



WORLD BANANA FORUM

CHARTER

1. BACKGROUND

The decision to create a multi-stakeholder Forum is the result of a long process of consultation between stakeholders which started in 1998. The aim was to bring together all the stakeholders of the banana sector, from production to consumption, to address jointly the challenges it faces. Subsequently, a series of meetings were held showing the consensus on the need for a permanent forum aimed at developing a sustainable banana sector from the social, environmental and economic perspectives. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been involved in this process through its Trade and Markets Division (EST) since the beginning. It launched in 2009 the *Multi-stakeholder forum on sustainable banana production and trade* (MSF) project to organize the first World Banana Forum and help stakeholders establish a permanent forum. An informal preparatory committee comprising representatives of every stakeholder group in equal numbers was formed and after extensive discussions, the first World Banana Forum (WBF) took place at FAO headquarters in Rome from 7 to 8 December 2009.

Over 150 participants came from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. They represented a wide spectrum of stakeholders of the banana sector: representatives of producers associations, trade organizations, private companies (including major banana marketing corporations, shipping companies and retailers), trade unions and other civil society organizations, research institutes, technical cooperation agencies and governments. The participants decided to start with an informal structure for the Forum to subsequently adopt a more formal structure.

The WBF has acted as an informal network, focusing on results and delivering regular communications to governmental representatives through the Intergovernmental Group on Bananas and Tropical Fruits (IGG), whose secretariat is also hosted by the EST Division of FAO. The activities of the Forum are guided by a Steering Committee (SC) and implemented by specialized Working Groups. These activities are funded by annual contributions paid by the Forum's participants and funds provided by donors.

2. WBF: DEFINITION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. Definition

The World Banana Forum (WBF) is a permanent space of assembly for participants involved in the global banana supply-chain to promote open dialogue on challenges facing the banana industry. This initiative brings together producers, their organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, consumers' organizations, exporter groups, trading companies, retailers, public agencies, governments, research institutions, standard-setting and certification organizations, NGOs and other civil society organizations.

2.2. Mission

The Mission of the World Banana Forum is to promote collaboration between stakeholders that produces pragmatic outcomes for the betterment of the banana industry; and, to achieve an industry-wide consensus of best practices regarding core workers' rights and other human rights, gender equity, environmental impacts, sustainable production and a fair distribution of value in the supply chain.

2.3. Vision

The vision of the World Banana Forum is that all stakeholders work together to make possible a sustainable banana supply chain for present and future generations.

2.4. Objectives



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The WBF focuses its activities on the development of sustainable banana production and trade. It undertakes activities that can rapidly generate gains for all stakeholders and its outputs are made available for free to everyone. The WBF seeks through its objectives the promotion of:

- promotion of sustainable farming and management of natural resources;
- mitigation of climate change and harmful environmental impacts;
- fair distribution of value along the supply chain;
- promotion of decent work
- effective application of workers' rights, including freedom of association and health and safety at work;
- gender equity;
- knowledge sharing.

2.5. Scope

The Forum focuses on internationally traded bananas (this term includes both dessert and cooking bananas) but ensures links and information exchanges with the scientific community and producing countries that are not currently major exporters.

3. STRUCTURE

The WBF comprises the following:

- its participants;
- a Steering Committee (SC);
- task forces;

Some task forces have been active since the beginning of the Forum to specifically handle activities such as: fundraising, budget review and external communications.. These task forces support the SC's decisions and help the Secretariat to produce project proposals, contact potential donors, collect funds and deal with communications, among others.

- thematic working groups;

A number of working groups focus on the effective implementation of activities related to the Forum's goals and objectives.

- and a Secretariat.

The Secretariat assists the working groups and facilitates the flow of information among them and with the SC and task forces; it also coordinates the SC and organizes its meetings. The Secretariat facilitates the communication between the Forum's participants and the outside world, it responds to queries of information, promotes the WBF, manages the budget, and administrative tasks.

