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منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## COUNCIL

### Hundred and Fortieth Session

Rome, 29 November - 3 December 2010

### Open-ended Working Group on Measures Designed to Increase the Efficiency of Governing Bodies, Including Representation Progress report

#### Executive Summary

- Since its inception in April 2010, the OEWG has held two meetings, in July and September 2010, and is due to meet again in February 2011. The present report covers the progress achieved so far on the issues addressed by the OEWG, namely: (i) membership of Council; (ii) working arrangements of the Technical Committees; (iii) preparation for, conduct of and reporting on, meetings of Council and Committees, including timeliness and accuracy of documentation; (iv) modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work; and (v) Note on the methods of work of the Council.

#### Suggested action by the Council

- The Council is invited to note the progress made by the OEWG and provide such guidance as it deems appropriate.
- The Council may wish to endorse the proposals made by the OEWG with regard to: (i) the membership, functions and election of the *bureaux* of the Technical Committees; (ii) timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings.

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## **I. Background**

1. As called for by the 2009 Conference, the *Open-Ended Working Group on measures designed to increase the efficiency of Governing Bodies, including representation* (OEWG) was established in April 2010. The OEWG agreed that it shall, in the course of the 2010-11 biennium, review and make recommendations regarding measures designed to increase the efficiency of the Governing Bodies, including representation. In this context, the OEWG has begun to examine, *inter alia*, the membership of the Council and may recommend changes in the number of Council seats. The OEWG also agreed that progress reports on its work shall be presented to the Council in 2010-11 and that a final report be submitted to the Conference in 2011<sup>1</sup>.

2. Since its inception, the OEWG has held two meetings, on 13 July and 23 September 2010, and is due to meet again on 22 February 2011. The present report covers the progress achieved so far on the issues addressed by the OEWG, namely: (i) membership of Council; (ii) working arrangements of the Technical Committees; (iii) preparation for, conduct of and reporting on, meetings of Council and Committees, including timeliness and accuracy of documentation; (iii) modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work; and (iv) Note on the methods of work of the Council.

## **II. Membership of Council**

3. The different options for or against the enlargement of the Council, as had emerged from previous deliberations, were recalled at the July and September meetings of the OEWG, without a consensus position being reached.

4. In this regard, it was emphasized that the basic premises for continuing dialogue among Members on this matter were the shared commitment to increasing efficiency of the Governing Bodies, as well as the desirability of avoiding a vote on the issue of Council membership.

5. In this context, the Chairperson indicated at the September meeting of the OEWG that he would circulate a “package” of proposals relating to the efficient functioning of Council, including, but not limited to, the specific issue of Membership. The package would take account of discussions held within the OEWG, and would aim to provide a sound basis for seeking a consensus way forward, addressing the various views and concerns expressed by Members. The proposals would cover such issues as: (i) Council Membership; (ii) term of office of Council Members; (iii) possibility of a “bureau” for Council; and (iv) reporting arrangements at Council sessions.

6. Such proposals would be discussed actively in the Regional Groups, ahead of their consideration at the next meeting of the OEWG, and would subsequently be examined and proposed for endorsement at the April 2011 session of the Council.

## **III. Working arrangements of Technical Committees**

7. In discussing working arrangements of the Technical Committees, the OEWG was cognizant of related developments in other Governing Body meetings in 2010, particularly the May session of Council and the April session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM), as well as the June sessions of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG). Subsequent planned debates at the COFO session in October were also borne in mind.

8. In keeping with these developments, the OEWG recalled that the Council had invited the Technical Committees to examine their Rules of Procedure, taking into account the CCLM recommendations. The Council had acknowledged that authority to amend Rules of Procedure was

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<sup>1</sup> CL 139/INF/7, Annex – *Arrangements for the Open-Ended Working Group Measures Designed to Increase the Efficiency of Governing Bodies, Including Representation*.

vested in the Technical Committees, which had their own specific functional requirements. However, the Council had stressed the desirability of consistency among the Rules of Procedure of all Technical Committees.

9. The OEWG echoed the Council guidance regarding the latitude of Technical Committees to decide on arrangements tailored to their specific circumstances and requirements, and agreed to focus on areas where harmonization of working methods was desirable and feasible. Hence, in relation to Technical Committees, Members expressed views on: bureau membership; bureau functions; bureau elections; duration of sessions; and reporting arrangements.

10. As regards bureau membership, subject to specific contexts, there was general agreement on the need to ensure maximum inclusiveness in representation up to 7 members.

