



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
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

COUNCIL

Hundred and Sixty-sixth Session

26-30 April 2021

Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference

Executive Summary

This document contains a tentative Timetable for the 42nd Session of the Conference, as well as proposals regarding (i) the dates and modality of the Conference; (ii) special procedures to be applied on an exceptional basis for a virtual modality of the Session, including alternative options for holding secret ballot elections; (iii) a topic for the General Debate at the Conference in 2021; (iv) a biennial theme for Governing Body sessions convened in 2022-23; and (v) the Officers of the Conference for which candidates need to be nominated.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is invited to take decisions on:

- a) Holding the 42nd Session of the Conference from 14-18 June 2021;
- b) Convening the 42nd Session of the Conference in virtual modality;

The Council is invited to make the following recommendations to the 42nd Session of the Conference:

- a) Special procedures to be applied on an exceptional basis for a virtual Conference Session, as set out in *Appendix A*, and alternative options for voting procedures, set out in *Appendix B*;
- b) The deadline for receipt of nominations for Council Membership for:
 - i. End of the 42nd Session of the Conference to 30 June 2024; and
 - ii. 30 June 2022 to the end of the 44th Session of the Conference;
- c) The tentative timetable for the 42nd Session of the Conference set out in *Appendix C*;
- d) A topic for the General Debate on the *State of Food and Agriculture*, procedures for delegations delivering statements in digital form under the General Debate and a five-minute time limit for statements made by Heads of Delegation under this item in plenary;
- e) A biennial theme for Governing Body sessions held in the 2022-23 biennium; and
- f) Candidates 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.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Rakesh Muthoo
Secretary-General of the Conference and the Council
Tel: +39 06570 5987

A. Introduction

1. This document contains proposals for Council consideration regarding the arrangements and preparations for the 42nd Session of the Conference. The document outlines (i) proposals of a procedural nature, on the theme for the General Debate, the Biennial Theme, a tentative Timetable of the Conference and Officers of the Conference, and (ii) proposals regarding decisions made previously by the Council and the Conference but which require adjustment in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated containment measures. These include proposals for revised dates and modality of the Conference Session, alternative options for holding secret ballot elections under virtual modality, and revised deadlines for the receipt of nominations for Council Membership.
2. This document complements the arrangements for the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference approved by the Council at its 165th Session, which are contained in CL 165/14.
3. The Provisional Agenda for the 42nd Session of the Conference was approved by the 165th Session of the Council (30 November-4 December 2020).

B. Change of Dates and Modality of the Conference

4. Rule I.1 of the General Rules of the Organization specifies:
“The regular session of the Conference shall be held at the seat of the Organization in the month of June, unless it is convened elsewhere or at a different time in pursuance of a decision of the Conference at a previous session, or, in exceptional circumstances, of a decision by the Council.”
5. In order to facilitate participation of all Members in the context of exceptional circumstances surrounding the global COVID-19 pandemic and the scheduling of high level inter-governmental meetings, as well as the opportunity for the FAO Conference to provide significant inputs to the UN World Food Systems Summit and Pre-Summit, the Council is invited to agree to holding the 42nd Session of the Conference from 14-18 June 2021, instead of from 12-16 July 2021, as originally decided by the 41st Session of the Conference in July 2019¹.
6. In addition, the Council is invited to decide to hold the Conference Session in virtual modality on the Zoom videoconferencing platform due to the limitations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic including, *inter alia*, restrictions on international travel and large physical meetings to contain the spread of COVID-19.
7. The specific procedures and arrangements proposed for a virtual 42nd Session of the Conference are set out in *Appendix A*. The Conference will be invited to endorse the special procedures outlined in *Appendix A* 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.

C. Alternative options for secret ballot elections

8. The Council is invited to endorse the proposal for an alternative voting procedure for secret ballot elections at the 42nd Session of the Conference, to be applied on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent for any of its future Sessions. Consultations held by the Independent Chairperson of the Council with the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Regional Groups on the special procedures to be applied to voting at the 42nd Session of the Conference have informed the proposals outlined in this document.
9. Three alternative voting arrangement options are presented for Council’s consideration: i) an online, electronic secret ballot conducted through external software; ii) an in-person vote by secret ballot by appointment; or iii) postal ballot. *Appendix B* to this document provides detailed information on the arrangements and procedures each option entails and how they would be implemented at the 42nd Conference.
10. Following the recommendation of the Council, the endorsed option for alternative voting arrangements will be subsumed under the special procedures and arrangements for the 42nd Session of

¹ C 2019/REP, paragraph 81

the Conference. The Conference will be invited to endorse, as part of its opening session, with a roll call vote in plenary on the implementation of an alternative voting procedure, on an exceptional basis, in view of the circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic 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.

