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Food and Agriculture
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Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

FORTY-SECOND SESSION

Budapest, Hungary, 19-21 January 2022

ECA Executive Committee Information document

I. Background

A. Purpose

1. The purpose of this document is to describe and clarify the arrangements and working modalities relating to the Executive Committee (hereinafter: the ExCom) of the European Commission on Agriculture (hereinafter: ECA or the Commission) so that it can serve as a reference document, aiming at assisting current and future ExCom members in fulfilling their mandate, as well as the ECA Secretariat in providing support to the ExCom activities.
2. The live document, which could be updated from time to time, should also serve transparency purposes, providing information on updated working procedures relating to the ExCom to the Members of the Europe and Central Asia region.

B. Supporting documents

3. The basis for the work of the ExCom are the following documents:
 - Rules of Procedure of the Regional Conference for Europe (RoP of ERC)¹
 - Rules of Procedure of the European Commission on Agriculture (RoP of ECA)²
 - Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the ERC.³

¹ RoP of ERC: <http://www.fao.org/3/mj470e/mj470e.pdf>

² RoP of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mu352e.pdf>

³ MYPOW 2020-2023 of the ERC: <http://www.fao.org/3/nc231en/nc231en.pdf>

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

C. Abbreviations

4. In this document, the following abbreviations have been used, with the following meaning:

ADG - FAO Assistant Director-General

CACFish - Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission

ECA - European Commission on Agriculture

ECA Secretariat - Secretariat of ECA

EFC - European Forestry Commission

EIFAAC - European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission

ERC - Regional Conference for Europe

ExCom - Executive Committee of ECA

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

REU - FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

RoP - Rules of Procedure

II. Working modalities relating to ExCom

2.1 The ECA Secretariat

5. The ECA Secretariat, hosted in REU, supports the ExCom in its work.⁴ The Secretariat consists of the ECA Secretary and an assistant. The ECA Secretary is appointed by ADG-RR for Europe and Central Asia from among REU technical officers. The Secretary is supported by the assistant.
6. The ECA Secretariat provides administrative support for the work of ExCom, especially in terms of:
- coordination with the ECA Chairperson on the dates and locations for the meetings;
 - preparation of meetings, meeting documents and meeting minutes;
 - ensuring efficient communication on ECA-related matters between the ECA Chairperson and the Members of the region;⁵
 - keeping the repository of all ExCom documents.

2.2 Composition of ExCom

7. The composition and structure of the ExCom is determined by the RoP of ECA:

“Rule III. Executive Committee

⁴ Review of the assessment of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/mu351e/mu351e.pdf>

⁵ Minutes of the 38/5 ExCom meeting:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2020/excom_38_5/Minutes.pdf

1) The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Chairperson, the two Vice- Chairpersons of the Commission as ex officio members and six other members elected by the Commission from among the representatives.”

2.3 ExCom Elections

2.3.1 The time of elections

8. The RoP of ECA determines the time for the elections of the ExCom membership:

“Rule III. Executive Committee

1) (...) Elections shall take place at the end of a regular session.”

2.3.2 Nominations

9. The RoP of ECA provides for the maximum time of service of ExCom members and for ensuring balance between the renewal and continuity of the memberships:

“Rule II. Officers

1) The Commission shall elect a Chairperson, a first Vice-Chairperson and a second Vice-Chairperson from among the representatives.

The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons shall be elected for a term of office of two years and shall be eligible for re-election for a second two year term.

The Chairperson shall be not eligible for re-election thereafter, provided that the first Vice-Chairperson shall be eligible for election as Chairperson.”

“Rule III. Executive Committee

1) (...) The term of office of the elected members shall be for a period of two years and they shall be eligible for re-election for up to two additional two-year terms. (...) In order to ensure both rotation of members and continuity of service, when electing members of the Executive Committee, due consideration shall be given to the desirability of replacing no more than four members at the same time, and avoiding that the overall term of office of an individual, irrespective of the nature of his/her mandate, should exceed eight years.”

