Draft Resolution)
b. Item 11.1.2: Proposal for the Establishment of a Sub-Committee on Livestock
c. Item 11.1.3: Proposal for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (Draft Resolution)
d. Item 11.1.4: Proposal for an International Day of Plant Health (Draft Resolution)
e. Item 11.1.5: Proposal for an International Year of Date Palm (Draft Resolution)
g. Item 14: United Nations/FAO World Food Programme
h. Item 15: Biennial Theme 2022-23
i. Item 16: Programme Implementation Report 2018-2019
j. Item 17: Programme Evaluation Report 2021

Other Matters

23. A mobile application for the 42nd Session of the Conference will be made available and will communicate any changes to the schedule of items for discussion.

24. All other working methods of the Conference, in accordance with established practice, will be applied to the 42nd Session of the Conference.
Appendix C

Alternative Voting Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference

Background

1. The Council, at its 166th Session, considered and reviewed the options for conducting a secret ballot election at the 42nd Session of the Conference through alternative voting procedures (CL 166/13, Appendix B; CL 166/13 Information Note 1; CL 166/13 Information Note 2).

2. The 42nd Session of the FAO Conference will take a number of decisions in accordance with formal decision-making processes laid down in the Basic Texts. While most decisions are expected to be taken by consensus, the Basic Texts prescribe that a formal vote be taken for a number of decisions.

3. Rule XII.6 of the General Rules of the Organization sets out the three types of votes: show of hands, roll call or secret ballot. The normal procedures and practices for secret ballot voting in accordance with Rule XII of the General Rules of the Organization assume the physical presence of all voting delegates in FAO. Therefore, elections through a secret ballot can only take place in virtual modality under conditions that deviate in some measure from the usual process. This is in contrast with the counting and recording of votes by roll call, which may still take place as close to normal as possible in a virtual modality.

General Consent

4. Rule XII.17 establishes that “If a decision is to be taken on a matter other than an election, for which a two-thirds majority is not required by the Constitution or these Rules, the Chairperson may submit to the Conference or Council that the matter be decided by general consent without recourse to a formal vote” (emphasis added). Much of the business of the Conference could, thus, be determined by “general consent”.

Roll Call

5. Rule XII.7(a) provides that “a vote by roll call shall be taken either upon request of a delegate or representative, or if a majority of two thirds is required by the Constitution or these Rules” (emphasis added). In such cases, the total number of affirmative and negative votes cast shall be more than half of the Member Nations of the Organization (Rule XII.3(b)).

6. The roll call vote will be applied at the 42nd Session of the Conference to the budgetary appropriation 2022-23 (Article XVIII (5) of the Constitution, Rule XX).

7. In the case a vote is conducted by electronic means, the roll call is replaced by a nominal vote and the vote of each Member is reflected in the Report.

Conduct of a roll call vote through Zoom

8. A roll call vote could take place through the Zoom platform in the manner prescribed by General Rule XII-7a. Each Member would be called, in alphabetical order, to cast their vote by indicating “yes”, “no” or “abstain” in respect of the vote at issue. The name of the first Member Nation to be called would be designated by a lot drawn by the Chairperson. At the conclusion of any

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17 Rule XII, paragraph 6, and Rule XII, paragraph 7(a): “a vote by roll call shall be taken either upon request of a delegate or representative, or if a majority of two thirds is required by the Constitution or these Rules. Voting by roll call shall be conducted by calling in English alphabetical order the names of all Member Nations entitled to vote. The name of the first nation to be called shall be designated by lot drawn by the Chairperson. The delegate or representative of each Member Nation shall reply “Yes”, “No”, or “Abstention”. At the conclusion of any roll call, the name of any Member Nation whose delegate or representative failed to answer shall be called again. The vote of each Member Nation participating in any vote by roll call shall be inserted in the record of the meeting.

18 Rule XII, paragraph 8. A nominal vote is intended as a roll call taken by electronic means, i.e. where Members vote electronically simultaneously during a prescribed time period and the electronic votes of Members are recorded by names.
roll call, the name of any Member Nation whose delegate or representative failed to answer shall be called again.

9. In the context of the particular circumstances of a roll call vote through the Zoom platform, Members would be asked to identify the delegate to cast the vote on its behalf. Such delegate would raise his or her hand in Zoom. All other delegates of the Member would refrain from raising their hand.

10. In line with normal practice, any member of a delegation who presents him or herself to cast the vote on behalf of the delegation will be assumed to be duly authorized to cast the vote.

11. The person casting the vote should clearly state the name of their delegation and pause to ensure that he or she can be both seen and heard.