11. In line with Rule XLIX and Rule XII.7 (a) of the General Rules of the Organization, the Conference will also be invited to suspend by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast at the virtual Plenary, through a roll call vote,² any Rules incompatible with the special procedures in place, including alternative voting arrangements, for a virtual Session of the Conference. Any suspension of the General Rules of the Organization and special procedures implemented at the 42nd Session of the Conference shall be implemented on an exceptional basis and without creating precedent for any of its future Sessions.

D. Tentative Timetable

12. A tentative timetable for the Conference (*Appendix C*) is submitted for consideration by the Council, and subsequent submission to the Conference, for approval.

13. The General Committee of the Conference shall review the tentative timetable at its first meeting to be held on the first day of Conference, and make a recommendation to Conference for its approval (Rule X.2 (a-b) of the General Rules of the Organization).

14. The tentative timetable has been developed on the basis of the decision of the 165th Session of the Council to schedule meetings of Commission I and Commission II of the Conference consecutively, to the extent possible³, in order to increase the efficiency of Conference proceedings and to bolster Members' participation in all meetings of the Conference.

E. Officers of the Conference

15. In keeping with regional rotation, the FAO Europe Regional Group is expected to submit to the 166th Session of the Council the name of a representative of the Europe Region for election as Chairperson of the Conference. Furthermore, the Council is invited to take into consideration the established practice of regional rotation, whereby the Chairperson of Commission I should be from a country that is a member of the Group of 77 and China and the Chairperson of Commission II is from a country that is not a member of the Group of 77 and China.

16. In accordance with Rule XXIV-5(b) of the General Rules of the Organization, the Council is requested to nominate candidates for the following positions:

- i. Chairperson of the Conference
- ii. Chairperson of Commission I;
- iii. Chairperson of Commission II;
- iv. Three Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference;
- v. Seven elected Members of the General Committee; and
- vi. Nine members of the Credentials Committee.

17. Following the endorsement by the 165th Session of the Council of the new working methods of the Conference, as contained in CL 165/18, the nominees for the General Committee may meet on an informal basis in the 15 days leading up to the Conference to undertake preparatory work. It is noted that any preparatory work would not constitute formal decisions and recommendations of the General Committee until its membership is elected by the 42nd Session of the Conference.

F. Topic for the General Debate

18. The General Debate at the Conference usually has one major topic agreed by the Conference, normally on the recommendation of the Council. The topics selected for the General Debate at the past three sessions of Conference were as follows:

² Or a nominal vote as per Rule XII.8 of the General Rules of the Organization.

³ CL 165/REP, paragraph 33 (b).

- “Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development” (2019)
- “Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security” (2017)
- “Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and Hunger by Strengthening Rural Resilience: Social Protection and Sustainable Agricultural Development” (2015)

19. In this regard, the 166th Session of the Council may wish to consider “*Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: From Strategy to Action*” when proposing the topic for the General Debate at the 42nd Session of the Conference under item 9, “Review of the State of Food and Agriculture”.

20. 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 Delegations may opt to deliver their statement in digital format in one of two ways:⁴

- 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 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 by Monday, 7 June 2021. Video statements will be published on a dedicated webpage on the 42nd Session of the Conference website.

21. Given that only five days are available for work in plenary meetings, and as the majority of Heads of Delegation present at the Conference are expected to make statements under item 9, the Council may wish to follow past practice and recommend that statements be limited to a maximum of five minutes each.

G. Biennial Theme

22. In line with the recommendation of the 39th Session of the Conference (June 2015), the Conference will be required to endorse a “biennial theme” for consideration by Governing Bodies at sessions taking place during the 2022-23 biennium. The aim of the “biennial theme” is to increase the focus of the Governing Bodies on the priorities and strategic global issues contained in the Strategic Framework.