10. The ECA Secretariat supports the management of nominations for the functions of the ECA Chairperson, the Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the ExCom. In order to ensure openness, inclusiveness and transparency of the election process, the ECA Secretariat invites all Members of ECA to submit nominations of candidates for the above-mentioned positions. The invitation is shared with the Members of the region on 30 April in the year of the ECA Session, and the deadline for the submissions is 30 June in the same year. The deadline may be extended if the number of nominations is less than the number of vacancies. The Secretariat collects the nominations, checks the eligibility of the nominees to be elected and confirms it to respective submitters, with the information that elected nominees will be invited to participate in the first meeting of the ExCom, which will be convened after the closure of the ECA Session. The Secretariat makes the list of eligible nominees available to the Members of ECA prior to the Session.⁶

⁶ Minutes of the 38/6 ExCom meeting:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2021/exCom38_6/Minutes.pdf

2.3.3 Other election procedures

11. The RoP of ECA provides for the following voting procedures applicable for the election of the membership of the ExCom.

“Rule VI. Voting and procedure

- 1) Each Member of the Commission shall have one vote.*
- 2) Decisions of the Commission shall be taken by a majority of the votes cast.*
- 3) Any Member of the Commission may request a roll-call vote, in which case the vote of each Member shall be recorded.*
- 4) The Commission may decide to vote by secret ballot.*
- 5) Election shall 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 Commission that the appointment be decided by clear general consent.*
- 6) Formal proposals concerning items of the agenda and amendments to such proposals shall be submitted in writing to the Chairperson who shall provide for circulation of these texts to the representatives.*
- 7) In addition, the provisions of Rule XII of the General Rules of the Organization⁷ shall apply mutatis mutandis.”*

2.4 Roles and responsibilities of the ExCom

12. The key overall responsibility of the ExCom is the ECA governance, entrusted to it by the Commission, of which it is the executive body. The ExCom acts on behalf of the Commission during the inter-sessional period.⁸

13. The ExCom:

- submits to the Commission proposals concerning the general orientation of the Commission's activities and its programme of work;
- investigates particular problems and helps ensure the implementation of the programme approved by the Commission.⁹

14. Other important tasks of the ExCom include:

- the oversight over the preparation of the sessions of ECA and ERC;
- the review of the implementation of REU's work plan in Europe and Central Asia.

2.4.1 Responsibilities of the ExCom in ECA and ERC preparations

2.4.1.1 Introduction

2.4.1.1.1 Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)

15. ERC is an official forum where Ministers of Agriculture and other high officials from all Members of FAO's Europe and Central Asia region meet to debate challenges related to food and agriculture, thus promoting regional coherence.

⁷ Basic Texts of FAO, General Rules of the Organization, Rule XII. Quorum and Voting Arrangements at Meetings of Conference and Council, page 28-34: <http://www.fao.org/3/K8024E/K8024E.pdf>

⁸ Review of the assessment of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/mu351e/mu351e.pdf>

⁹ Rule III.3 of the RoP of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mu352e.pdf>

16. ERC session is held once every two years, in years when the global FAO Conference does not meet in a regular session.

2.4.1.1.2 European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

17. ECA serves as a technical preparatory meeting for ERC. Membership in ECA is open to all Members of the FAO's Europe and Central Asia region.

18. ECA meets every two years, between sessions of the Regional Conference for Europe.

2.4.1.2 ExCom's responsibilities in relation to ECA

19. The scope of ExCom's roles and responsibilities in relation to ECA is determined by relevant provisions in the following documents.

20. RoP of ERC:

"Rule II. Sessions

(...) 3. Any number of separate meetings may be held during each session of the Regional Conference. The European Commission on Agriculture will hold separate meetings to ensure technical preparations for the technical segment of sessions of the Regional Conference. There will be also a policy segment, under such conditions as the Regional Conference may establish."