12. If technical issues arise, which prevent the person casting the vote from being clearly seen and heard, the name of the delegation will be called a second time. If no response is provided, the vote will progress to the next Member of the Conference.

13. At the conclusion of the first call, the names of Member Nations whose delegates or representatives failed to answer shall be called again.

14. If, on the first call, a delegation has had connectivity problems, they may wish to consider designating a different delegation member to cast the vote on the second call to avoid such problem recurring. That delegation member should raise their hand accordingly.

15. In any event, on the second call if the person with their hand raised cannot be reached successfully, the delegation will be given an opportunity to have an alternative member of the delegation raise their hand in the system and be given the floor to cast the vote. As such, a delegation would have a total of three opportunities to cast the vote; one opportunity during the first call, and two opportunities during the second call.

16. Those delegations that, for whatever reason, do not cast a vote in the first or second round, will be recorded as absent.

17. Once voting has commenced, no one may interrupt the voting except to raise a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the vote (Rule XII-14). Members would be requested to refrain from using the “Chat” function for any other purpose during the roll call vote except for raising a point of order or to indicate a connectivity problem.

Secret Ballot

18. The secret ballot vote is foreseen at the 42nd Session of the Conference for the following:

- Appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council - a new Independent Chairperson of the Council will be elected in accordance with Article V.2 of the Constitution for a term of office of two years from the end of the 42nd Session of the Conference to the end of the 43rd Session of the Conference. In the event that no candidate obtains the required majority of more than one half of the votes cast in the first round of balloting, the candidate with the lowest number of votes would be eliminated and a further ballot would be required between the remaining candidates.

- Election of new members of the Council - in accordance with Article V.1 of the Constitution, the Conference will elect sixteen new members of the Council for the period July 2021 to June 2023, and seventeen members for the period July 2022 to June 2024. If the number of candidates does not exceed the number of seats to be filled, the elections could take place by “mutual agreement or by the Conference by such methods as it may decide to adopt”, for example, clear general consent (Rule XXII.10 (g)).

- Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Conference, the Members of the Credentials and General Committee – in accordance with Rule VIII, after consideration of the report of the Council, the Conference will elect the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference and the Members of the Credentials and General Committees.
As provided in Rule XII.10 (a), the elections must be decided by secret ballot, except that in the case of an election in which there are not more candidates than vacancies, the Chairperson may submit to the Conference or Council that the appointment be decided by clear general consent.

- **Election of one Member and one Alternate Member as Representatives of the FAO Conference to the Staff Pension Committee** - also in this case, similar requirements apply insofar as the election would take place by secret ballot. In case there is an equal number of candidates as there are vacancies, the Conference could decide to elect the Representatives by clear general consent.19

- **Any application for membership or associate membership of the Organization** – a vote on the admission of any new Member or Associate Member would take place by secret ballot (Rule XII.10 (a)).

**Considerations**

**Legal**

19. Developing alternative options for voting arrangement are based on the imperative that they be consistent with the Basic Texts of the Organization and reflect its basic principles.

20. In the case of decisions taken by “general consent”, decisions taken through virtual means could closely follow the usual procedures operating through consensus, similar to those procedures that have been applied successfully in the Technical and Council Committee Sessions in 2020 and 2021.

21. In the case of roll call votes, Members may conduct roll calls through the Zoom platform for the virtual session.

22. As regards secret ballots, from a legal perspective, the basic roles and functions in connection with a secret ballot vote should continue to operate to the furthest extent possible, specifically the roles and responsibilities of the tellers.20 A similar consideration applies to the option for the candidates or their appointed scrutineers to attend the counting of the votes, and to the elections officer and the Secretariat to support the process. These mechanisms reflect and ensure both the ownership of the ballot by the Members, and ensure that the process takes place with full transparency.

23. A further requirement that must be met is the ability to verify the election result in case of a challenge, as provided in Rule XII.15 (d). In such an event, the Director-General must be in a position to access the records of the ballots for the purpose of investigation for up to three months after the election (Rule XII 10 (i)).

**Practical**

24. The options for the conduct of the Conference Session should be practically feasible and should not create excessive risk to the integrity of the voting process.

25. Furthermore, the scenario of several rounds of balloting should be taken into account, which would be necessary in the election for the Independent Chairperson of the Council if no candidate obtains the required majority in the first ballot. Successive rounds of balloting would be completed within the 42nd Session of the Conference.

**Consensus**

26. Procedures for the conduct of the Conference and, in particular, elections and secret ballots are sensitive by nature, which underscores the importance that consensus be achieved on any deviation from the established process.