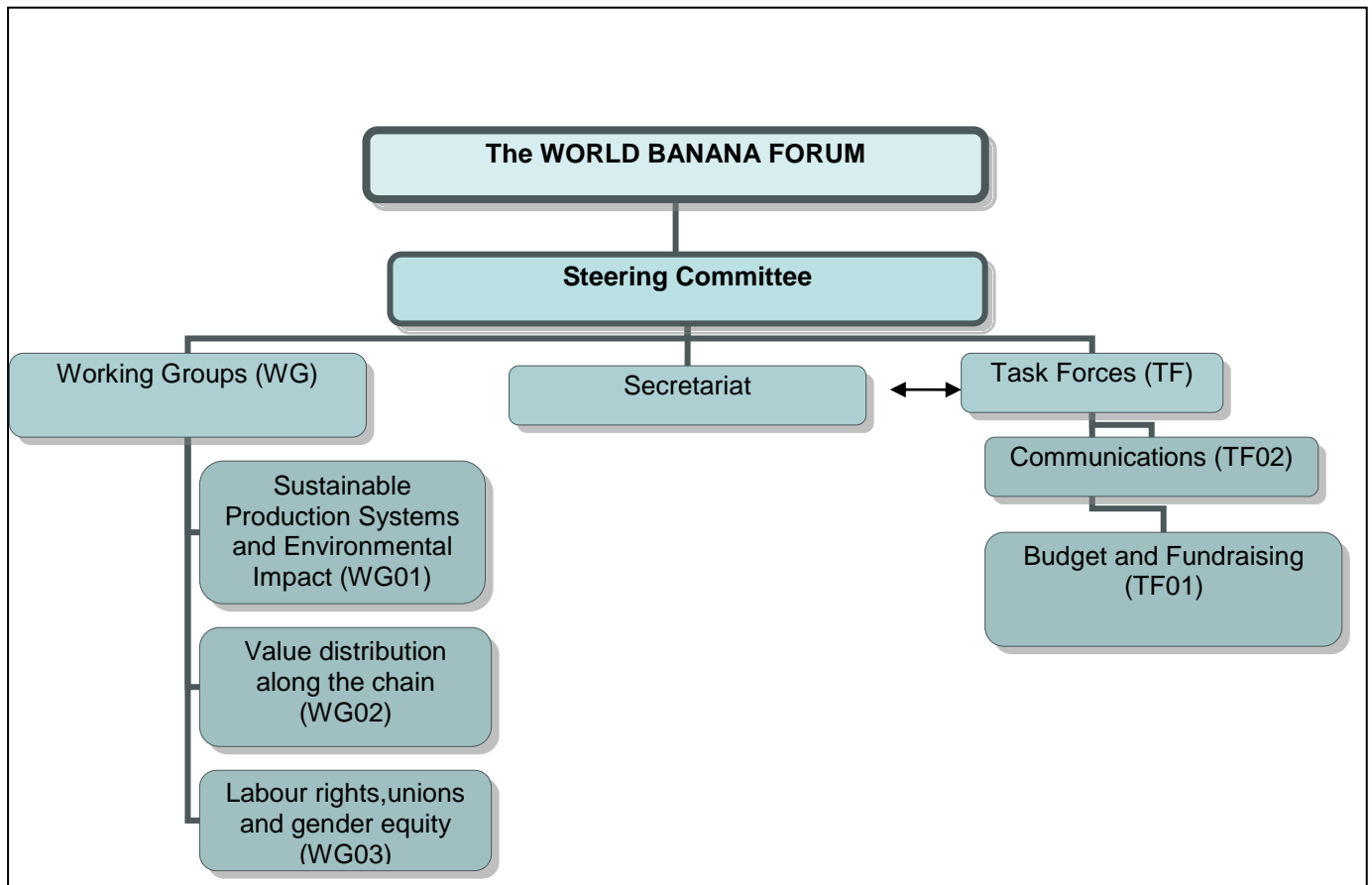


Figure 1. WBF structure diagram

4. WBF PARTICIPATION

4.1. Participants

Participation in the WBF is open to all organizations involved in the banana sector. The participants are from all the major geographic regions which contribute to world trade either as producers or consumers. Participants typically belong to the constituencies below; nevertheless, other type of actors might be considered.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The CSO group includes small-scale farmer associations, trade unions, human rights, environmental and development NGOs, consumers' associations and standard-setting and certification organizations.