23. In selecting the “biennial theme” for the 2022-23 biennium, the 166th Session of the Council may wish to consider endorsing the following proposed theme:

Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: From Strategy to Action

24. It is proposed to maintain the theme of the General Debate for the Biennial Theme in recognition of its importance and to provide the Governing Bodies the opportunity to reflect and build on the issues that will be raised during the Conference throughout the 2022-23 biennium.

H. Round Table events

25. The Council at its 165th Session endorsed the proposal to recommend the Conference introduce informal Round Table events at its Sessions to foster senior or high level official action-oriented dialogue.⁵ In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated containment measures, including the need to convene the Conference virtually, and taking into account the principle of inclusiveness and equal participation by Members, the Council is invited to postpone the introduction of Round Table events to the 43rd Session of the Conference in 2023.

⁴ CL 165/REP, paragraph 33 (a)

⁵ CL 165/REP, paragraph 33 (c)

I. Constitutional Duties of the Conference

26. The Council at its 165th Session recommended that the deadline for receipt of nominations for election to the Council be set at 12:00 hours on Monday, 12 July 2021, and the election be held on Thursday, 15 July 2021. The Council is invited to endorse adjusted deadlines for the receipt of nominations for election to the Council, in light of the proposal to convene the 42nd Session of the Conference from 14-18 June 2021, outlined in section B of this document. As such, the Council may propose that the deadline for receipt of nominations for election to the Council be set at 12:00 hours on Monday, 14 June 2021, and that the election be held on Thursday, 17 June 2021.

Appendix A: 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 of the Conference outlined in the Constitution and General Rules of the Organization, in particular Article IV of the Constitution of FAO.
3. The General Committee shall recommend the Conference (i) endorse the special procedures and arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference, as outlined in this *Appendix*, and (ii) suspend any Rules that may be incompatible with these special procedures and arrangements⁶, through a roll-call vote⁷. In this case, the total number of affirmative and negative votes cast shall be more than one half of the Member Nations of the Organization⁸.
4. The Report of the 42nd Session of the Conference shall record the Conference's endorsement of these special procedures and the suspension of any Rules which may be incompatible with these 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, and any side events and Round Tables.
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. 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 +1) 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.

⁶ Rule XLIX.1 of the General Rules of the Organization

⁷ Rule XII. 7 (a) of the General Rules of the Organization

⁸ 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 (3 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 (3 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 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)
- f. Item 13: Progress report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System
- 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

22. 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.

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

Appendix B: Alternative Voting Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference

Introduction

1. The global crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for the activities, processes and governance of FAO. These exceptional circumstances have been successfully addressed through a combination of digitalisation, innovation and adaptation. In particular, all meetings of the Governing Bodies have been held in virtual format since 2020. This has been based on adjusted exceptional modalities, consistent with the Basic Texts of the Organization, in an online platform, as agreed upon by its Members.
2. Decisions by FAO Governing Bodies in virtual modality have thus far been undertaken by consensus. However, the need for decisions to be taken by a vote is envisaged at the forthcoming 42nd Session of the Conference. The Conference will, consequently, need to approve special procedures for the conduct of its business in the prevailing exceptional circumstances.
3. Other UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have also adopted special arrangements to facilitate the conduct of proceedings of their online sessions during the pandemic, including questions on voting. In the case of WHO, it should be noted that a correspondence format was chosen to conduct an election for the WHO Director for their Regional Office for Europe.
4. Agencies such as the ILO and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) conduct their voting through an electronic system, most usually, to date, using the electronic voting system within their premises. On the other hand, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has used a procedure for a physical vote adapted to Covid-19 restrictions.

Background

5. The upcoming 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.
6. Rule XII, 6 of the General Rules of the Organization sets out the three types of votes: show of hands, roll call or secret ballot⁹. 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

7. However, 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”.

⁹ 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.

Roll Call

8. 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 one half of the Member Nations of the Organization (Rule XII, 3 (b)).

9. The roll call vote will be applied at the 42nd Session of the Conference to

- the budgetary appropriation 2022-2023 (Article XVIII (5) of the Constitution, Rule XX).
- Suspension of any of the Rules that may be incompatible with a virtual modality of the Conference, including the special procedures approved by the Members for the 42nd Session Conference (Rule XLIX, 1).