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19. Article 6 (c) of the Regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension fund provides that the staff pension committee of each member organisation “shall consist of members and alternate members chosen by the body of the organisation corresponding to the General Assembly, its chief administrative officer, and its participants in service…”.

Principles

27. Special arrangements, including for voting, would need to adequately reflect the fundamental principles of secrecy, transparency and access. With respect to voting, the following principles are fundamental.

Transparency

28. Transparency is a *sine qua non* condition for any voting option. Moreover, the results should be verifiable, as the option for Members to challenge the result of the election must continue to be available to the Members.

Access

29. All Member Nations have equal rights under the FAO Constitution; accordingly, the right to cast a vote in elections as provided in Article III.4 of the Constitution is one of the most important expressions of such equality. As such, any voting option must enable Members to participate fully in decision-making. This means that all Members need to understand the mechanisms that will enable them to cast their vote.

Secrecy

30. Rule XII 10 (e) provides that the voting procedure must be “supervised in such a manner as to ensure complete secrecy of the ballot.” Secrecy of the balloting process must be guaranteed under any adjusted voting option.

Options for Secret Ballot

*Option 1: Voting in-person through physical secret ballot*

31. The option to vote in-person involves the physical entry of voting delegates into FAO headquarters premises to cast a physical vote, while ensuring compliance with physical distancing and other measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This procedure mirrors in almost all its aspects the usual procedures and practices of secret ballot voting of the Organization as reflected in the Basic Texts, particularly Rule XII of the General Rules of the Organization.

32. The main issue that arises is how votes can be cast by Members that are not permanently represented in Rome. All voting could take place in FAO headquarters in Rome, and Members without representations in Rome could exercise their right to include persons in their delegations to the Conference who can be present in Rome during the Session of the Conference. The rules on the composition of delegations allow Members to include any person to their delegations to the Conference, including nationals from other countries. A limitation applies that no delegate can be included in the credentials of more than one Member Nation. In this manner, all Members could be represented during the voting procedure if Members succeed in identifying suitable persons to represent them physically in Rome for the purpose of a vote.

33. Alternatively, those Members who are not represented in Rome could choose to cast their vote from the FAO Liaison Office in New York where there are a considerably high number of Member Representations.

34. FAO will hold a secret ballot in a physical manner, by inviting delegates into headquarters premises to cast a physical ballot paper. Those Members who do not have delegates present in Rome could designate a delegate to vote on their behalf in New York.

35. Due to COVID-19 containment measures, voting delegates would be divided into groups of ten, in alphabetical order, to enter FAO premises and make their way to the voting area in pre-set time slots of ten minutes each. Voting delegates would line up to enter the voting area set up in the Atrium

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21 Rule III.1 provides that, “for the purpose of these Rules the term “delegation” means all the persons appointed by a Member Nation or an Associate Member to attend a session of the Conference, that is to say, its delegate and his alternates, associates and advisers.”
of FAO headquarters, while maintaining physical distancing at all times. The same process would be followed in New York, with the number of delegates per group dependent on the total number of delegates opting to vote from New York.

36. A ballot paper would be issued to the voting delegate, who would then complete the ballot and deposit the ballot paper in the ballot box.

37. The issuing of ballot papers, the casting of votes and the counting of votes would proceed as per established procedures and practices. The basic roles and functions in connection with a secret ballot vote would continue to operate as normal, specifically the roles and responsibilities of the tellers. Two tellers appointed by the Chairperson from among the delegates would supervise the voting process, issue ballot papers and record the deposit of ballot papers in the ballot box.

38. Once voting is completed, the tellers in both the Rome and New York locations would open the ballot box, count the votes, establish the result and certify it. The counting of the votes would take place in the presence of scrutineers, as per standard procedure. The tellers in New York will establish their partial result, and communicate their result through video link to the tellers in Rome. The tellers in Rome will consolidate the total numbers of votes for each of the candidates, and the total number of abstentions and defective ballots. The tellers in Rome would establish the result on the basis of the required majority of the total votes cast, i.e. the total number of ballots minus abstentions and defective ballots.

39. Following the casting of their ballot, voting delegates would leave the headquarters premises of FAO, or the FAO Liaison Office in New York, as the case may be.

40. In the event that a further round of balloting is necessary, this will take place immediately after the first round has concluded and ballots have been counted. Voting delegates will receive a dedicated notification, either through the Conference Mobile Application or otherwise, and through a message inviting them to make their way to the FAO headquarters premises, and enter in the same groups of ten to proceed to the voting area for the second ballot.

