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COUNCIL

Hundred and Sixty-sixth Session

26-30 April 2021

Methods of Work for the 166th Session of the Council

Executive Summary

This document summarises the standing working methods of the Council, and outlines the special procedures to be applied to the 166th Session of the Council on an exceptional basis in light of the virtual modality of the Session. These special procedures are the result of consensus arising from informal consultations undertaken with the Membership by the Independent Chairperson of the Council for the 166th Session, and build upon special procedures enacted for the virtual 164th and 165th Sessions of the Council. A written correspondence procedure will be implemented for twelve agenda items in order to streamline the time management of the proceedings. In addition, introductory presentations on all agenda items shall be made available ahead of the Session. Members of the Council will be invited to endorse these special procedures under item 1 of the Provisional Agenda of the 166th Session of the Council. The Report of the Session will record the Council's endorsement of these procedures in order to ensure the integrity of the Report of the Session and all recommendations and decisions contained therein.

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

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STANDING METHODS OF WORK FOR THE COUNCIL

1. The standing methods of work for the Council, originally adopted by the Council at its 60th Session in June 1973¹, were revised by the Council at its 141st Session in April 2011², its 153rd Session in November/ December 2015, and its 160th Session in December 2018³.
2. Between sessions of the Conference, the Council acts on behalf of the Conference as its executive organ and makes decisions on matters specifically entrusted to it, taking into account the advice of subsidiary bodies as appropriate.
3. The Provisional Agenda is prepared in consultation with the Independent Chairperson of the Council and is issued together with the invitation letters 60 days before the date of commencement of the Council Session.
4. Council documents follow a standard format and contain an executive summary with a clear indication of any action the Council is requested to take. Unless the timing of the sessions of the bodies concerned makes it impossible, all documents are despatched at least four weeks before the opening of the session in question.
5. Except as otherwise provided in the Basic Texts, the decisions of the Council are taken by a majority of the votes cast, bearing in mind that the Independent Chairperson of the Council shall take steps to facilitate and achieve consensus among Members.
6. At the end of the debate on each item, the Chairperson makes a concise and focused summary of the conclusions and recommendations emerging from the debate as an input to form the basis of the draft Council report. The draft conclusions are projected onscreen in plenary to facilitate a better understanding of the proposed text, with some flexibility afforded to the Drafting Committee in finalising the draft report while not reopening substantive discussions which remains the prerogative of the plenary meeting.
7. Verbatim records are kept of Council plenary meetings and accordingly Council reports, while recording in an unambiguous manner all decisions reached by the Council, are as concise as possible.
8. A draft report is normally prepared by the Drafting Committee or through another suitable arrangement agreed by the Council, with Secretariat assistance. Reports consist of the conclusions, decisions and recommendations on matters discussed by the Council.

SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL EXCEPTIONAL TO ITS 166TH SESSION

9. The Independent Chairperson of the Council has consulted with Members on the modalities of the 166th Session of the Council. The outcome of these consultations are reflected in the procedures detailed in this section.
10. The special procedures outlined in this section apply on an exceptional basis for the 166th Session of the Council in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting virtual modality of this Council Session. The adoption of such procedures shall not create a precedent for the working methods of the Council for its future Sessions.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

11. The virtual modality of the 166th Session of the Council does not alter any of the functions of the Council.

¹ CL 60/REP, paras 170-179 and Appendix G.

² CL 141/REP, para 51 and Appendix G.

³ CL 160/REP, paras 33 and 34

CONDUCT OF DEBATE

12. All plenary meetings of the 166th Session of the Council will be conducted through the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Members and Observers of the Council 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 Council.

13. 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 Council]. This will enable the Independent Chairperson 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.

14. The draft conclusions of agenda items will be displayed to all Members and Observers of the 166th Session of the Council 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.

15. The meetings of the Drafting Committee of the 166th Session of the Council will be held on the Zoom videoconferencing platform, in a private and separate meeting from the plenary meetings of the Council. The ‘share screen’ function on the Zoom platform will be used to facilitate any adjustments to the conclusions considered necessary.

WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

16. The following items on the Agenda of the 166th Session of the Council shall be addressed through a written correspondence procedure:

- **Item 7** – Technical Committees
 - **7.1** – Report of the 73rd (Extraordinary) (22 January and 19 February 2021) and 74th (10-12 March 2021) Sessions of the Committee on Commodity Problems
 - **7.2** – Report of the 34th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (1-5 February 2021)
- **Item 11** - Report of the 112th Session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (8-10 March 2021)
- **Item 12** - Report of the 47th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (8-11 February 2021)
- **Item 13** - Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference
- **Item 14** - Code of Conduct for Voting
- **Item 15** – FAO Awards
- **Item 16** - Status of Implementation of Decisions taken at the 165th Session of the Council (30 November – 4 December 2020)
- **Item 18** - Selection and Appointment of Secretaries of Article XIV Bodies
- **Item 19** - Margarita Lizárraga Medal
- **Item 20** - Calendar of FAO Governing Bodies and other Main Sessions 2021-22
- **Item 21** - Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO
- **Item 22** - Tentative Agenda for the 167th Session of the Council

17. The written correspondence procedure aims to allow more time during the virtual discussions of the Council in Plenary and to allow the Council to address all items on its Agenda in a timely manner.

18. Under the written correspondence procedure, Members will be asked to submit any comments and questions in writing to the Secretariat; and will be provided with written responses where applicable.

19. Members will receive, at least three weeks before the 166th Session of the Council convenes, any related documentation to the relevant written correspondence items. Members will be able to submit their written inputs by Wednesday, 14 April 2021, to FAO-Council@fao.org. All inputs

received will be published on the website of the 166th Session of the Council. The Secretariat will provide written responses, where necessary, by Friday, 23 April 2021. Members shall be notified when the FAO Secretariat has provided written responses.

20. The Independent Chairperson of the Council will draft summary conclusions for the agenda items considered through the written correspondence procedure on the basis of this written exchange. The Council will address these draft conclusions at a virtual meeting of the Council as indicated in the Timetable, and in line with the procedure described in paragraph 14 of this Note.

21. The draft conclusions for the items to be addressed through the written correspondence procedure will also be addressed by the Drafting Committee at its meeting(s) following the closure of debate on all agenda items by the Council.

22. The standing item on *Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO* will be addressed through a written correspondence procedure. Concept Notes on the relevant *fora* addressed under this item will be circulated in lieu of a presentation by the Secretariat to Council Members.

REPORTS AND RECORDS

23. The Draft Report for Adoption will be prepared by the Drafting Committee of the 166th Session of the Council, and will be circulated to the Members of the Council as soon as possible before the Adoption of the Report, in accordance with established practice.

24. The Report of the 166th Session of the Council will be communicated in accordance with Rule VI.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

25. The Report of the 166th Session of the Council will record the Council's consensus on the amended modalities for the Session outlined in this Note.

26. The Report of the 166th Session of the Council will record the Council's agreement to suspend any rules incompatible with the virtual setting, including Rule II.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council which states that "*each Session of the Council shall be held at the seat of the Organization unless, in pursuance of a previous decision of the Council or at the request of a majority of its Members, another place is designated.*"

27. The verbatim records of the 166th Session of the Council shall be made available in line with Rule VI.1 of the Rules of the Procedure of the Council.

OTHER MATTERS

28. All documents for the session are prepared and disseminated by the Secretariat as per established practice, in all six languages of the Organization. An Order of the Day will be circulated, in all languages of the Organization.

29. In order to streamline the proceedings of the 166th Session of the Council in light of the exceptional circumstances and the virtual modality, introductions to agenda items will be circulated in writing to Members and Observers of the Council at least two weeks in advance of the Session, or at least three weeks in advance of the Session for those items addressed through the written correspondence procedure.

30. In addition, interventions by Members will be limited to a maximum of three minutes and multi-Member statements will be limited to a maximum of five minutes.

31. The time zone applicable to the Council's 166th Session Timetable will be 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.

32. The meetings of the 166th Session of the Council will be scheduled in line with established practice, from 9.30 to 12.30 in the morning, and from 14.30 to 17.30 in the afternoon, or later if necessary.

33. The Independent Chairperson of the Council may call for a short break of up to ten minutes at any time during the meeting.

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34. The Drafting Committee of the 166th Session of the Council will convene its meeting(s) after the conclusion of the Council's consideration of all agenda items.
 35. Simultaneous interpretation in all six languages of the Organization will be provided for all virtual meetings of the 166th Session of the Council.
 36. A mobile application for the 166th Session of the Council will be made available and will communicate any changes to the schedule of items for discussion.