21. RoP of ECA:

"Rule III. Executive Committee

(...) 3. The Executive Committee shall act on behalf of the Commission between sessions of the Commission, of which it is the executive body. In particular, it shall submit to the Commission proposals concerning the general orientation of the Commission's activities and its programme of work; it shall investigate particular problems and help to ensure implementation of the programme approved by the Commission."

22. REU MYPOW 2020-2023¹⁰:

"Section II, point A, Result 1, Working methods:

- b) collaboration among Members in the region through the ERC Chairperson, the secretariat and the Executive Committees of the ECA, EFC, EIFAAC and CACFish during the intersessional period;*
- c) regular contacts and informal consultations, as appropriate, among Members and between the ERC Chairperson and the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative, including informal coordination meetings between the secretariats of the regional technical commissions (especially ECA, EFC, EIFAAC and CACFish), to foster dialogue during the intersessional period;*

Section II, point B, Result 2, Indicators and targets:

- c) ECA, EFC, EIFAAC and CACFish advice on regional aspects of global policy and regulatory matters considered when defining the ERC session agenda.*

Section II, point B, Result 2, Working methods:

- c) collaboration among Members in the region through the ERC Chairperson, the secretariat and the Executive Committees of the ECA, EFC, EIFAAC and CACFish during the intersessional period.*

Section II, point C, Result 3, Activities:

- a) consult with Members on agenda and format of the ERC through the Executive Committees of the ECA and the Europe Regional Group of Permanent Representatives (ERG);*

¹⁰ Multi-year Programme of Work 2020-2023 <http://www.fao.org/3/nc231en/nc231en.pdf>

Section II, point C, Result 3, Working methods:

a) consultations among Members, through the ERC Chairperson and Executive Committees of the ECA and the ERG for continuity between biennial meetings with support from the secretariat”

23. Following the RoP of ECA, the RoP of ERC and the MYPOW, ECA and therefore the ExCom have a very specific role beyond its technical mandate as a regional commission in facilitating the overall work in the region and providing guidance to the FAO Regional Office, as well as operating as a soundboard in between the sessions of ERC and ECA. ECA serves as the preparatory body for technical discussions and decision-making at ERC.
24. The ExCom coordinates with ADG-RR on dates, modalities and the agenda for ECA Sessions and provides advice and feedback on the ERC agenda, not undermining the role of the Chairperson of the ERC and the Members of the region. For technical aspects of ECA and ERC, the scope of ExCom’s tasks covers the identification of the main technical theme for ECA or ERC, and as well as other topics for the agenda of the ECA or ERC session.

2.4.2 Preparations for ECA sessions

25. ECA sessions take place in Budapest every two years, usually at the end of September or beginning of October. In exceptional circumstances, where a session of ECA cannot be held as a physical meeting, it may be conducted in virtual modality.
26. As recommended by the ECA Assessment conducted in 2017, each ECA session should have a main technical theme.
27. Identification of the main technical theme and preparation of the draft annotated agenda for an ECA session are joint responsibilities of the ExCom and the ADG-RR, as prescribed by the RoP of ECA:

“Rule V. Agenda

1) The Director-General, in agreement with the Chairperson of the Commission, after having examined all proposals of the Executive Committee, shall prepare a provisional agenda for each session.”
28. Each ECA session should focus on one technical theme, of interest to the entire membership, to be tackled from different perspectives, e.g. on-going initiatives, innovation, technologies, policies, management capacity development needs and opportunities, etc.¹¹
29. Whenever relevant and appropriate, the ECA theme should align with the biennial theme selected by the FAO Conference, addressing it from the perspective of ECA mandate, to avoid duplication of debates; the fine-tuning of the theme would require a robust consultation process with all institutional owners of the ECA.¹²
30. Proposals for the main technical theme for an ECA Session are collected through an open call operated by the ECA Secretariat, in order to obtain information on topics of interest to the Members of the region. The call should be accompanied by relevant guidance on the selection of topics for ECA sessions provided by the 2017 ECA assessment, and by the list of topics covered at previous ECA and ERC sessions.