41. Extensive outreach has been undertaken with Members since the decision of the Council to have the Secretariat ensure that all three alternative voting options are viable for consideration by the Conference. A Circular State Letter to all Members was despatched on 5 May 2021 seeking Members’ preferences regarding physical voting locations, while a further letter from the Director-General was despatched to those Members who do not have representation in Rome. Further to seeking their views on preferences for the location of a physical in-person ballot, those Members were also asked to indicate whether, in the event of a hybrid option, they would prefer to cast their vote physically or use the online system.

42. The Secretariat has provided training and preparatory material to ensure that Members are in a position to make an informed decision on the voting options, and are prepared to exercise their voting rights effectively under any of the options selected by the Conference. Written materials, briefings and audio-visual materials have been rolled out, covering all aspects of voting, including on the legal framework, walk-through tutorial videos and step-by-step instructions on a physical secret ballot at headquarters and New York. Additionally, a detailed information note was circulated to all Members in all FAO languages and an all-member, virtual briefing was held.

43. The composition of delegations and the communication of credentials will be of the utmost importance at this Conference session. Given the secondary voting locations, it is essential that Members communicate all delegates, especially those who have been identified to vote from New York, in the credentials they will present to the Conference. The normal procedure for communication of credentials will be followed, whereby Members can submit their credentials electronically. The Credentials Committee will review all credentials received in accordance with applicable rules and its usual practices. The credentials should, insofar as possible, be deposited with the Director-General not less than 15 days before the date fixed for the opening of each Session of the Conference.

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22 Rule III.2 of the General Rules of the Organization
Option 2: Online voting using external software

44. Another option is to hold the secret ballot using an automated online voting system. The implementation and use of an online voting system would have significant advantages in a virtual context and in light of the current travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Members would be able to cast their secret ballot votes using the online voting portal during the virtual Session of the Conference. The system could be used for all voting requirements during the Conference, including a nominal (roll call) vote on the budgetary appropriations.

45. The Secretariat has worked to identify all fundamental aspects that an online voting system should contain in order to replicate, as much as possible, the procedure that would take place were the vote to take place physically, as well as to ensure the secrecy of the ballot.

46. The online system would mirror a physical voting procedure while also providing some further assurances with respect to accessibility for Members not physically present in Rome.

47. The online voting platform would be accessible to all Members, regardless of physical location, and ensure vote secrecy, confidentiality, integrity and efficiency in the voting process. Furthermore, the online voting system has been configured with wide margins to manage any risks; full access would be available to a delegate as well as an alternate of each Member as a backup, to provide for a contingency in case of any technical or other issue. Furthermore, the system can be accessed two days before any votes, which are tentatively scheduled on Thursday, 17 June 2021. This period will provide time to address any issues of access or connectivity, if necessary with the assistance of the provider of the online voting system, Minsait, to provide direct support to the preparations and the votes.

48. Also under an online voting option, the voting delegate and the alternate must be included in the credentials of the delegations of Members. It is essential that Members communicate all delegates, in the credentials they will present to the Conference. The normal procedure for communication of credentials will be followed, whereby Members can submit their credentials through electronic means.

49. During elections, the online system allows the delegate voting on behalf of a Member Nation to cast a vote in favour of a single candidate, in the case of the election of the Independent Chairperson of the Council, and for more than one delegate, in the case of the election of Council Members. If necessary, the system allows for further ballots to be carried out until a candidate receives the required majority and also allows for the candidate with the lowest number of votes to be eliminated from the ballot.

50. The system is easy to access from any location via internet. It would be tailored to suit the specific requirements of a secret ballot as per the Basic Texts of FAO, and the interface will be available in all the FAO languages.

51. The system ensures the secrecy of the vote by making sure the vote cast cannot be linked to the voter. Moreover, it can ensure that all ballots are cast correctly, essentially eliminating the possibility of a spoiled ballot, and also provides users with verification that their votes were cast and counted correctly.

52. As with a physical vote, the presence and the role of the tellers and scrutineers is ensured. Tellers and scrutineers will have full access to the voting platform, with no voting rights. They will be able to monitor the delegates in real time as they cast their vote.

53. In regard to the tellers who ensure the delegates are present at the voting booth to cast their vote in the case of a physical ballot, in this case, the tellers ascertain that the delegate is present in the online environment. Upon activation of the online voting, the tellers would monitor the status of delegates to confirm whether they had cast a vote. Similar to their role in a physical voting area when they monitor delegates as they place their ballots in the ballot boxes, the tellers will be able to see that a delegate has cast a vote, without the knowledge of which candidate the delegate voted for.

