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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

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CONFERENCE

Forty Second Session

14-18 June 2021

First Report of the General Committee

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A. Agenda for the Session¹

1. The General Committee examined the Provisional Conference Agenda contained in document C 2021/1 and noted, following a proposal by the Republic of Korea², an additional agenda item on the “*Preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress*” will be as a sub-item under Item 11.4, *Report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry*. The Membership was notified of this request by Circular Letter C-CC-701-Add on 24 May 2021.
2. The Committee recommends that the Provisional Agenda be adopted by the Conference, as amended.

B. Special Procedures and Arrangements for the Session³

3. The Committee recommends that the Special Procedures for the 42nd Session of the Conference, outlined in C 2021/12, *Appendix B*, be applied on an exceptional basis in light of the virtual modality of the Session.
4. The Committee noted the extenuating circumstances arising from the global COVID-19 pandemic and in this regard acknowledged that extraordinary measures would be required in order to allow the Conference to complete its agenda and allow Members to exercise their fundamental rights in these exceptional circumstances.
5. The Committee noted that the 166th Session of the Council (26 April-1 May 2021) recommended that the Conference implement an alternative voting modality due to the exceptional circumstances created by the pandemic. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the Conference adopt voting in-person through a physical secret ballot by appointment in FAO Headquarters and United Nations Office in New York as an exceptional, alternative voting arrangement, for the specific and sole application during the 42nd FAO Conference, due to the exceptional circumstances arising from the global pandemic.
6. The Committee took note of the provisions of Rule XII of the GRO and agreed that while the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic may alter the setting in which the provisions would be applied, or may require a further-reaching interpretation in order for them to cover all voting scenarios during a pandemic, their fundamental application would remain unchanged. Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the votes scheduled during the Conference would follow the provisions of Rule XII, as applicable in the current global pandemic.
7. In particular, the Committee noted that the provisions of Rule XII were drafted to ensure the integrity and secrecy of the vote and agreed that this spirit remains the basis of the secret ballot election.
8. The Committee agreed that the alternative voting arrangement for the Conference, and by consequence the altered manner in which Rule XII would be applied, would not affect the integrity or the secrecy of the ballot nor would it jeopardise the sovereign right of all Members to vote.
9. The Committee confirmed that the vote on the Adoption of the Draft Resolution on Budgetary Appropriations 2022-23 will take place by roll-call vote in accordance with Rule XII, noting that Members will be called in English alphabetical order, starting with the letter “A”.
10. The Committee recommends a comprehensive review by the Council for a possible use of an online voting system in the future.
11. The Committee recommends that the Conference adopt the following Resolution:

¹ C 2021/1; C 2021/INF/1; C 2021/12

² C 2021/LIM/17

³ C 2021/12

Draft Resolution .../2021
Special Procedures at the 42nd Session of the Conference

THE CONFERENCE:

Considering the current circumstances and associated limitations caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;

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

Recalling the provisions of the General Rules of the Organization (GRO), in particular Rule I, Rule XII and Rule XLIX;

Reaffirming also that the Conference shall, as a rule and in accordance with established practice, always meet in person, and **recognizing** that exceptional suspension of this practice shall be made only in the most extraordinary circumstances and for as limited a time period as possible;

Recalling also the decision 74/557 adopted by the UN General Assembly, “Procedure for holding elections by secret ballot without a plenary meeting during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”,

Recalling further that the Council, at its 166th session, agreed, pursuant to Rule I.1 of the GRO 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 special procedures to be applied on an exceptional basis, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the virtual modality of the Conference; 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;

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;

Recalling the importance of upholding inclusiveness and ensuring all Member States can exercise their vote;

THE CONFERENCE:

1. **Confirmed** that the Council agreed to hold the 42nd Session of the Conference in virtual modality, in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;

2. **Decided**, in accordance with Rule XLIX, to suspend, on an exceptional basis, without creating a precedent and as a one-time arrangement for the 42nd Conference, the portions of the General Rules of the Organization insofar as any elements are incompatible with the virtual setting of the 42nd Conference or with the holding of secret ballot voting arrangements as laid out in paragraphs 4 and 5 of this resolution;

3. Further **approved** the special procedures and voting arrangements set out in the present decision, on an exceptional basis, without creating a precedent and as a one-time arrangement for the 42nd Session of the Conference held in virtual format;

