NOTE ON THE METHODS OF WORK OF THE COUNCIL

The text of this Note, originally adopted by the Council at its Sixtieth Session in June 1973, was updated at its Hundred and Nineteenth Session in November 2000, in the light of the recommendations made by the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) at its Seventy-first Session (Rome, 10-11 October 2000).

FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

1. The Council should concentrate on general policy issues pertaining to the achievement of the objectives and functions, spelled out in the Preamble and Article I of the FAO Constitution.

2. The Council should in particular focus on those of its functions relating to the general policy of the Organization, as set out in Rule XXIV of the General Rules of the Organization (GRO), and in particular:

   a) the world food and agricultural situation and related matters;

   b) current and future activities of the Organization, including its Programme of Work and Budget, and a multidisciplinary evaluation of the activities of the Organization;

   c) administrative matters and financial management of the Organization;

   d) constitutional matters, including making recommendations to the Conference on amendments to the Basic Texts of the Organization;

   e) electing members of Programme Committee, Finance Committee, and Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters, and proposing candidates for the offices of the Conference.

1 At its Sixtieth Session the Council adopted the original text of the Note after re-examining the decisions taken at its Thirty-fifth Session (June 1961) as amended at its Forty-third Session (October 1964). It had also reviewed the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Committee on the Methods of Work of the Council which it had set up at its Fifty-sixth Session (June 1971) and had taken into account its own detailed comments on those recommendations made at its Fifty-ninth Session (November 1972). See CL 60/REP, paras 170-179 and Appendix G.
3. The Council should act on behalf of the Conference on matters specifically entrusted to it by the supreme body and should delegate authority to the Programme and Finance Committees as might be necessary.

4. In reviewing the activities of its subsidiary bodies, the Council should ensure that:

   a) they give the necessary attention to the matters falling within their respective mandates;

   b) they do not duplicate each other's work; and

   c) their discussions are not repeated in the Council, except when this is necessary to enable a decision to be reached.

AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION

5. The Provisional Agenda should be issued together with the invitation letters 60 days before the date of commencement of the Council Session and documents for Council sessions should be issued in sufficient time for Member Nations to examine them before the session (see paragraph 8 below), and in a form that shall facilitate the Council's consideration.

6. An Annotated Provisional Agenda should be issued prior to the Council Session providing under each proposed agenda item the following information:

   a) the documentation required for the discussion of that item;

   b) an indication whether the item is submitted to Council for decision, discussion or information.

7. The length of Council documents should normally not exceed 5,000 words. All documents should be issued in the languages of the Organization (Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish).

8. Unless the timing of the sessions of the bodies concerned makes it impossible, all documents (other than the summary of the proposed Programme of Work and Budget) should be dispatched at least six weeks before the opening of the session in question.

9. Sessions of other bodies whose reports must be considered by the Council should, as far as possible, be held in sufficient time to meet the deadline in paragraph 8 above.

10. To facilitate decision-making by Council all reports of subsidiary bodies and other documents should include a clear list of points requiring the Council's decision or consideration.

11. The points requiring the Council's decision should be divided into:

   a) those where a subsidiary body has made recommendation(s) for endorsing by the Council;

   b) those on which no decision has been reached by a subsidiary body and on which a decision by the Council is required.

12. In respect of paragraph 11.a), there should be no discussion in the Council unless a Member desires clarification or amendments to a subsidiary body's recommendation, in which case it should inform the Secretariat in advance of the meeting.
13. Reports of subsidiary bodies and other documents which do not contain points requiring the Council's decision or consideration should be presented for information only.

CONDUCT OF DEBATE

14. The summaries contained in the documents should provide adequate introductory material, and therefore oral introduction should not normally be necessary.

15. Secretariat introductions should be made only when important new developments have occurred since the relevant document was issued.

16. At the discretion of the Independent Chairman of the Council, the Chairpersons of the Programme Committee, the Finance Committee and the CCLM may be invited to introduce their reports.

17. Lengthy and/or repetitious statements should be avoided and speakers should not restate views already expressed by others, unless extended debate is required to develop a consensus. In these cases, speakers should confine themselves to indicating their agreement with a previous speaker, and not repeat what has already been said.

18. The participation of representatives of organizations of the United Nations system in FAO Council sessions will continue to be governed by existing procedures and practices.

19. In respect of items on which a decision is required, the Independent Chairman, if preliminary debate indicates that there is likely to be difficulty in reaching agreement, should suspend the debate and allow for informal consultations or set up a sessional working party to examine the matter and make recommendations to the Plenary.

20. With the exception of the provisions of paragraph 19 above, debate on any item should normally be completed before debate on the next item begins.

21. Any Council member who wishes to open a discussion on an item presented for information only, should inform the Secretary-General of the Conference and Council as soon as possible, and in any case before the meeting at which that item is scheduled.

22. Information items or documents which do not form part of the Agenda for Council discussions will be listed at the end of the Agenda. Any delegation wishing to refer to these items or documents may do so under the Agenda item “Any other Matters”.

23. Committee Chairpersons and the Secretariat should have the Right of Reply to the points made in the debate.

24. At the end of the debate on each item, the Chairperson should as far as possible highlight the main trends apparent in the debate. This should be taken into account by, but should not be binding on, the Drafting Committee.

COUNCIL REPORTS AND RECORDS

25. Verbatim records shall be kept of Council Plenary meetings and accordingly Council reports, while recording in an unambiguous manner all decisions reached by the Council, should be as concise as possible.