54. In line with the requirements of the General Rules of the Organization (Rule XII.15), the voting data will be stored and made available for audit after the conclusion of the vote.
55. The online system offers an expeditious voting option for Members and would ensure that all votes take place according to the Provisional Timetable.

56. Due consideration has been given to the measures required to reduce the risk of cyber-attacks. These include setting a short time frame for voting, introducing the possibility of automatic logout after each round of voting and re-authentication before any new round of voting begins.

Supplier

57. Minsait was selected by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through a negotiated procurement procedure as the supplier for an online vote at its latest Governing Council meeting. Minsait is a Spanish company. It is a subsidiary of Indra Holding Tecnologías de la Información. The company is one of the world’s top consulting and technology groups, with 42 years’ experience in developing electoral solutions at international level. Since 2014, Minsait is a certified elections provider with the United Nations Development Programme. Its system offers the possibility for on-site and remote voting and there is a validation of the system carried out by a third party, Verizon. Minsait uses cloud servers through Amazon cloud, with servers based in Europe.

58. The Secretariat has been liaising with Minsait since February 2021 in order to obtain as full an understanding of the system as possible. Members of the Secretariat have taken part in trial runs of the voting system in order to assess its functioning and have determined that it is able to mirror the procedure for a secret ballot election as laid out in the Basic Texts of the Organization.

59. Following guidance from the 166th Session of the Council, the contract with Minsait was issued on 4 May 2021. The Secretariat is satisfied that the service offered by Minsait fully conforms to the specific needs for a successful online vote.

60. The total amount of the contractual obligations with the supplier for the use of the system is EUR 31,704 and includes customization and testing. It would also include direct assistance during the Conference from staff of the supplier.

61. Following conclusion of the contract, Minsait, the Secretariat and Members entered a phase of collaboration with regular consultations, briefings and training sessions taking place over the course of the weeks leading up to the 42nd Session of the Conference.

62. Testing of the system with Members began on 6 May 2021 with regular sessions organized since to allow Members to enter a simulated online voting platform where mock votes could be carried out for various election or roll call scenarios. This introductory phase allowed Members to gain familiarity with the online voting environment, and gain experience in designing a customized online voting system for the Conference.

63. Following customization of the voting system for FAO, targeted training sessions began with the Membership which entailed Members being provided with precise procedural instructions on all the relevant steps that would be needed to be taken on the day of the scheduled vote(s). Members have been provided with detailed information notes, step-by-step tutorial documentation and a tutorial video on the online voting process. A total of ten regional briefings were held between 27 May 2021 and 11 June 2021, targeting specific time zones and all regions of FAO’s membership, in order to brief Members representatives in Rome as well as in capitals on the online voting system. A further final briefing will be held on 11 June 2021 on the online system for all Members.

64. The online voting system is fully customized to adhere to FAO’s environment, voting procedures and in all FAO languages. The final configuration of the system follows a four-step process: 1) Access credentials; 2) Access to a Waiting Room to allow for testing; 3) Access to the Voting Room and 4) Casting a ballot. A number of features are specifically designed to allow ample opportunity to manage and address any issues regarding access or connectivity.

65. Special training will be provided to the scrutineers and the tellers who will be appointed by the Chairperson, and will play an important oversight role in the voting process.
Preventive measures

66. The medium risk, relating to the possibility of votes being altered on compromised computers, is inherent to all online systems. No system allows a service provider to control the computers being used to submit votes. Since the best way to mitigate this risk is from the user side, the Secretariat will urge all voters to adhere to the following mitigation measures:

   a) Ensure that fully updated software and current antivirus software is installed and enabled on the computers they use to vote;

   b) Ensure that the internet browsers used to access the system and cast votes are updated to the latest version.

67. The list of recommended browsers and their versions have been circulated to Members during the testing period.

68. Guidelines on the voting process and detailed instructions on how to access and use the system have been issued by the Secretariat. Members have been invited to provide details on the name of the delegate responsible for casting the vote on behalf of the Member.

Option 3: hybrid of in-person and online

69. The option to combine physical in-person voting and online voting could also be implemented by the Secretariat. A hybrid secret ballot voting would combine a physical ballot at FAO headquarters on the one hand with online voting on the other.

70. Delegations to the Conference would have the option to elect their method of voting, for example, on the basis of their ability to vote physically in Rome, their presence in Rome or ability to travel to Rome, opportunities to identify delegation Members in Rome for the purpose of a physical vote, or other factors deemed relevant by Members.

71. A physical ballot at FAO headquarters would take place as described in this Appendix, whereas online voting would take place through the online voting system identified above.