4. **Decided** to conduct secret ballot votes by in-person voting by staggered appointment at FAO headquarters in Rome and the United Nations headquarters in New York, recalling that no delegate may represent more than one Member Nation or Associate Member and that each Member Nation shall have only one vote, in accordance with Articles III.1 and III.4 of the Constitution;

5. **Decided** further, for the conduct of a secret ballot, that:

i. The procedures under Rule XII-10 paragraphs (a), (d), (e), (f) and (g) shall be conducted by staggered appointment at one of the two locations, which are in FAO headquarters (Atrium) and the United Nations headquarters (Conference room(s) C);

ii. For the purpose of Rule XII-10 (g), the count of the votes in Rome will be carried out in the Iraq Room at FAO headquarters, in New York vote counting will be carried out in the voting room, and in both locations will be supervised through the presence of tellers, and scrutineers, as well as by video-link from the FAO headquarters;

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 by the tellers in both locations; the tellers in FAO headquarters shall be responsible for the consolidation of the total number of votes deposited and the certification of the result.

iv. The two tellers appointed in each location, Rome and New York, shall be delegates, representatives or alternates of same two delegations, pursuant to Rule XII-10 (c).

6. **Decides** that votes other than by secret ballot shall be taken by roll call, noting that a roll call would proceed in alphabetical order in English, starting with the letter "A".

7. Also **decides** that the Secretariat shall, as part of its intergovernmental services and within existing resources, provide technical support and assistance upon request by Member Nations to ensure the full and equal access by all Members to the procedure outlined in the present resolution.

C. Establishment of Commissions and Provisional Timetable of the Session⁴

12. At its 165th Session (30 November-4 December 2020) and 166th Session (26 April-1 May 2021) the Council formulated proposals concerning the organization and timetable for the 42nd Session of the Conference. These proposals are contained in documents C 2021/12 and C 2021/INF/1.

13. The Committee recommends that the Conference establish two Commissions to consider and report on the "Substantive and Policy Matters" and "Programme and Budgetary Matters" sections of the Agenda respectively.

14. The Committee noted that the McDougall Memorial Lecture will take place at 18:00 on Monday, 14 June 2021, and that the Adoption of the Reports of Commission I and II by the Commissions will take place on Thursday, 17 June 2021, before the afternoon Plenary Session.

15. The Committee recommends that the Conference approve the Provisional Timetable proposed by the Council, as amended. It is understood that this Timetable may be subject to modifications according to progress made in the Plenary and in the Commissions.

D. Appointment of the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Two Commissions⁵

16. In accordance with Rules VII and XXIV.5(b) of the General Rules of the Organization (GRO), the Council at its 166th Session proposed the following candidate as Chairperson of Commission II:

⁴ C 2021/12; C 2021/INF/1

⁵ CL 166/REP, paragraph 35

Commission II: Mr Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands)

The Committee noted that Mr Hans Hoogeveen had withdrawn his nomination on 9 June 2021. The Committee noted the subsequent nomination of Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma of Mexico has been nominated for Chairperson of Commission II.

The following nomination was received after the 166th Session of the Council had concluded its work:

Chairperson of Commission I: Ms Eudora Hilda Quartey Koranteng (Ghana)

The Committee recommends that the Conference endorse the nomination of:

Ms Eudora Hilda Quartey Koranteng (Ghana) as Chairperson of Commission I; and
Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma (Mexico) as Chairperson of Commission II.

17. In accordance with Rule X.2(c) of the GRO, the Committee recommends that the Vice-Chairpersons of the Commissions be as follows:

Commission I: Mr Carlos Cherniak (Argentina)

Commission II: Mr Akeel Hatoor (Qatar)

E. Appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council⁶

18. By the date determined by the Council, that is, 5 April 2021, three nominations had been received for election to the office of Independent Chairperson of the Council, namely:

- Mr Mario Arvelo Caamaño (Dominican Republic)
- Mr Zoltán Kálmán (Hungary)
- Mr Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands)

These nominations were notified by the Secretary-General of the Conference to all Members by circular letter C/CF 4/3(a) of 12 April 2021.

19. Under the terms of reference of Rule XXIII.1(b) GRO, the General Committee determines and announces the date of the election. The Committee recommends that the election be held in the afternoon of Thursday 17 June 2021, specifically at 15:00 hours (CEST).

F. Election of Members of the Council⁷

20. Rule XXII.10(a) of the GRO provides that the Conference, on the recommendation of the General Committee, shall, not later than the end of the third day of the Conference Session, decide the date of election of Members of the Council and the date by which nominations are to be submitted.