¹¹ Review of the assessment of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/mu351e/mu351e.pdf>

¹² Review of the Assessment of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/mu351e/mu351e.pdf>

31. The timeframe for the call will be established in due time before the 43rd Session of ECA (2023), considering that an early start of the call (earlier than on 1 October in the year preceding the Session) is important to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the Session documents.
32. The ExCom identifies the recommended main technical theme of each ECA session. This may include respective subtopics, as appropriate and considered necessary by the ExCom. The recommended theme is forwarded to the ADG-RR for confirmation.
33. Once the main technical theme is agreed, the ECA Secretariat drafts the annotated agenda for the session and presents it to the ExCom for review and comments. The draft agenda is subject to approval by the ADG-RR and by the ExCom.
34. In order to facilitate the consultation process, the draft topics for the agenda may be brought to the attention of the Members of the region through the European Regional Group and the traditional Informal Consultation meeting organized usually in the year of the Session of ECA.
35. In situations, where agreement between the ECA Chairperson and ADG-RR is required, the appropriate form for seeking this agreement will be a dedicated note sent to the ADG-RR by the ECA Secretariat on behalf the ECA Chairperson.¹³
36. Whenever there is a request from a Member of the region to add an item to the agenda of an ECA Session, submitted 90 days prior to the Session, this request may be considered at an ExCom meeting, if a meeting is held in appropriate time, or in a written procedure, if no meeting is held. In each case, a quorum will be required for taking a decision.¹⁴
37. The ExCom is regularly updated at their meetings by the ECA Secretariat on the progress and current state of preparations for ECA sessions.

2.4.3 Preparations for ERC sessions

38. Similarly as for the Sessions of ECA, the ExCom reviews and provides recommendations on proposals for the main technical theme for the sessions of ERC.
39. The ExCom is regularly updated at their meetings by the ERC Secretariat on the progress and current state of preparations for the ERC sessions. The ExCom is invited to note the updates, provide comments on the preparations, or request additional related information.
40. The background papers for ERC sessions are made available directly to the Members of the region, according to the provisions of the RoP of ERC.

2.4.4 Review of the implementation of the REU's work plan in the region

41. Throughout their term, the ExCom is requested to review updates on the implementation of selected topics on REU's work plan. These updates are presented at ExCom meetings by relevant REU's technical officers. The ExCom is invited to review and discuss the updates and provide recommendations, as needed, on further implementation of the work plan.

¹³ Minutes of the 38/7 ExCom meeting:
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2021/exCom38_7/minutes.pdf

¹⁴ Minutes of the 38/7 ExCom meeting:
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2021/exCom38_7/minutes.pdf

2.5 Meetings

2.5.1 Work plans

42. The ExCom conducts its activities primarily during meetings, which take place approximately three to four times a year. The ExCom meetings may be held in face-to-face mode, virtually, or mixed modality may be used.
43. ExCom meetings take place in accordance with the work plan and meeting schedule.
44. The work plan lists items foreseen to be discussed during the term of the ExCom, along with approximate dates for their consideration.
45. The meeting schedule lists the planned meetings of the ExCom, along with the main topics to be discussed at each meeting.
46. The work plan and meeting schedule should be endorsed by the ExCom at the first meeting after the election, which takes place when ECA holds a session.
47. The work plan and meeting schedule may be modified as needed. Any amendments must be endorsed by the ExCom. The endorsed meeting schedule constitutes the basis for the development of agendas for the ExCom meetings.
48. The specific dates for the ExCom meetings are determined by the ECA Secretariat, taking into account the availability of ExCom members and other participants.
49. The ExCom work plan and its updates are made publicly available on the ExCom website.¹⁵

2.5.2 Participation in meetings

50. The ExCom meetings provide a platform of cooperation between the Members of the region and the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU).
51. Apart from the ExCom members, the meetings are regularly attended by the ECA Secretariat and the ERC Secretariat, and may be attended by the members of the REU management (ADG-RR, Deputy RR, RPL), as needed. Where technical items are presented for the review by the ExCom, relevant REU technical officers presenting them are invited to attend the meeting (or part of it) by the ECA Secretariat.
52. The RoP of ECA do not allow observers at the ExCom meetings. Neither do they allow for ad-hoc replacement of an absent Member by a different person at a single meeting.