72. Under a hybrid voting option, Members would be required to communicate their preferred voting option within a deadline of ten days before the opening of the Conference. Such a deadline is necessary to set up the online voting system and prepare physical voting arrangements. This period would also allow for briefings and test runs organized by the Secretariat for the general membership, as well as specifically targeted to the delegates of Members who opted to vote through the online platform. Briefings on the online voting system will be an important feature of the preparation of the secret ballot, as it is a new voting modality.

73. This option would allow those Members, who cannot be physically present in Rome to cast their vote, to do so from a location of their choosing.

Conduct of a hybrid vote

74. The online voting booth would be open for Members to cast their vote online once all votes have been cast in the physical ballot. The tellers will announce that the online voting booth is open for fifteen minutes. This period of time to vote online will be communicated to the voting delegates. At the expiration of this time period, the online voting will close.

75. The computer terminals for the online voting procedure at FAO headquarters would be placed in the same room – the Iraq Room at FAO headquarters, where the votes of the physical ballot would be counted. This allows the tellers to supervise and monitor both processes and establish the result of both the physical and online balloting. The scrutineers appointed by the candidates could be present in the same room where all votes, physical and online, are counted. As such, the tellers and scrutineers would take on the same roles and responsibilities as in normal voting practices in this scenario.

76. The online voting would close at the expiration of the final time period allowed for online voting. The tellers would open the online vote immediately after the physical voting procedure
concludes, but before the physical ballots are counted. Upon the closure of the online vote, the tellers would first establish the result of the online voting system, before proceeding to count the physical ballots. Once done, the two results would be integrated and a result would be established on the basis of the votes from both votes, applying the required majority on the basis of the votes cast, i.e. all votes, minus abstentions and defective ballots.

77. The result sheet of the ballot would reflect the consolidated result only, which the tellers would certify. The elections officer would communicate the consolidated result to the Chairperson, as per usual practice, for his immediate communication to the Conference.

78. A second ballot, if needed, would proceed physically as described above. A further ballot online would be set up. All voting delegates would be informed of the time of a second ballot by message and Conference App notification.
Note on decision-making on working arrangements and voting procedures in a COVID-19 pandemic context

1. This Note addresses modalities for decision-making at the 42nd Session of the Conference regarding: a) holding the Conference in virtual format; and b) working arrangements and voting procedures for decisions on its Agenda.

2. The context of the 42nd Conference is a global pandemic, which excludes, a priori, the holding of a physical meeting in Rome, whether as a result of containment measures of FAO, other restrictions, including travel restrictions by the Italian Government, or travel restrictions by a number of Members. Besides measures taken by FAO and Member governments, there is the plain fact of infection risk. All such factors render it impossible to meet physically in Rome. As such, the context of the Conference can be qualified as a force majeure situation, a fait accompli, which prevents the normal conduct of a Conference session.

3. This situation in itself has consequences for the application of the rules of FAO, which, by definition, cannot be applied normally. Indeed, Members, by their acceptance through the Council to hold the Conference in virtual modality, on an exceptional basis in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their attitude in participating in briefings on a virtual Conference, have already accepted that it will be virtual.

4. This being so, a procedural path could open up to rely on the normal processes of the Conference to determine its working arrangements, in these extraordinary circumstances, which is through the General Committee. Such a process would rely on the notion that the Conference itself determines how it wishes to operate, given that it has to respond to exceptional circumstances as they present themselves, and given that the normal course of proceedings is not available.

5. The General Committee is mandated to address a variety of arrangements and procedural matters of the Conference, captured in Rule X-2 (a) through (k), including to “facilitate the orderly dispatch of the Conference” (k). It makes recommendations to the Conference on matters within its mandate. The Conference subsequently adopts the Reports of the General Committee; this decision is a normal decision, by consensus, and in the absence of consensus by a simple-majority vote (Rule XII-3 (a)) i.e. a show of hands, or a roll call if requested by any one Member, or a secret ballot if the Conference so determines (i.e. by consensus or a majority decision by vote).

6. A similar line of argument could apply to the modality of voting; also here, the fait accompli created by the pandemic necessitates alternative methods of voting. The Basic Texts prescribe that there shall be a Conference in which each Member Nation and Associate Member shall be represented by one delegate (Article III-1), and that each Member Nation shall have (only) one vote (Article I-II-4); naturally, a modality must be offered in which these basic prescriptions are met.