11. Concerning the role of bureaux, there was broad agreement on the following support and facilitation functions: (i) setting of the agendas for future sessions, in consultation with Regional Groups; (ii) information sharing on new developments during inter-sessional periods, and on possible follow-up actions. It was also noted that the CCLM had recommended the addition of a generic reference to bureau functions, such as “ensuring preparations for the sessions”, to the Rules of Procedure of Technical Committees, while considering that a more detailed description of such functions might not be required in view of their dynamic nature.

12. On the timing of bureau elections, the OEWG confirmed the increasing support to this taking place at the end of sessions, which was consistent with the expected proactive role of bureaux between sessions.

13. Regarding the duration of sessions, the OEWG recalled that, while sessions of the Committees on Fisheries and Forestry usually had a duration of five days each, COAG and CCP had been holding back to-back sessions over a six-day period since 2005. In the light of recent concerns expressed by participants concerning these reduced time frames, the OEWG was generally of the view that the length and complexity of agendas could justify an increase in duration. It noted that this issue and the desirability of continuing the back-to-back formula warranted further consultations with the respective bureaux, bearing in mind the imperative of cost-effectiveness which had been at the origin of the current arrangement.

14. On reporting arrangements, the broader issue of use of Drafting Committees or Rapporteurs is covered under the following item. In more general terms, the OEWG recalled the fundamental change in reporting lines of the Technical Committees mandated by the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA), whereby the Committees report to Council on programme and budget matters and to Conference on policy and regulatory matters. These reporting modalities have led to changes to the Basic Texts, and could also be reflected in amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Technical Committees as well as in the structure of their reports.

15. At its next meeting the OEWG is due to continue discussion of working arrangements issues pertaining to the Technical Committees that require further consideration.

#### **IV. Preparation for, conduct of and reporting on, meetings of Council and Committees, including timeliness and accuracy of documentation**

16. This matter was considered by the OEWG based on proposals made by the North America Regional Group in a document covering: (i) timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings; and (ii) use of Rapporteurs in place of Drafting Committees.

17. The OEWG supported the proposals relating to timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings. These include a transparent system for measuring and reporting on document preparation for Conference, Council and other important meetings. At the start of the relevant session, the Secretariat would provide a brief report summarizing any delay in issuing documents. These reports would be used over time to assess any fluctuations in performance. Such statistics would also cover issues related to translation. In addition, actions expected of Members would be more clearly defined in the documents. In particular, for those marked “for decision,” the

specific decision(s) expected from Members would be spelled out in a box. The agreed proposals are described in more detail in the Annex.

18. As regards the use of Rapporteurs and/or Drafting Committees for the preparation of meeting reports, the document submitted to the OEWG proposed that the chairpersons and bureaux be assisted by a rapporteur, to be nominated at the outset of each session, and to rotate among Regional Groups. The document recalled that, under the IPA, Conference reports should: “concentrate on conclusions and decisions”, and Council reports should: “consist of conclusions, decisions and recommendations”. It also noted that the chairpersons would have the authority to convene drafting committees or “friends of the chair” groups to assist, as appropriate, in the formulation of draft reports.

19. Different views were expressed in the OEWG on the respective merits of Rapporteurs and Drafting Committees, and no consensus on the most desirable formula emerged. Other options were also put forward for consideration. It was stressed that any option should respect the need to enable Members to participate in decision making in the FAO languages.

20. Besides practical arrangements for the preparation of draft reports, it was also considered important for Members to reflect on, and determine their expectations as, to the desirable scope and coverage of meeting reports. For instance, while the prime focus of reports should be the agreed decisions and recommendations, the extent to which more descriptive parts should be included, e.g. to capture the “flavour” of the debates, was a matter to be further examined.

21. Moreover, the OEWG noted that there was general agreement on other important aspects, including: (i) the expectation of Members to see the concrete outcomes reflected in the reports in a concise manner; (ii) the key facilitation role of the chairpersons in providing clear summaries of decisions and/or recommendations at the conclusion of each agenda item; (iii) the need for the Secretariat to spell out in relevant documents the decisions/recommendations expected from Members.

22. The OEWG is expected to further examine these issues at its next meeting.

## **V. Modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work**

23. Discussion of this matter followed a slide presentation made by the Representative of Australia, on behalf of the South West Pacific Regional Group. Possible avenues of application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) were explored in two areas: in-session and inter-sessional. For in-session work, the following measures were proposed for further consideration:

- use of videoconferencing, e.g. to enable eminent speakers or FAO field staff to participate at minimal cost;
- Internet streaming of Governing Bodies deliberations, to ensure wider awareness of the proceedings in Member Nations;
- Enhanced electronic voting systems.