26. A draft report should be prepared by a Drafting Committee with Secretariat assistance.

27. The reports of the Council should be written in clear and unambiguous terms to avoid potential misunderstandings on the type of follow-up action required.

28. Reports on the various agenda items should provide a brief indication of the background and the main views expressed and then list decisions reached. The action taken by the Council
should be clearly specified using the formula “The Council agreed/decided/recommended/ requested/urged, ...” and the verb should be underlined in the report.

29. If the views of “some” or “many” members are included in reports, the verb should not be underlined to ensure that they are not mistaken for decisions of the Council. To the extent possible, these expressions or variations thereof (“a few”, “several”) should however be avoided.

30. Reports should not generally record the views of individual delegations by name, since the verbatim records include all interventions made in Plenary meetings.

31. Reports should not include unsupported suggestions unless the Council has so directed.

32. The Secretary-General of the Conference and Council should provide the Council at each session with an information document regarding the implementation of decisions taken at the preceding session.

ADHERENCE TO THE METHODS OF WORK

33. These methods of work should be available to delegations during the sessions of the Council.

34. The Chairperson should draw these Notes to the attention of members at each session, and at the first meeting of the Drafting Committee its members should be formally appraised of the guidelines listed in the section “Council Reports and Records” (paras. 25 to 32 above).

35. Appropriate sections of these methods of work should be applied to the subsidiary bodies of the Council.
ANNEX
RULES APPLICABLE TO COUNCIL PROCEDURES

1. The main rules pertaining to the structure, functions and procedures of the Council are to be found in Article V of the FAO Constitution, in Rules XXII to XXV of the General Rules of the Organization, and in the Council's Rules of Procedure. However, other provisions of the Basic Texts of the Organization are also relevant. Therefore, a detailed list of the appropriate subject matters and relevant provisions is provided below.²

AGENDA

AGREEMENTS AND CONVENTIONS

ALTERNATES

CHAIRMAN
• Appointment
• Functions
• Nomination
• Term of Office
• Voting Rights

COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS
• Sessional
• Standing
• Other

COMPETENCE OF

COMPOSITION

CONVENING OF

CONVENTIONS

DECISIONS OF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DELEGATES</th>
<th>see REPRESENTATIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTATION</td>
<td>GRO XXV.7 (a); RC VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTION OF</td>
<td>GRO XXII; see also PROCEDURE, QUORUM, VOTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conference</td>
<td>Const. V.1; GRO II.2(c)(vii); GRO II.4(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Election Procedure</td>
<td>GRO XII.9,10; GRO XXII.10(g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General Committee Recommendations</td>
<td>GRO X.2 (i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Membership and Eligibility</td>
<td>Const. II.9; Const. V.1; GRO XXII.4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nominations</td>
<td>GRO XXII.10 (a-e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Term of Office</td>
<td>GRO XXII.1, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENSES OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR TRAVELLING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reimbursement of</td>
<td>GRO XXV.6; RC VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNCTIONS</td>
<td>Const. V.3; GRO XXIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activities of the Organization, Current and Prospective</td>
<td>GRO XXIV.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrative and Financial Matters</td>
<td>GRO XXIV.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constitutional Matters</td>
<td>GRO XXIV.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food and Agriculture Situation</td>
<td>GRO XXIV.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General</td>
<td>GRO XXIV, Preamble; GRO XXIV.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparation of Conference Sessions</td>
<td>GRO VII.1; GRO XXIV.5(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>see ELECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIONS</td>
<td>see ELECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Associate Members</td>
<td>GRO XXV.9(c); Vol. II, Part L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Director-General</td>
<td>Const. VII.5; GRO XXV.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• International Organizations including United Nations and Specialized Agencies</td>
<td>GRO XXV.8; RC III.2; RC VI.2; Vol. II, Part Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Member Nations not Members of the Council</td>
<td>GRO XXV.9; Vol. II, Part L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Member Organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Assimilation Clause</td>
<td>Const. II.3; GRO XL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Competence</td>
<td>Const. II.4-7; GRO XLI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Holding of Office</td>
<td>Const. II.9; GRO XLIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Membership Rights</td>
<td>Const. II.8-10; GRO XLIII; GRO XLIV.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Quorum</td>
<td>see this heading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Voting

- Non-Member Nations

POWERS

PROCEDURE AT MEETINGS

QUORUM

RAPPORTEURS

RECORDS OF PROCEEDINGS

REPORT OF COUNCIL SESSION

REPRESENTATIVES

RESIGNATION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

RULES OF PROCEDURE

- Adoption
- Amendments
- Suspension

SESSIONS

TERM OF OFFICE

URGENT MATTERS

VICE-CHAIRMAN

VOTING

WITHDRAWAL AND RESIGNATION

Const. II.10; GRO XLIV
GRO XXV.11; Vol. II
see FUNCTIONS
GRO XII.1-29
GRO XII.2, 13(a); GRO LIV.1; RC II.2
GRO XVI.2
RC VI
GRO II.2(c)(v); GRO XXIV.5(f);
GRO XXV.12; RC VI.2
Const. V.1
see WITHDRAWAL
Const. V.4
RC VIII.1
RC VIII.2
GRO XXV; RC II
see ELECTION
GRO XXV.14
RC I
Const. V.5; GRO XII; RC IV see also
PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY
MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS
GRO XXII.7, 8, 9,