10. In the case a vote is conducted by electronic means, the roll call is replaced by a nominal vote¹⁰ and the vote of each Member is reflected in the Report.

Secret Ballot

11. 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 paragraph 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 there is one candidate for the vacancy of the Independent Chairperson of the Council, the Chairperson could submit to the Conference that the appointment be decided by clear general consent (Rule XII 10 (a)). If accepted, a secret ballot would not be necessary and the appointment would be decided, essentially, by acclamation. In the event that no candidate obtains the required majority of more than one half of the votes cast, 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

¹⁰ 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.

candidates as there are vacancies, the Conference could decide to elect the Representatives by clear general consent.¹¹

- *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)). At the time of preparation of this Note, it is not anticipated that any such application will be presented to the Conference.

Considerations

Legal

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. In the case of roll call votes, Members could decide to conduct roll calls through the platform for the virtual session. Alternatively, the Rules envisage electronic voting and special procedures could be approved by the Members that are aligned with the relevant Rules.

15. 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.¹² 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.

16. A further requirement that should 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 should be in a position to have access to the records of the ballots for the purpose of investigation up to three months after the election (Rule XII 10 (i)).

Practical

17. 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.

18. 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 should normally be completed within the Session of the Conference.

Consensus

19. 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 established process.

Principles

20. 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.

¹¹ 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...”.

¹² Rule XII 10 (c)

Transparency

21. 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

22. 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

23. 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

Viability

24. FAO could continue to hold a secret ballot in a physical manner, by inviting delegates into headquarters’ premises to cast a physical ballot paper. Voting for Rome-based Membership would take place at FAO Headquarters, by appointment or other such arrangements that are consistent with any COVID-19 containment measures.

25. The issuing of ballot papers, the casting of votes and the counting of votes would proceed as per normal procedures and practices, and would be supervised by two tellers appointed by the Chairperson from among the delegates. A ballot paper would be issued to the delegate representing each Member entitled to vote, the voting delegate would complete the ballot and deposit the ballot paper in the ballot box. The tellers would oversee this process and record all Members’ voting. Once voting is completed, the tellers would open the ballot box, count the votes, establish the result and certify it. The result of the ballot would then be announced by the Chairperson of the Conference. The counting of the votes would take place in the presence of scrutineers, as per standard procedure.

26. However, only 141 Member Nations out of a potential 194 voting Member Nations are represented in Rome. In respect of non-Rome based Members, three options could apply: the FAO Liaison Office in New York as the location with the highest number of representations of Members; the FAO Liaison Office in Geneva; or voting by proxy, enabling those not represented either in New York or in Geneva to exercise their right to vote.

27. Ballot papers could be counted at the FAO Liaison Offices in New York and Geneva in accordance with normal procedures and practices, and under the supervision of tellers appointed from among the New York- and Geneva-based Members of FAO. Scrutineers could also be appointed for these locations as per normal procedure. The counting could take place via a video-link with the counting room at headquarters, including the two Rome-based tellers in order to consolidate the result of the three voting locations in Rome. The results of the vote would be known immediately as votes are counted contemporaneously.

28. Any Member could delegate any person (a “proxy”) to cast its vote on its behalf. The General Rules of the Organization do not place any restriction upon the appointments that a sovereign Member may make for attendance at the Conference as its delegate or its delegate’s alternates, associates and advisers¹³. However, Article III, paragraph 3 of the FAO Constitution provides that “No delegate may represent more than one Member Nation or Associate Member” and it is therefore

¹³ Rule III, paragraph 2, of the General Rules of the Organization.

not permitted to accredit one individual as the delegate of more than one Member Nation for the Conference, including for the purpose of proxy voting. Nevertheless, using this option would facilitate voting by Members who do not have a presence in Rome, and all aspects of the vote could be conducted at FAO headquarters. A Member making use of a proxy voting option would identify the individual authorized to cast the vote in the credentials submitted in accordance with Rule III.

29. Subsequent rounds of balloting would normally take place immediately following the announcement of results by the Chairperson, and following some preparation time of new ballot papers. It should be noted that all physical voting options would require more time as compared to the usual voting process in the FAO Plenary Hall, for example to consolidate results with non-Rome locations, or the preparations for successive rounds of ballots, including coordination with any non-Rome voting locations. This time factor may be relevant in light of the tight schedule of the 42nd Session of the Conference, and particularly in light of efforts to avoid overlaps between meetings of Commissions I and II of the Conference as much as possible.