7. In this context, and in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances and unprecedented limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that does not allow a normal application of Rule XII, the FAO Legal Counsel is of the opinion that a set of special procedures that include alternative voting arrangements could apply to the 42nd Session of the Conference, on an exceptional basis, without creating precedent for any of its future sessions. She considers that this would require a decision by the Conference on the option of voting modalities that would be most appropriate to address the fundamental tenets of voting rights for each Member as laid down in the FAO Constitution, to ensure that Members are indeed in a position to exercise their Constitutional rights. Such special procedures should be adopted by consensus, in line with the normal working procedures of the Conference, i.e. upon recommendations of the General Committee, and on the basis of a political goodwill. The Legal Counsel has prepared, for consideration, elements of a draft decision which are set out in Appendix E.

23 It is noted that in the same circumstances, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) did not proceed with a suspension of its rules but adopted, through a silence procedure, decision 74/544 titled ‘Procedure for taking decisions of the General Assembly during the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic’ on 27 March 2020, which enabled the UNGA to adopt essential decisions under a silence procedure.
Appendix E

Special procedures and exceptional ad hoc rules for decision-making using alternative voting modalities

Executive Summary

1. The Council, at its 166th Session, agreed to hold the 42nd Session of the Conference from 14-18 June 2021, and in virtual modality, in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. The Council also recommended that the Conference consider for approval, for implementation at its 42nd Session and on an exceptional basis, specific modalities for alternative voting procedures that would guarantee the complete secrecy of the ballot and the sovereign right of all Members to vote.

3. This Appendix presents a draft Resolution that is presented for approval by the 42nd Session of the Conference with respect to decision-making during that Conference to be convened in virtual modality.

4. The draft Resolution addresses the three options that the Council recommended the Conference to consider for approval, i.e. the conduct of a secret ballot through a physical in-person vote by appointment, an online voting system through external software, and a hybrid combination of an in-person and online vote through external software. It also recalls that preparations for the 42nd Session of the Conference included preparations for the conduct of secret ballot votes in accordance with established practices and Rule XII of the General Rules of the Organization. The Conference is invited to approve one voting option for implementation at its 42nd Session; the draft Resolution will be adjusted accordingly.

Recommendation

The General Committee recommends to the Conference the adoption of the following draft Resolution:

Draft Resolution …/2021

Special Procedures at the 42nd Session of the Conference

THE CONFERENCE:

Affirming that the procedures of the Conference are governed by the provisions of the FAO Basic Texts, including the General Rules of the Organization (GROs);

Affirming also that the Conference shall, as a rule and in accordance with established practice, always meet in person, and recognizing that the exception to this practice is made only in the most extraordinary circumstances;

Recalling the extraordinary circumstances and unprecedented limitations caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;

Recalling also that the Council, at its 166th session, pursuant to Rule I-1 of the GROs, agreed to hold the 42nd Session of the Conference from 14 to 18 June 2021 in virtual modality, in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recommended, inter alia:

(i) approval by the Conference at its 42nd Session of the special procedures to be applied on an exceptional basis, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the virtual modality of the Conference (as set out in Appendix B of C 2021/12); and
(ii) that the Conference consider for approval, for implementation at its 42nd Session and on an exceptional basis, without setting a precedent, and as a one-time arrangement, either in-person voting through a physical secret ballot by appointment, online voting through an electronic voting system, or a hybrid of the in-person and online vote (as set out in Appendix C of C 2021/12);

Recalling further that the Council also requested the Secretariat continue its preparations of the option which conforms with the Basic Texts, as set out in Rule XII;

THE CONFERENCE:

1. Approves the special procedures set out herein, and in Appendix B, C 2021/12, on an exceptional basis and without creating precedent for any of its future Sessions, for the 42nd Session of the Conference held in virtual format;

2. Confirms that decision-making during the 42nd Session of the Conference shall follow as far as possible the FAO Basic Texts, in the prevailing extraordinary circumstances;

3. Recalling that each Member Nation in the Conference shall be represented by one delegate and shall have only one vote in accordance with Articles III.1 and III.4 of the Constitution;

4. Decides to conduct secret ballot votes by [in-person voting by appointment at headquarters and the FAO Liaison Office in New York] [using an online electronic voting system through external software] [using a combination of in-person voting by appointment at headquarters and an online electronic voting system through external software];