21. The Committee accordingly recommends that:

- a) nominations for the Council seats to be filled at the present session be communicated to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Council by 10.00 hours on Tuesday 15 June 2021; and
- b) the election be held in the afternoon of Thursday 17 June 2021.

22. In this connection, the Conference will note in particular the following provisions of paragraphs 3 to 7 of Rule XXII of the GRO:

“3. In selecting Members of the Council, the Conference shall give due consideration to the desirability of:

⁶ C 2021/9

⁷ C 2021/11 Rev.1

- a) including in its membership a balanced geographical representation of nations interested in the production, distribution and consumption of food and agricultural products;
- b) ensuring the participation in the work of the Council of such Member Nations as contribute in a large measure toward the success of the Organization;
- c) giving to the greatest possible number of Member Nations an opportunity, by rotation of membership, to serve on the Council.

4. Member Nations shall be eligible for re-election.

5. No Member Nation shall be eligible for election to the Council if it is in arrears in payment of its financial contributions to the Organization in an amount equal to or exceeding the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years.

6. The Conference shall, at any regular or special session, fill all other vacancies on the Council which may have occurred since the last regular session. In the case of a special session, the General Committee shall recommend to the Conference such readjustments as circumstances may warrant to the time limits provided for in paragraph 10(a) and (d) below.

7. A Member of the Council shall be considered to have resigned if it is in arrears in payment of its financial contributions to the Organization in an amount equal to or exceeding the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years, or if it has not been represented at two consecutive sessions of the Council”.

G. Right to Vote

23. Article III.4 of the Constitution states: “A Member Nation which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contribution 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”.

24. The Committee noted that 25 Member Nations listed in the Annex to this Report have not paid a sufficient amount of their assessed contributions to retain their vote in the Conference.

25. Fifteen Member Nations (Antigua and Barbuda, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Libya, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mozambique, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, Suriname) have not requested special consideration. The Secretariat continues actively following-up with the delegation of these Member Nations to ensure they are aware of their contribution position and its consequences on its right to vote.

26. Nine Member Nations have requested special consideration under Article III.4 of the Constitution and permission to vote:

- Chad – letter dated 14 June (GC 2021/INF/9)
- Colombia – letter dated 4 June (GC 2021/INF/5)
- Cuba – letter dated 9 June (CG 2021/INF/7)
- Ecuador – letter dated 14 June (GC 2021/INF/10)
- Iran (Islamic Republic of) – letter dated 17 May (GC 2021/INF/1)
- North Macedonia – letter received on 3 June 2021 (GC 2021/INF/4)
- Tuvalu – letter dated 11 June (GC 2021/INF/8)
- Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) – letter dated 1 June (GC 2021/INF/2 and GC 2021/INF/2 Addendum)
- Yemen – letter dated 3 June (GC 2021/INF/3)

27. One of the Member Nations currently with voting rights problems, Turkmenistan, proposes to repay their arrears according to an instalment plan (GC 2021/INF/6). The Secretariat is following-up with the delegation of this Member Nation to clarify the terms of the instalment plan proposed.

28. After using these criteria for a case-by-case evaluation of the nine petitions, the General Committee recommends that voting rights should be restored to nine Member Nations, Chad,

Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Iran (Islamic Republic of), North Macedonia, Tuvalu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen.

29. The General Committee will consider at its second meeting on Tuesday 15 June 2021 the right to vote of the countries in arrears listed in the Annex to this Report, on the understanding that contacts with those Member Nations in arrears shall continue with a view to regularizing their situation before the votes scheduled for Thursday 17 June 2021.

H. Right of Reply

30. At its previous sessions, the Conference decided that, if delegates wished to reply to criticisms of their Governments, they should preferably do so on the day on which such criticism had been voiced after all those wishing to participate in the discussion had had an opportunity to speak.

31. The Committee recommends that these same arrangements be followed at the present session.

I. Verbatim Records

32. Rule XVIII of the GRO lays down that verbatim records shall be kept for all Conference Plenary and Commissions' meetings and that delegates shall be given the opportunity to check the accuracy of the record of their interventions. Editorial amendments should be submitted by the delegation which made the statement within one week of publication of the draft verbatim record concerned.

33. The Committee noted the arrangements outlined in C 2021/12 for the General Debate under item 9 – *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture*, where three options for Heads of Delegations to submit a statement are available: (i) oral delivery in Plenary in line with established practice; (ii) submission of a statement in text-format only; and (iii) submission of a pre-recorded video statement.