Private Sector. This group includes national producers and their organizations, multinational producers and traders, trade associations, exporters, shipping companies, importers, ripeners and retailers distributing bananas. It also includes companies supplying inputs and services to the banana industry.

Governmental/Intergovernmental Institutions. It includes government representatives of producing and importing countries and also inter-governmental institutions, notably FAO, the ILO and UNCTAD.

Research institutions. Mainly specialized research centres and universities.

4.2. Participation requests and roles

Requests for registration as a participant of the WBF shall be submitted directly to the Secretariat, who will assess them based upon the following criteria. Final approvals of the applications will be conducted by the Steering Committee (SC). The criteria are as follows:



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- (i) Belonging to the banana sector or having relevant activities directly related to it;
- (ii) Ability and willingness to contribute to attaining the WBF objectives through sharing knowledge, willingness to implement changes, and participation in the WBF meetings and pilot projects;
- (iii) Financial contributions to the WBF (additional in-kind contributions will be welcome as well).

The WBF has four categories of affiliation; all of these can be referred to as 'participants':

- **Steering Committee members:** Representatives of organizations who lead the development of the WBF, defining its work plan and budget and overseeing their implementation, approving new participants' applications, defining the calendar of meetings and long term strategy of the Forum.
- **Working Group coordinators:** Individuals or representatives of organizations who lead and coordinate the activities of one of the working groups of the WBF. These participants use their expertise to guide the WG through the production of concrete outputs.
- **Regular participants:** Individuals or representatives of organizations who provide an annual contribution to support the Forum and may belong to any of the Working Groups¹.
- **Partners:** Institutions which due to their status - e.g. governmental bodies, UN agencies or networks – may be unable or unwilling to become a member under another network's umbrella. They may liaise closely with the WBF.

4.3. Benefits for paying participants

The participants who provide voluntary financial contributions following the approved scale² enjoy the following benefits:

- (i) attend the WBF meetings and participate in its main decisions;
- (ii) become eligible as member of the Steering Committee or as coordinator of one of the Working Groups;
- (iii) have their name, logo and a link to their website in the WBF project's webpage (same size and relevance regardless of the amount of the contribution);
- (iv) access the WBF project's database;
- (v) access the WBF materials (information and technical guides).

5. WBF MEETINGS

All the meetings held under the umbrella of the World Banana Forum will seek a balanced representation from a geographical point of view and per constituencies. They also will favour a fair gender balance.

5.1. Global meetings

The WBF organizes a "Global meeting" (designated as *Conference*) addressed to all the banana stakeholders worldwide once every two years on average. The conferences provide WBF participants with the opportunity to jointly review the progress made by the WGs towards achieving the objectives of the WBF. They enable the sharing of information among participants, including on the activities and outputs of the WGs. Participants have the possibility to express their views on these and make proposals to increase their effectiveness or, more generally, suggest ideas to raise the sustainability of the banana sector. Each conference is a suitable occasion for the banana sector stakeholders to jointly formulate petitions or proposals to the Steering Committee and to the Secretariat. When possible, this event should be held back to back with the sessions of the Intergovernmental Group on Bananas and Tropical Fruits (IGG).

¹ On an exceptional basis, an organization might still be considered a participant even if this organization is unable to pay the financial contribution, provided that sufficient reasons are provided and these are accepted by both, the members of the task force on fund raising and the SC members.

² The scale was approved during the Second Meeting of the SC (November 2010, Rome) and it is available online at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/banana/documents/WBF_MembershipFees_en.pdf



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The meeting of December 2009 which gave birth to the World Banana Forum is to be considered the First Conference of the World Banana Forum. The next meetings will be named following the same denomination structure.

5.2. Working meetings

The working meetings of the WBF happen with regularity throughout the year. There are three types of working meetings:

- (i) Steering Committee (SC) meetings. Physical meetings held, in principle, twice a year. The date, venue and agenda are decided by the SC after a proposal is received from the Secretariat. It is advisable that electronic meetings are held in between the physical meetings.
- (ii) Working Group's coordinators meetings. When possible, the coordinators of the Working Groups are invited to meet in parallel sessions to the SC meetings. Since the WGs focus on the delivery of outputs, it is important that those are overseen and validated by the SC members.
- (iii) Working Groups meetings. Each of the Working Groups of the WBF is free to schedule their own meetings, based on the demand and needs perceived by their respective coordinators. The WG coordinators (or 'core team') might prefer to meet amongst themselves sometimes, but they need to call open meetings with regularity to promote open dialogue and greater participation.