2.5.3 Meeting documents

53. The documents for the ExCom meetings may be developed by the ECA Secretariat, ERC Secretariat, ExCom members, or by REU officers. Usually, a meeting document is developed for each agenda point.
54. All documents are put in a standardized format by the ECA Secretariat. Where Power Point presentations are used, these are developed by the relevant speakers. Speakers are encouraged to share their presentations with the Secretariat prior to the meeting.

¹⁵ The ECA Executive Committee: <http://www.fao.org/europe/commissions/eca/executive-committee/en/>

55. Each meeting document is identified by its unique number, e.g. ECA_ExCom_38/1-3, where:
- ‘ECA_ExCom’ - is a constant element, which identifies the document as the document of the ECA Executive Committee;
 - ‘38/1’ - is the number of the meeting in the current biennium; ‘38’ is the respective code for the biennium, while ‘1’ (or 2, 3, etc.) is the serial number of the meeting;
 - ‘3’ - is the number of the document for the particular meeting.
56. The template for a meeting document is presented in Annex 1.
57. The ECA Secretariat makes the meeting documents available to the participants by posting on the ExCom website.¹⁶ Additionally, meeting documents are attached to meeting invitations sent to participants.
58. Meeting documents should be made available to the meeting participants at least seven days prior to the meeting.

2.5.4 Invitations to the meetings

59. Once the date of a meeting is decided, the meeting invitations are developed by the ECA Secretariat.
60. The invitations are sent on behalf of the ECA Secretary to all ExCom Members, to the ERC Secretariat, to REU Management, and to invited experts, as appropriate, at least seven days prior to the meeting. All available meeting documents (in .pdf format) are attached to the invitations.
61. All participants are requested to confirm their participation, prior to the meeting.

2.5.5 The conduct of the meetings

62. RoP of ECA:

“Rule III. Executive Committee

2) The Chairperson of the Commission shall preside over the Executive Committee. In her/his absence, or in the event that the Chairperson is unable to exercise her/his functions for the remainder of the term, a Vice-Chairperson shall preside at the meetings of the Executive Committee and exercise such other functions as may be required to facilitate the work of the Executive Committee.”

63. After the opening of the meeting, the ExCom adopts the meeting agenda.
64. Rapporteurs are not selected for ExCom meetings.

2.5.5.1 Proceeding of agenda items and decision-making

65. The agenda items are discussed at the meetings in the order agreed by the ExCom. Where justified (e.g. by insufficient time at a meeting), the ExCom may decide that an agenda item will be discussed between meetings, in a written procedure. The written procedure is operated by the ECA Secretariat and conducted by e-mail. Unless the ExCom decides otherwise, it is initiated as soon as possible after the closure of the relevant ExCom meeting and the ExCom members are invited to submit their views and comments back to the Secretariat within a set deadline. The outcome of the written procedure is presented to the ExCom by the ECA Secretariat at the next meeting and is recorded in its minutes.

