

165th Session of the Council

Item 14: Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference (CL 165/14 and CL 165/18)

Document CL 165/18, *Working Methods of the Conference* addresses four proposals for reform of Conference working methods to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Conference proceedings. These four proposals have been discussed and supported by Members during my informal meetings with the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Regional Groups, as mandated by the Council at its 162nd Session. The compendium of proposals outlined in the document aim to streamline the meetings of the Conference, reduce overlap between Conference meetings, and bolster Members participation in all Conference meetings, as well as quorum in all meetings. The proposals further aim to foster informal, action-oriented dialogue among senior level officials in attendance at the Conference.

The 111th Session of the Committee on Constitutional and legal Matters (CCLM) considered the proposal to convene meetings of the General Committee prior to the opening of the Conference, from the perspective of the Basic Texts of the Organization. The CCLM observed that the General Committee is constituted only upon election of its Members by the Conference and therefore could not meet and take decisions prior to the Conference. Acknowledging the need for efficiency gains in Conference proceedings, the CCLM therefore suggested that informal meetings be held by the nominees to the General Committee prior to the opening of the Conference without the authority to take decisions or make recommendations. Consequently, in line with the modus operandi of the Credentials Committee, it is proposed that the General Committee convene informal meetings ahead of the Conference to undertake preliminary discussions. However, no decisions or recommendations by the General Committee would be made before the constitution of its Membership by the Conference. Once the Chairperson and Members of the General Committee are elected by the Conference at its meeting, the General Committee may take decisions on the basis of prior informal discussions.

The Joint Meeting of the 129th Session of the Programme Committee and the 183rd Session of the Finance Committee considered document CL 165/18 and all four proposals contained therein. The Joint Meeting welcomed the CCLM's suggestion and recommended the Council consider for endorsement the proposal to convene informal meetings of the General Committee prior to the opening of the Conference to undertake preparatory work, noting that such preparatory work would not constitute formal decisions and recommendations of the Committee until its membership is elected by the Conference.

With regard to the remaining three proposals, the Joint Meeting recommended the Council consider for endorsement the proposals to i) introduce, on a voluntary basis, the option for delegations to deliver statements in digital form under the General Debate of the Conference, ii) schedule meetings of Commission I and Commission II of the Conference consecutively, to the extent possible, and iii) introduce Round Tables during the Conference to foster senior or high level official action-oriented dialogue on matters of strategic importance to Members. In addition, the Joint Meeting noted that such Round Table events could be facilitated by an external moderator. Finally, the Joint Meeting proposed that the established practice of time limits under the General Debate be maintained, as outlined in the Arrangements for the 41st Session of the Conference document (C 2019/12 Rev.1).

The Council is invited to consider the four proposals contained in document CL 165/18, alongside the related observations and advice from the CCLM and the Joint Meeting, and submit any such recommendations as it considers appropriate for approval by the Conference at its 42nd Session. Any recommendations of the 165th Session of the Council with regards to the working methods of the

Conference will then be incorporated into the document ‘Arrangements for the 42nd Session of the Conference’ submitted to the 166th Session of the Council in April 2021.

Mr Khalid Mehboob, Independent Chairperson of the Council