5.3. E-forums (electronic meetings)

Electronic meetings and/or consultations are held with regularity (at least twice a year). The Secretariat offers a web based platform to facilitate the process.

6. GOVERNANCE

As a general rule, the SC operates as the decision making body for the WBF and in that capacity it defines and directs the fund allocation strategy in accordance with the terms and procedures set out below. The Secretariat coordinates the day to day operations of the WBF in accordance with the terms described below. Finally, the WG's coordinators lead and coordinate the activities of the working groups, focusing on concrete outputs.

6.1. About the Steering Committee

6.1.1 Membership. The Steering Committee (SC) membership is open to all the WBF participants provided that they have paid the annual financial contribution (see 4.2 above) and have sufficient time and willingness to support actively the Forum. In order to adequately manage the process, it is recommended that the SC is formed by not less than 10 members and no more than 30. Each organization may designate one representative to join the SC. However it is advisable that alternates be also nominated and they have the right to be copied in all the communications and attend meetings.

Every organization can belong to the SC provided that its professional activities are related to banana production or trade, it requests to belong to the SC and accepts the conditions described in section 6.1.7 of this document and that there are no motivated strong oppositions to its participation by other SC members or the Secretariat. As a general procedure, the SC accepts new members by consensus after they are presented through the Secretariat.

Following the spirit of the dialogue process since 1998, the SC should be comprised of at least one member from each of the following types of organizations with total membership by each category to remain below 50% of the total number of SC members.

- (i) Representatives from CSOs.
- (ii) Representatives from the private sector.
- (iii) Representatives from governments and intergovernmental organizations.



It is strongly advisable that the SC membership respects a fair gender balance. Regarding the geographical representation, ideally at least 1/3 of the members should come from regional and/or national organizations representing developing countries. The SC should include members from at least three out of the four following producing and exporting regions: Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia-Pacific. The costs of travel (including accommodation and meals) of members from not-for-profit organizations from developing countries to participate in the SC meetings may be covered by the WBF's budget ("sponsored participation") provided sufficient funds are available and there is no opposition from the SC.

Rotations within the SC are expected. SC members whose participation is sponsored should be replaced by others every two years approximately, unless a majority of SC members vote for this period to be extended.

SC members who do not attend two successive in-person meetings of the SC will be excluded from the SC unless they provide proper justification.

6.1.2. Functions. The SC has the following main functions:

- (i) Lead the overall development of the WBF defining its strategic plan and policy, long term objectives and expected outputs;
- (ii) Define the annual WBF work program as well as selection criteria and financial plan and allocation for activities;
- (iii) Ensure the implementation of the work program and monitor its progress;
- (iv) Review and validate the outputs of the Working Groups;
- (v) Supervise the activities of the Working Groups and Task Forces;
- (vi) Take note of parallel activities contributing to the WBF objectives, considers means of enhancing the alignment of these activities with the WBF work program;
- (vii) Oversee the inclusion of new participants in the Forum and the SC;
- (viii) Oversee the creation and development of *ad hoc* task forces.
- (ix) Contribute to fund raising activities;
- (x) Review and decide on the dissemination of the communication and technical materials produced by the Working Groups and WBF participants; and
- (xi) Promote the WBF and its activities

6.1.3. Meetings. The SC meets on average every quarter, either in-person or through electronic conferences. In principle at least one meeting per year should be in-person. Additional meetings may be in person or via internet/telephone/video conference. The SC sessions are chaired on a rotating basis, ensuring a balanced representation of every constituency.

6.1.4. Participation. In addition to the SC members, every participant of the WBF may attend open sessions of the SC in an observer capacity, although the Chairperson elected for the SC meeting may declare certain sessions of the SC closed to observers.

6.1.5. Materials. Agendas and materials to be considered at SC meetings are provided by the Secretariat or the Chair at least 7 days in advance of such meetings.