34. The Committee noted that a dedicated Web page had been set up for all statements under item 9 provided by delegations under the three above-mentioned options. Statements delivered orally in Plenary under item 9 would be uploaded immediately after delivery in the plenary meeting, with their related audio recordings, and treated as Verbatim Records for item 9. Statements delivered in text-format only or as pre-recorded video statements would also be uploaded on the Web page and treated as Verbatim Records for item 9.

35. In 1961 a procedure was formally adopted by the Conference whereby speakers who so desire may have their statements inserted in the record without delivering them in Plenary. The Committee recommends to follow this procedure in the interests of saving time on condition that:

- a) the Plenary, or the Commission concerned, be informed by its Chairperson that a statement not actually delivered, or a substantive addition to a statement that has been delivered, is being inserted in the record;
- b) the text handed over to the Chairperson for insertion should preferably be in digital format;
- c) the provisional verbatim record containing the additional statement be circulated before the close of the Session; and
- d) delegations attending the Session be able to avail themselves of the right of reply by having an opportunity to make, prior to the close of the Session, an intervention relating to the inserted statement.

J. Statements by Heads of Delegations

36. The Committee recommends that a list of speakers for the General Debate under item 9, *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture* on the topic *Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: From Strategy to Action*, be published daily in the Journal of the Conference, in the order in which they will be called upon to take the floor by the Chairperson, and further recommends that statements be limited to a maximum of five minutes.

K. Admission of Observers from Intergovernmental and International Non-Governmental Organizations⁸

37. The list of Intergovernmental and International Non-Governmental Organizations which have been invited by the Director-General to be represented in an observer capacity at this session of the Conference is given in document C 2021/13 Rev.1. The invitations sent to Intergovernmental Organizations with which FAO does not have a formal agreement and to International Non-Governmental Organizations which do not have consultative status with FAO are extended on a provisional basis and are subject to approval by the Conference.

38. After having reviewed this list, the Committee recommends that the Conference confirm such provisional invitations.

L. Attendance by Palestine

39. In conformity with the suggestion made by the Council at its 165th Session⁹, Palestine has been invited to attend the Conference in an observer capacity. The Committee recommends that the Conference confirm this invitation, in line with the practice followed, and the terms applied, since 1975.

M. Conclusion

40. The Committee recommends that the Conference confirm all the above arrangements for the Session.

⁸ C 2021/13 Rev.1

⁹ CL 165/REP

Appendix A

Member Nations with Potential Voting Rights Problems at 11 June 2021

	Member Nation	Amount in Arrears USD	Amount in Arrears Euro	Minimum Payment required to Ensure Vote in USD
1.	Antigua and Barbuda	16,241.97	12,984.23	12,069.19
2.	Central African Republic	14,108.78	9,488.02	15,677.87
3.	Chad	33,275.33	37,847.55	34,722.33
4.	Colombia	1,651,266.16	1,692,550.15	663,975.82
5.	Comoros	246,035.49	3,764.24	240,622.49
6.	Cuba	351,884.61	315,122.16	10,853.62
7.	Democratic Republic of the Congo	27,069.95	71,903.48	25,644.18
8.	Ecuador	397,928.27	548,065.90	331,041.37
9.	Gabon	110,299.55	169,056.84	156,432.67
10.	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	5,670,724.63	2,983,080.34	4,961,891.87
11.	Kyrgyzstan	56,307.99	3,867.01	41,015.88
12.	Liberia	9,497.76	6,626.12	7,576.25
13.	Libya	1,205,729.35	1,003,106.72	1,715,986.61
14.	Marshall Islands	2,707.00	10,485.40	5,572.69
15.	Micronesia (Federated States of)	3,387.89	7,567.19	2,613.57
16.	Mozambique	16,102.38	22,585.38	3,628.47
17.	Nigeria	1,808,272.67	1,375,235.46	1,189,411.57
18.	North Macedonia	37,897.93	39,524.42	16,067.84
19.	Sao Tome and Principe	230,806.21	32,031.56	261,715.87
20.	Somalia	380,342.73	32,031.56	411,252.37
21.	Suriname	55,553.19	40,745.26	50,308.24
22.	Turkmenistan	902,264.12	410,331.07	1,128,282.63
23.	Tuvalu	5,414.00	5,646.36	2,296.27
24.	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	8,485,826.70	5,744,128.35	8,994,015.32
25.	Yemen	104,344.67	56,463.45	73,158.39