Integrity

30. This option mirrors to the closest extent possible the normal paper ballot procedures as described in the Basic Texts of FAO. The secrecy of the vote would be maintained. In the event that a second or further rounds of balloting are necessary, the secret ballot procedure could in all likelihood be completed within the time available for the Conference.

31. The option comes with a degree of logistical complexity due to the decentralized nature of voting. In the case of a video-link used for the contemporaneous counting of votes in Rome, New York and Geneva, some inherent risks are incurred regarding the security of the connection. However, the time needed for the counting of votes could be relatively limited and further rounds of balloting could most likely be completed within the Session of the Conference.

Other UN agencies

32. Voting was carried out in-person through secret ballot by the UN General Assembly in 2020. During its 75th Session, ambassadors from 192 UN Member States, wearing facemasks and practicing physical distancing, entered the empty General Assembly Hall to cast their votes by secret ballot during pre-determined time slots.

33. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) have made provision for proxy voting; if a voting Member cannot be physically present during the secret ballot, then the rules allow for it to be exceptionally and validly represented by a Member of another State's delegation.

34. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) implemented a physical voting procedure in the context of Covid-19 restrictions; IAEA Member States not physically represented at its headquarters location in Vienna were given the opportunity to vote by proxy.

Option 2: Online voting using external software

Viability

35. 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 given the current travel restrictions being 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 all nominal (roll call) votes and establishment of quorum.

36. The voting system would be linked to the Zoom platform for the Conference. The integrity of the voting system is secured through the use of blockchain technology and security keys that are designed to make it impossible to retrace the content of votes cast by any person. Voting delegates would receive authentication codes for a second level authentication, and an intuitive voter portal would be available once a delegate is cleared for entry to cast the vote. The option to change the vote before signing out is available, as well as a mechanism for Members to verify that their vote

has been recorded, including the option to download a receipt further confirming that a vote was cast.

37. The votes would be counted by the electronic voting system. The system provides for administrator access to monitor the progress and counting of the vote, which is where the tellers and scrutineers would have access to have the same monitoring ability as the system operators of the Secretariat. Subsequent to the vote, records can be retained in accordance with the requirement to retain documentation for a three-month period for the filing of any challenges, in which case the voting process could be retraced, but without linking specific votes to specific Members.

Integrity

38. The automated online voting system could be installed, tested and made operational relatively quickly. The Secretariat would make all efforts to ensure that Members are comfortable and well versed with the online voting process.

39. However, an electronic voting system could not be supervised by the tellers in the same direct manner as compared to normal physical circumstances. Furthermore, concerns could remain about the integrity and security of the system; inherent security risks would remain. The workstations or devices used by Members, for example, could be compromised, which is out of the control of the Secretariat and the provider.

40. In order to ensure that a voting system is set up and tested, a Working Group of Member Representatives could be established as a contact group to monitor progress in the installation and testing of the system. It would be imperative to achieve a full understanding and full transparency around the system's functioning and operating modalities, and invest significant efforts to ensure Members to be conversant on its use and have confidence in the system.

Other UN Agencies

41. There are examples of the use of such systems within the UN system, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Labour Organization (ILO). FAO could make use of the same online voting system that was installed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

42. In light of the experiences gained by IFAD for its 2021 Governing Council session, adopting the same system as that of IFAD would be most practical, also in light of the significant scrutiny, testing and evaluation of the system that IFAD has already conducted. Contacts with IFAD as well as with the provider have already been established, and a mock-meeting with several types of votes will take place shortly. There would be no logistical impediments to have the system operational in time for the Conference Session.

Option 3: Voting through ballot papers sent by post

Viability

43. A secret voting system could be set up through which the Secretariat would send and receive completed ballot papers by post or hand-delivery. The Secretary-General would request each voting Member Nation to notify of the authority and address to which ballot papers should be sent. A deadline for the receipt of the vote at the beginning of the Conference Session would be communicated. Ballot papers and blank envelopes would be issued by FAO to ensure uniformity and ensure secrecy. Members would be provided with a second, larger envelope, marked "Confidential" and bearing an identifying number assigned by the Secretariat. Each Member would complete the ballot paper, place it in the standard blank envelope and seal it. This blank envelope would be placed inside the larger envelope marked "Confidential", which would be marked and sealed with the official stamp of the accredited office and sent or hand-delivered to FAO.