6.1.6. Decisions. A quorum by the SC includes at least one member of each category of the SC and a majority of all SC members. Under normal circumstances the SC is a non-voting body that works by consensus. In the event that the SC is unable to achieve consensus on a matter, a decision will be approved if at least half plus one of the participating SC members agree.

6.1.7. Duties of SC members. The SC members accept the following duties:

- (i) Participate in the meetings of the SC with regularity and integrity, read the draft documents sent by the Secretariat, contribute comments and attend electronic and in-person meetings (it is required to participate at least at one SC meeting every year);
- (ii) Play the role of intermediate between the WBF and the organizations they represent (they should circulate the WBF's decisions and outcomes internally within their own organizations);



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- (iii) Seek consensus as the first method to avoid confrontation, SC members understand that different points of view can -and should- exist among them and also among WBF participants;
- (iv) Respect the neutrality of the Forum and, while acting as SC members, do not take position regarding issues out of the scope of the WBF;
- (v) Follow the principles of collaboration, sharing knowledge, demonstrating solidarity and ethical behavior which inspired the creation of the WBF;
- (vi) Do not try to use the membership of the SC to derive personal or organizational profits or advantages.

In case of non-compliance with the above duties the SC may decide to exclude a member with a majority vote.

6.2. About the Secretariat

6.2.1. For the period 2011-2013, the Secretariat is hosted by the Trade and Markets Division of FAO at the FAO HQ in Rome. Being hosted at FAO, the Secretariat of the WBF must respect the rules and procedures of this Organization.

6.2.2. The responsibilities of the Secretariat include but are not limited to the following:

- (i) Coordinate the preparation and implementation of the strategic plan -as defined by the SC considering the WBF's objectives- and annual work programs;
- (ii) Assist in the preparation of project documents (such as project proposals) and letters of agreement with potential donors and participants;
- (iii) Provide technical and logistical support to the operations of the Steering Committee and organize its meetings;
- (iv) Liaise with the various member organizations, government representatives, donors and multiple stakeholders;
- (v) Act as contact point for stakeholders seeking information on the WBF project and reply to queries;
- (vi) Contribute to the fundraising for the WBF and participate in the activities to be done by the other task forces that may be created;
- (vii) Manage the WBF finances in accordance with the financial management systems of the institution housing the Secretariat (for the time being, the FAO);
- (viii) Liaise with other networks and institutions to maintain up-to-date information on parallel and complementary analytical and policy/stakeholder dialogue initiatives;
- (ix) Provide SC members and WG coordinators regular reports on the deliberations of the meetings and overall status of all the WBF activities;
- (x) Ensure that this Charter is observed by the Forum participants and that requests for amendments are regularly submitted for approval;
- (xi) Provide technical advice on and maintain an internet platform enabling online work and communication within Working Groups and between them and the Secretariat;
- (xii) Provide technical advice and support to the specialized Working Groups of the WBF (as much as possible, based on available funds);
- (xiii) Ensure smooth communication among the Working Groups and between them and the Steering Committee in order to create synergies and avoid overlaps;
- (xiv) Facilitate discussions of the WBF through web platforms and electronic conferences (to collect ideas and proposals from members and obtain their feedback on draft documents, etc.);
- (xv) Set up and update dedicated web pages providing information on the WBF in the FAO website (in English, Spanish and French);
- (xvi) Assist in the identification, elaboration and showcase of best practices by WBF participants and other banana industry stakeholders with potential for broad dissemination;
- (xvii) Assist in translating documents and e-conference contributions into English, French and Spanish (as much as possible, based on available funds).

6.2.3. Any proposals made to the SC are directed through the Secretariat prior to consideration by the SC. The Secretariat has responsibility for indicating to the SC that a proposed activity may be inconsistent with the WBF's objectives/policies and as such it may not be implemented. The SC will make the final decision.



6.2.4. In exceptional circumstances the SC may pass a motion of no-confidence in the Secretariat.

6.3. About the Working Groups' coordinators

6.3.1. The role and functions of the coordinators in each WG should be based on mutual consensus within the WG. A team of three to eight coordinators per WG is recommended. The coordinators should be appointed by the participants of the WG trying to ensure a balanced representation regarding gender, geographical origin and professional activity. The coordinators are not supposed to be permanent; this is a voluntary position which can be continued as long as there is mutual consensus.

