

**NOTE ON SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY**

EXCEPTIONAL TO ITS 25TH SESSION

1. The procedures outlined in this Annex apply on an exceptional basis for the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) in light of the measures to contain the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting virtual modality of this Session. The adoption of such procedures shall not create a precedent for the working methods of COFO for any of its future Sessions.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COFO

2. The functions of the Committee as laid down in [Rule XXXI of the General Rules of the Organization](#) include the following:

- Conduct periodic reviews of international forestry problems and appraise these problems with a view to proposing concerted action to be undertaken by Member Nations and the Organization in their resolution;
- Review the work programmes of the Organization in the field of forestry and their implementation;
- Advise the Director-General on the future work programmes of the Organization in the field of forestry and on their implementation;
- Review specific matters relating to forestry referred to the Committee by the Council or the Director-General, or placed by the Committee on its agenda at the request of a Member Nation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Committee, and make recommendations as may be appropriate; and
- Report to the Council and tender advice to the Director-General, as appropriate, on matters considered by the Committee.

3. The virtual modality of the 25th Session of COFO does not alter any of the functions of the Committee on Forestry outlined in the Basic Texts.

CONDUCT OF DEBATE

4. All plenary meetings of the 25th Session of COFO will be conducted through the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Members and Observers of COFO 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 Committee.

5. 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 COFO]. This will enable the Chairperson and all participants to recognize the identity of the speakers. Delegates may request the floor by using the ‘raise hand’ function in the Zoom platform. This will draw up a list of speakers which the Chairperson will use to call Members to take the floor.

6. Simultaneous interpretation in all six languages of the Organization will be provided for all virtual meetings of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry.

7. Given the virtual modality of the 25th Session of COFO and the need to streamline the proceedings to ensure sufficient time during the Session to complete all Agenda items, a number of time management provisions shall be implemented. This includes limiting the time available for individual Member interventions from the floor to three minutes, and multi-Member interventions to five minutes. Regional and multi-group statements are particularly encouraged to maximise the efficiency of the proceedings.

8. To facilitate parallel consultations among participants, including regional groups, breakout rooms will be made available in the Zoom platform, upon request to the Secretariat at COFO-2020@fao.org.

9. In line with established practice, the Chairperson will make a summary of the conclusions and recommendations emerging from the debate at the end of deliberation on all agenda items.

10. The Chairperson's conclusions will be displayed to all Members and Observers of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry through the 'share screen' function on the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Any adjustments to the draft conclusions will be made on the screen in real time, unless otherwise specifically agreed by the Committee.

11. The meetings of the Drafting Committee of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry will be held on the Zoom videoconferencing platform, in a separate meeting from the plenary meetings of the Committee. The 'share screen' function on the Zoom platform will be used to facilitate any adjustments to the text.

AGENDA, TIMETABLE AND DOCUMENTATION

12. All documents for the session are prepared and disseminated by the Secretariat as per established practice, in all six languages of the Organization.

13. The meetings of the 25th Session of the Committee will be scheduled in line with established practice, from 10.00 to 13.00 in the morning, and from 14.30 to 17.30 in the afternoon, or later if necessary.

14. The Drafting Committee of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry will convene its meeting(s) after the conclusion of the afternoon sessions of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (6, 7 and 8 October 2020).

15. The time zone applicable to the 25th Session of COFO will be Central European Summer Time (GMT +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. The background documentation for the session will be made available in line with established practice at the end of August on the Committee's website at <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/en/>.

17. With the view to save time in the running of the sessions, written introductions/presentations will replace the oral presentations usually made at the beginning of each Agenda item in plenary. These written introductions/presentations shall be made available on the Committee's website. Members will receive, three weeks before the 25th Session of the Committee convenes (Monday, 14 September 2020), written introductory presentations on all items on the Agenda of the 25th Session of the Committee.

18. Brief oral introductions to Agenda items may also be delivered in virtual plenary, at the opening of any agenda item, including on any new developments since the publication of the written introductions.

19. A further time saving measure to be applied to COFO25 shall be to forego the oral delivery of general statements by Members or Observers in the opening segment of COFO25. General statements, usually held during the opening of COFO Sessions, may be submitted in written format. These written statements will be webposted on the COFO webpage and available to all, in both the original and English languages.

20. All relevant documentation to the 25th Session of the Committee will also be available on the COFO list of documents website: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/documents/en/>

21. All other working methods of the Committee in relation to the Agenda, Timetable and documentation will be applied to the 25th Session of the Committee in accordance with established practice.

WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

22. In light of the exceptional procedures in place for the virtual meeting of the 25th Session of the Committee, a number of items on the Agenda (items 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4) will be addressed through a written correspondence procedure. This procedure is a time management measure with the aim to provide sufficient time during the virtual plenary meetings of the 25th Session of the Committee to be able to conclude all items on its Agenda.

23. Once the written introductions/presentations to agenda items are made available to Members (on Monday, 14 September 2020), they shall be requested to submit written inputs, including any comments and questions on the items, by Friday 26 September 2020. Members may submit these written inputs to the Secretariat via email at COFO-2020@fao.org. All written inputs by Members will be posted on a dedicated webpage on the website of the 25th Session of the Committee (<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/en/>) along with an English translation, if not originally provided in English.

24. The Secretariat shall then provide written responses to Members inputs, as applicable, and these shall also be webposted on the dedicated website of the 25th Session of the Committee [and the COFO website?], alongside Members' written inputs. Secretariat responses shall be translated in all six official languages of the Organization.

25. This written correspondence procedure addresses, through writing, a first round of deliberation among Members and the Secretariat, in order to save time during the virtual plenary sessions. Following this initial written exchange, the item will be opened in virtual plenary, according to the Timetable of the Session.

26. At the opening of the item in virtual plenary, the Chairperson will open the floor for any further interventions, should Members wish to make any additional comments or questions following the initial written exchange. As such, an agenda item addressed through a written correspondence procedure can benefit, if desired by any Member, from a fully interactive discussion in writing as well as in plenary among Members and the Secretariat.

27. The Chairperson shall draft conclusions on the Agenda item on the basis of the main points raised through both the written exchange and any verbal exchange during the virtual plenary meeting, in particular with regards to the "Suggested actions by the Committee" (at the beginning of the background documents). These conclusions will be addressed, in virtual plenary, in line with the procedure described in paragraphs 10-11 of this Note.

28. The draft conclusions for the items to be addressed through the written correspondence procedure will also be addressed by the Drafting Committee at its meetings, in line with the procedure outlined in paragraph 12 of this Note.

WRITTEN INPUTS ON ITEMS NOT ADDRESSED IN THE WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

29. As a further time management measure, it is encouraged that Members submit, in advance, written statements on items that are addressed in plenary. These should be addressed to the Secretariat via email to COFO-2020@fao.org, and shall be published on a dedicated webpage on the website of the 25th Session of the Committee.

30. These written submissions may be made either in lieu of, or in parallel to, oral delivery in virtual plenary. Written submissions under this modality may be consulted for the purpose of preparing the Chairperson's draft conclusions; however, the written submissions will not continue to exist as a record of the meeting, and will, as such, be treated in the same way as any other oral intervention.

31. No deadline is specified for these written submissions. However, should Members wish for their written intervention to be taken into account by the Chairperson when drafting conclusions for the item, the written input should be sent at least two working days before the item is scheduled for virtual discussion in plenary, according to the timetable. This shall also enable the written intervention to be translated into English where necessary.

REPORTS AND RECORDS

32. The Draft Report for Adoption will be prepared by the Drafting Committee of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry, and will be circulated to the Members of COFO as soon as possible before the Adoption of the Report, in accordance with established practice.

33. The Report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry will be communicated in accordance with Rule VI.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee.

34. The Report of the 25th Session of the Committee will record the Committee's consensus on the amended modalities for the Session, adopted on an exceptional basis, outlined in this Note.

35. All other working methods of the Committee in relation to Reports and records of the meeting will be applied to the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry, in line with established practice.

VOTING PROCEDURES

36. The decisions of the Committee shall be ascertained by the Chairperson and are normally taken by consensus. If resorting to a vote is necessary, under virtual meeting conditions such a vote would necessarily take place by roll call.

37. In case a decision shall be taken by roll call vote in a virtual setting, such a vote would be conducted through the following procedure. The Chairperson reads the question that is subject to a vote, the Chairperson or Secretary reads the names of Members in English alphabetical order (starting from a country drawn by lot) and waits for the reply of each Member. Members must clearly pronounce "Yes", "No" or "Abstention". The Member representative voting must enable his/her video function on the Zoom platform during the vote. Members of the Secretariat take note of the replies and count the votes. Following a pause, the results are announced by the Chairperson.