24. Measures identified to ensure greater involvement of Members between sessions included:

- greater use of electronic discussion forums, especially ahead of meetings, e.g. to share views and comments on documentation, thus facilitating and shortening discussions at the sessions;
- informal online surveys, e.g. to seek Members’ views on specific issues;
- out-of-session electronic clearance for non-controversial matters.

25. The OEWG recognized that FAO had already made progress in recent years, in particular with the development of the Permanent Representatives Website, which could be built upon to implement some of the proposed measures with limited additional investment or effort. Other technologies required further analysis as to their feasibility and implications within FAO, as well as in Member Nations.

26. The OEWG agreed that there was merit in pursuing improvements in working methods based on the above suggestions, bearing in mind important considerations such as:
- the need to take account of differing capacities of access to, and use of, ICTs in all Member Nations;
  - ensuring full transparency while safeguarding secrecy or confidentiality, when required;
  - any proposals to be backed by adequate cost-benefit analysis;
  - taking a progressive approach, preferably to all-embracing initiatives.
27. The OEWG requested the Secretariat to prepare an information document which would: (i) report on the extent to which the above technologies or tools were already in use in the Organization; (ii) analyze how they could be expanded or introduced, with attendant costs and benefits; and (iii) seek to illustrate, where feasible, experiences in other institutions, especially the other Rome-based Agencies. Given the potentially wide scope of application of ICTs, a small Working Group of Members would provide guidance to the Secretariat in setting relative degrees of priority.

## **VI. Revised Note on the methods of work of the Council**

28. In July 2010, the Secretariat had presented to the OEWG a draft revised *Note on the methods of work of the Council* – an information document which had been made available at each session of Council since 1973. Revision of the Note was required to take into account the changed role, functions, practices and ways of working of the Council, as set out in the IPA and reflected in amendments to the Basic Texts adopted by the Conference in 2009.
29. The OEWG recognized that the Note was a useful reference document, and agreed that it should be adjusted on the basis of comments made by Members, including the need to:
- describe Council functions in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Basic Texts;
  - foresee membership engagement and interaction in the work of Council, with the Independent Chairperson performing an enhanced facilitation role in the process;
  - foresee membership involvement in inter-sessional work, including in agenda setting;
  - provide for standard formats for meeting documents;
  - provide information on voting arrangements.
30. Taking into account the recommendations of the OEWG, the Secretariat further revised the *Note*, for subsequent review by the CCLM. At its second meeting, the OEWG was advised that the CCLM had decided, at its 91<sup>st</sup> session (20-22 September 2010), to postpone consideration of the *Note on the methods of work of the Council*.

## **VII. Suggested action by the Council**

31. The Council is invited to note the progress made by the OEWG and provide such guidance as it deems appropriate.
32. The Council may also wish to endorse the proposals made by the OEWG, in particular with regard to: (i) membership, functions and election of the bureaux of Technical Committees (paragraphs 10 to 12 refer); (ii) timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings (paragraph 18 and Annex refer).

## ANNEX

**Proposals agreed by OEWG on  
timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings**

1. The FAO Secretariat should use a transparent and predictable system for measuring and reporting on delivery of documents for Conference, Council and other Governing Body meetings. The baseline for preparation of documents should be between two and four weeks ahead of such meetings, including translation in official languages, posted on the Website.
2. At the start of relevant Governing Body sessions, the Secretariat should provide a brief (not to exceed 5 minutes) report summarizing the documentation preparation process, and make mention of the number of papers issued/available within the expected timeframe. These reports could be used over time as a basis for comparison in subsequent sessions to determine any variance in performance. Such statistics would also include information relevant to translations.
3. As regards the “accuracy” of final documentation such as reports, any attempt to modify texts from the floor during adoption should be done with the assistance of computer technology, on a screen visible to the entire plenary. Any changes accepted by the membership should be communicated as soon as possible in writing to Members.
4. The efficiency of Governing Body meetings would be enhanced by consistent arrangements whereby the decisions expected of Members are clearly defined in pre-session documents. If a paper is for “Information Only,” there may be no need for substantive discussion unless specifically requested by Members. If marked “For Debate,” a paper could be reviewed, staff questioned on its contents, and recommendations made by Members. If “For Decision,” a paper should clearly spell out up front what specific decision is being asked of Members. Whatever the format eventually agreed, it should be used consistently and accurately for all future sessions.
5. Governing Body documents of a less substantive nature should not necessarily pass through the Office of the Director-General for review.