44. Members would have the option to send the envelopes either to FAO headquarters in Rome or to the FAO Liaison Offices in New York or Geneva. If a Member was unable to hand deliver to these locations, it could send them by registered mail or courier or diplomatic pouch.

45. Two tellers appointed from among the New York- and Geneva-based FAO Members would verify the records of receipt of the envelopes and record the Members who hand-delivered their vote. The envelopes would subsequently be sent to Rome, either hand-carried, by courier or by diplomatic pouch. If an envelope or ballot paper is received after the day on which the deadline expires, the relevant Member shall be recorded as “Absent”.

46. The Secretary-General of the Conference would take custody of the envelopes from all locations and place them at the disposal of the tellers, in the presence of the scrutineers. Tellers would open the envelopes, record the Member voting and place the blank envelopes including the ballot papers in the ballot box. Once completed, the ballot box would be opened, the blank envelopes would be opened and the ballots counted in accordance with the normal practice and rules. Scrutineers appointed by the candidates would attend the entire procedure of the tellers, from the point of receipt of the envelopes to the counting of the ballots.

Integrity

47. The advantage of this possible modality is that it will closely resemble the normal procedure to count the ballots, and maintain the roles of the teller and scrutineers as prescribed by Rule XII of the GRO. It will also maintain the secrecy of the vote as well as the verifiability of the votes. However, the disadvantage is that more time would be spent in carrying out the vote, with some logistical risks in receiving completed ballot papers, particularly in respect of ballots sent by mail or courier.

48. It would not be possible to complete a second round of balloting within the Conference week, given the logistics required to send out envelopes and ballot papers before votes can be mailed in. In a scenario of more than one round of balloting, the procedure would need to be completed after the Conference week, while adjourning and re-opening the Session for this purpose.

Other UN Agencies

49. This system has been applied by WHO for elections at their Regional office in Copenhagen, Denmark, with two collection points for envelopes in Copenhagen and Geneva. Envelopes received in Geneva were subsequently sent by courier to Copenhagen. While this option has a precedent, it is also noted that the scale of the voting operation for WHO’s European Office was substantially smaller compared to a full membership election by the FAO Conference.

Conclusion

50. As a result of the exceptional circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the 42nd Session of the Conference may be held in virtual modality on an exceptional basis. In that case, it will be necessary to put in place arrangements to conduct secret ballot elections in a virtual Conference.

51. The options presented in this *Appendix* are put forward for consideration by the 166th Session of the Council, in order to make a recommendation for approval by the Conference at its 42nd Session.

Appendix C: Provisional Timetable of the 42nd Session of the Conference**Monday 14 June 2021****Morning (9.30-12.30) – Plenary (Plenary Hall/Zoom Platform)**

- Item 1** Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons
- Item 2** Appointment of the General Committee and Credentials Committee
- Item 28** Any Other Matters
- 28.1** McDougall Memorial Lecture

Director-General's Statement**Independent Chairperson of the Council's Statement****(First Meeting of the General Committee)****Afternoon (14.30) – Plenary (Plenary Hall/Zoom Platform)**

- Item 3** Adoption of the Agenda and Arrangements for the Session
- Item 4** Admission of Observers
- [Item 5** Applications for Membership in the Organization (Vote)]
- Item 9** Review of the State of Food and Agriculture
- [Item 5** Applications for Membership in the Organization (Admission Ceremony)]

Once item 4 has been completed, and should there be no applications for Membership, Commission I and Commission II will begin their work

Monday 14 June 2021 (Cont'd)