¹⁶ The ECA Executive Committee: <http://www.fao.org/europe/commissions/eca/executive-committee/en/>

66. Where a decision should be made, ExCom members should take every effort to reach consensus. Should reaching consensus not be possible, the ExCom may decide to vote or to refer to the Commission for decision. Where the ExCom decides to vote, decisions are taken by a majority of the votes cast.¹⁷

2.5.5.2 Minutes of the meetings¹⁸

Contents of the minutes

67. Minutes are the written record of the ExCom meeting. The minutes shall be terse, factual and structured, following the sequence of the adopted agenda of the meeting. The minutes should include the following:
- place and date of the meeting;
 - relevant discussion points and statements;
 - decisions made by the ExCom;
 - required actions to be taken after the meeting is concluded;
 - annexes, including the list of participants, the adopted agenda and documents revised by the ExCom during the meeting.
68. The minutes shall not be transcripts of the discussions nor shall they be considered a detailed report of the meeting. The minutes should reflect the debate at the meeting and contain specific action points for the Members and/or for the ECA Secretariat, as the case may be.
69. The process of preparation of the minutes, including taking notes at the meeting, drafting the minutes, sending the draft for comments, revising the draft based on the comments, submission for approval, and posting, is conducted by the ECA Secretariat.
70. Templates for annexes to meeting minutes are presented in:
- Annex 2 - list of participants;
 - Annex 3 - meeting agenda.

Adoption and publication of the minutes

71. Following an ExCom meeting:
- within five working days ECA Secretariat prepares the first draft of the minutes, considering internal reviews, where appropriate, and shares the draft with the ExCom Members via online channels;
 - within four working days the ExCom Members provide their comments;
 - within three working days ECA Secretariat reviews all received comments, revises the draft minutes accordingly and shares the revised draft minutes with the ECA Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons for approval;

¹⁷ Rule VI.2 of the RoP of ECA

¹⁸ Minutes of the 38/3 ExCom meeting:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2020/excom_38_3/minutes.pdf

- the Chairperson may decide to circulate the draft to ExCom Members, for confirmation; the minutes should be approved by the ExCom within two working days;
 - once approved, within one working day the minutes are published on the ExCom website¹⁹ by the ECA Secretariat.
72. The minutes should be posted no later than 15 working days after the meeting. ECA Secretariat notifies Members of the region and the ExCom about the posting of the minutes, including the link to the relevant website. The Secretariat sends the message on behalf of the ECA Chairperson, addressing it to ECA Members, through their Permanent Representatives, as well as to the Members not having Permanent Representations. The message should contain the summary of topics discussed at the ExCom meeting and the link to the minutes.²⁰

III. Final provisions

Any amendments to this document may be agreed by the ExCom as needed.

This document and its updated versions shall be posted on the ExCom website by the ECA Secretariat.

¹⁹ The ECA Executive Committee: <http://www.fao.org/europe/commissions/eca/executive-committee/en/>

²⁰ Minutes of the 38/5 ExCom meeting:
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2020/excom_38_5/Minutes.pdf

Annex 1



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
ECA ExCom Meeting XX/Y, Month 20XX, Agenda point Z

ECA_ExCom/XX/Y-Z

TITLE OF THE MEETING PAPER

(prepared by)

I. Background

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II.

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The ExCom is invited to:

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Annex 2**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE****3.../... MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Day Month Year

FAO HQ, Rome, Italy / Online meeting

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Role	Country/Organization	Name	Present/Absent
1.	ECA Chairperson		Mr/Ms Xxxxx XXXXXXXXXXXXX	Present/Absent
2.	ECA 1st Vice-Chairperson			
3.	ECA 2nd Vice-Chairperson			
4.	ExCom Member			
5.	ExCom Member			
6.	ExCom Member			
7.	ExCom Member			
8.	ExCom Member			
9.	ExCom Member			
10.	ECA Secretariat	FAO REU		
11.	ECA Secretariat	FAO REU		
12.		FAO REU		
13.		FAO REU		
14.		FAO REU		

Annex 3**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE****3.../... MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Day Month Year

FAO HQ, Rome, Italy / Online meeting

MEETING AGENDA

No.	Agenda Item Title	Document No./Link	Presenter
	Opening of the meeting	-	ECA Chairperson
1.	Adoption of the agenda		
2.	(...)		
3.	(...)		
4.	(...)		
5.	(...)		
... .	(...)		
	Close of the meeting	-	