6.3.2. The WG's coordinators have the following main functions:

- (i) Lead the coordination of the Working Groups according to the WG guidelines document³;
- (ii) Report regularly to the Secretariat: WG composition, objectives, work plan and financial needs (the appointment of a rotating rapporteur is recommended);
- (iii) Work as a link between the WG and the WBF (the Secretariat, the SC and the rest of the members of the forum), but their power should be considered equal to that of any other member;
- (iv) Establish and review regularly the WG working plan and make it available to the members of their WG and the SC; and
- (v) Call meetings and hold teleconference as deemed necessary.

The WG's coordinators elect a lead coordinator who is responsible for facilitating the WG, sending reminders for inputs and feedback, calling meetings, etc. The lead coordinator function rotates among WG coordinators. WG coordinators may also decide to hire a consultant (namely *facilitator*) to support the lead coordinators or request the Secretariat to provide this support if funds are available for this.

6.3.3. Linkage to the SC. Every Working Group should have at least one representative in the SC.

6.4. About the Task Forces' coordinators

6.4.1. The role and functions of the coordinator in each Task Force (TF) should be based on mutual consensus within the TF. One coordinator per TF is recommended. The coordinator should be appointed by the participants of the TF. The coordinators are not supposed to be permanent; this is a voluntary position which can be continued as long as there is mutual consensus.

6.4.2. The TF's coordinators have the following main functions:

- i) Coordinate the TF
- ii) Report regularly to the Secretariat on the TF's activities
- iii) Call meetings and hold teleconference as deemed necessary
- iv) Write and distribute short reports of the meetings and teleconferences

6.4.3. Linkage to the SC. Every TF should have at least one representative in the SC.

7. FUNDING

The existence of the World Banana Forum primarily relies on voluntary annual contributions paid by participants as stipulated in the scale approved by the Steering Committee. These contributions enable the coordination of the WBF and the basic functioning of the Secretariat and Steering Committee. In addition, participants cover their participation in the WBF's activities (travel costs, staff time...) -non-profit organizations from developing countries may receive financial help to facilitate their participation-. The voluntary contributions are not sufficient to fund all the activities envisaged by the WBF, in particular those of the working groups and the participation of non-profit organizations from developing countries. The Forum still requires support from FAO (which provides technical support, an office with computer and

³ Guidelines accessible at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/banana/documents/WBF_WGsGuidelines_en.pdf



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telecommunication equipment for the Secretariat and the facilities for the meetings that are held at HQ) and public/private sector donors. The use of public funds is also justified by the public goods that the forum generates. The Steering Committee, the Secretariat and the Task Force on Budget and Fundraising have the responsibility of collecting funds from donors. The mix of public and private funds ensures that the Forum operates independently and impartially. As the Forum develops over time, gains new members and as the positive impacts of its activities become evident throughout the banana sector, an increasing share of its budget will be financed by its participants.

Voluntary financial contributions will be accepted only after an assessment of the interest and relevance of the potential contributor to the banana sector. This assessment will be carried out by the WBF Secretariat and at least one member of the FAO Partnership Committee should be informed. The Secretariat has prepared a standard letter containing a voluntary contributor agreement to clarify the status, rights and obligations of voluntary contributors.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

The technical outcomes and other communication materials issued by the WBF are available for free to everyone. Since the WBF is tri-lingual (English, Spanish and French), it strives to produce most of its outputs in the three languages of the Forum (provided sufficient funding is available).

The WBF relies on *ad-hoc* task forces for taking decisions in regards to specific external communications needs. This team of WBF participants prepares communication materials such as press releases and oversees the content and style of the messages delivered by the WBF. Different audiences are targeted: WBF participants and stakeholders, donors, governments, retailers, international institutions and specialized media.

9. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Charter may be made by a 2/3 majority of the SC members and WG coordinators. Such affirmative agreement may not arise from a mere lapse of a no objection period, whereas affirmative agreement by all members present at a SC and WG coordinators meeting shall be sufficient. The Secretariat shall maintain and distribute clear records of any such amendments.

The Secretariat is responsible for receiving and classifying requests for amendments to this Charter. It will raise the proposed changes for discussion and approval at least once a year.

Contact information:

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