Plenary (Plenary Hall/Zoom Platform) 14.30 – 21.00 (or later if required)	Commission I (Green Room/Zoom Platform) 15.00 – 19.30 (or later if required)	Commission II (Red Room/Zoom Platform)
Item 9: Review of the State of Food and Agriculture	<p>Item 10: Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory matters arising from:</p> <p>10.1: Report of the 31st Session of the Regional Conference for Africa (26-28 October 2020)</p> <p>10.2: Report of the 35th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (1-4 September 2020)</p> <p>10.3: Report of the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Europe (2-4 November 2020)</p> <p>10.4: Report of the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (19-21 October 2020)</p> <p>10.5: Report of the 35th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (21-22 September 2020)</p> <p>10.6: Report of the Informal Regional Conference for North America (22-23 October 2020)</p> <p>Item 12 Reports of the 46th (14-18 October 2019) and 47th (8-11 February 2021) Sessions of the Committee on World Food Security</p>	

Tuesday 15 June 2021

	Plenary (Plenary Hall/Zoom Platform)	Commission I (Green Room/Zoom Platform)	Commission II (Red Room/Zoom Platform)
08.30-13.00	Item 9 (cont'd): Review of the State of Food and Agriculture		Item 18: Strategic Framework 2022-31 Item 19: Medium Term Plan 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022-23 (Draft Resolution on budget level)
14.30-19.30 (or later if required)	Item 9 (cont'd): Review of the State of Food and Agriculture	Item 11: Global Policy and Regulatory matters arising from: 11.1: Report of the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (28 September-2 October 2020) 11.2: Reports of the 73rd (Extraordinary) (22 January 2021) and 74th (10-12 March 2021) Sessions of the Committee on Commodity Problems 11.3: Report of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (1-5 February 2021) 11.4: Report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (5-9 October 2020)	

Wednesday 16 June 2021

	Plenary (Plenary Hall/Zoom)	Commission I (Green Room/Zoom)	Commission II (Red Room/Zoom)
08.30-13.00	Item 9 (cont'd): Review of the State of Food and Agriculture		Item 19 (cont'd): Medium Term Plan 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022-23 (Draft Resolution on budget level) Written Correspondence Items (<i>Draft conclusions only</i>) Item 16: Programme Implementation Report 2018-2019 Item 17: Programme Evaluation Report 2021
14.30-17.30 (or later if required)	Item 9 (cont'd): Review of the State of Food and Agriculture	Written Correspondence Items (<i>Draft conclusions only</i>) Item 11: Global Policy and Regulatory: Item 11.1.1: Eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) by 2030 (Draft Resolution) Item 11.1.2: Proposal for the Establishment of a Sub-Committee on Livestock Item 11.1.3: Proposal for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (Draft Resolution) Item 11.1.4: Proposal for an International Day of Plant Health (Draft Resolution) Item 11.1.5: Proposal for an International Year of Date Palm (Draft Resolution) Item 13: Progress report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System Item 14: United Nations/FAO World Food Programme Item 15: Biennial Theme 2022-23 <i>(Drafting Committee time to be announced)</i>	<i>(Drafting Committee time to be announced)</i>

Thursday 17 June 2021

	Plenary (Plenary Hall/Zoom)	Commission I (Green Room/Zoom)	Commission II (Red Room/Zoom)
08.30-13.00	<p>Item 20: Draft Code of Conduct for Voting Procedures under Rule XII of the General Rules of the Organization</p> <p>Item 21: Other Constitutional and Legal Matters</p> <p>Item 26: Proposal for conditions for the FAO Awards</p> <p>Item 22: Audited Accounts 2018 and 2019 (Draft Resolutions)</p> <p>Item 23: Scale of Contributions 2022-23 (Draft Resolution)</p> <p>Item 24: Payment by the European Union to Cover Administrative and other Expenses Arising out of its Membership in the Organization</p> <p>Item 25: Other Administrative and Financial Matters</p> <p>Item 27: Date and Place of the 43rd Session of the Conference</p> <p>Item 28: Any Other Matters</p> <p>28.2: In Memoriam</p>		
14.30-19.30 (or later if required)	<p>Item 8: Appointment of Representatives of the FAO Conference to the Staff Pension Committee</p> <p>Item 7: Election of Council Members</p> <p>Item 6: Appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council</p>		

Friday 18 June 2021

Morning: (Time to be announced)

Commission I: Adoption of the Report (Green Room/Zoom)

Commission II: Adoption of the Report (Red Room/Zoom)

Afternoon: (Time to be announced) (Plenary Hall/Zoom Platform)

Adoption of the Report of:

- Commission I
- Commission II
- Plenary