5. Decides, for the conduct of a secret ballot, that:

   a. For online electronic vote through external software

      i. The delegate and one alternate delegate, included in the credentials submitted in accordance with Rule III, shall receive the authentication code to access the virtual voting room;

      ii. Processes set out in Rule XII-10 shall be conducted within the electronic environment and references to booths, ballot papers and other documentary records shall be deemed to refer to voting procedures and electronic records stored in the online electronic voting system;

      iii. For the purpose of Rule XII-10 (f), the voting delegates shall receive a message generated by the online electronic system requesting them to confirm the submission of their vote before it is finalized;

      iv. At the end of the voting period, the tellers and the Elections Officer shall record the result of each ballot as generated by the online electronic system in writing, following the process set out in Rule XII-10, and shall include the result of the ballot in the record, for certification by the tellers.

   b. For in-person voting through physical ballot

      i. The procedures under Rule XII-10 paragraphs (a), (d), (e), (f) and (g) shall be conducted by appointment at one of the two locations, which are in FAO headquarters and the FAO Liaison Office in New York;

      ii. For the purpose of Rule XII-10 (g), the count of the votes at locations outside of FAO headquarters will be supervised through the presence of tellers and scrutineers at those outside locations as well as by video-link from the FAO headquarters location;

      iii. The result of the ballot shall be established on the basis of the sum of the votes deposited from the two locations and recorded in writing: the tellers in FAO headquarters shall be responsible for the consolidation of the total number of votes deposited and the certification of the result.
c. **For simultaneous in-person and online electronic voting procedures**

i. The provisions set out under paragraphs a. and b. above shall apply, on the understanding that the result of the ballot shall be established on the basis of the sum of the votes deposited through the in-person vote and online electronic vote;

ii. The tellers shall be responsible for the consolidation of the total number of votes deposited and the certification of the result.
FAO Policy Concerning Relations with International Non-Governmental Organizations
Rule XVII of the General Rules of the Organization
Participating International Organizations

1. A representative of the United Nations and a representative of any specialized agency of the United Nations, accompanied by advisers and assistants, may attend the plenary meetings of the Conference and the meetings of any commission, of any committee of a commission, and of any committee established under Rule XV. Such representatives may, without vote, speak and participate in the discussions and may circulate to the Conference, without abridgement, the views of the organizations which they represent.

2. An observer of any other intergovernmental organization with which an agreement has been concluded providing for representation, accompanied by advisers and assistants, may attend the plenary meetings of the Conference, and the meetings of any commission, of any technical committee of a commission and of any technical committee established under Rule XV. Such observer may, without vote, speak and, upon the request of the Chairperson, participate in the discussions. They may circulate to the Conference, without abridgement, the views of the organizations which they represent.

3. An observer of any international non-governmental organization having consultative status, accompanied by advisers and assistants, may attend the plenary meetings of the Conference and the meetings of any commission, of any technical committee of a commission and of any technical committee established under Rule XV. Such observers may, without vote, speak before such commissions and committees, participate in the discussions therein upon the request of the Chairperson and, with the consent of the General Committee, speak before plenary meetings of the Conference. They may circulate to the Conference, without abridgement, the views of the organizations which they represent.

4. The Director-General shall determine provisionally what other international organizations shall be invited to any session of the Conference and shall submit the list of such organizations to the Conference for approval.

Extract from the FAO Basic Texts, Volume II, Section M
FAO Policy Concerning Relations with International Non-Governmental Organizations

General Arrangements

5. The Organization established relationships with certain international non-governmental organizations in order to secure their advice and to associate them effectively with the work of the Organization.

Organizations eligible for consultative status

6. In order to be eligible for consultative status, an international non-governmental organization shall:

   a) be international in its structure and scope of activity, be sufficiently representative of the field of interest in which it operates, and be of a recognized standing that renders its views on policy a matter of great interest to governments and to FAO;
   b) be concerned with matters covering a substantial portion of FAO's field of activity;
   c) have aims and purposes in conformity with the general principles embodied in the Constitution of FAO;
   d) have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures and machinery for communicating with its membership in various countries.
Organizations eligible for specialized consultative status

7. In order to be eligible for specialized consultative status, an international non-governmental organization shall:
   a) be international in its structure and scope of activity, and representative of the specialized field of interest in which it operates;
   b) be concerned with matters covering a particular portion of FAO's field of activity;
   c) have aims and purposes in conformity with the general principles embodied in the Constitution of FAO;
   d) have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures and machinery for communicating with its membership in various countries.

Organizations eligible for liaison status

8. In order to be eligible for liaison status an international non-governmental organization shall:
   a) be international in its structure and scope of activity and be sufficiently representative of the field of interest in which it operates;
   b) be concerned with matters covering a portion of FAO's field of activity and be in a position to give practical assistance in that field;
   c) have aims and purposes in conformity with the general principles embodied in the Constitution of FAO;
   d) have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures and machinery for communicating with its membership in various countries.