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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

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CONFERENCE

Thirty-ninth Session

Rome, 6-13 June 2015

Report of the First Meeting of the General Committee

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A. Agenda for the Session¹

1. The General Committee examined the Provisional Conference Agenda contained in document C 2015/1.
2. The Committee recommends that the Provisional Agenda be adopted by the Conference.
3. Having noted that the Provisional Agenda included subjects on which information documents were tabled, the Committee also recommends that delegates wishing to comment on these documents be given an opportunity to do so under Item 33 – *Any Other Matters*.

B. Establishment of Commissions and Tentative Timetable of the Session²

4. At its 150th Session (1-5 December 2014) and 151st Session (23-27 March 2015) the Council formulated proposals concerning the organization and timetable for the 39th Session of the Conference. These proposals were communicated to all FAO Members and observers in documents C 2015/12 and C 2015/INF/1. The Committee recommends that the Conference establish two Commissions to consider and report on the "Substantive and Policy Matters" and "Programme and Budgetary Matters" sections of the Agenda respectively.
5. The Committee recommends that the Conference approve the Tentative Timetable proposed by the Council. It is understood that this Timetable may be subject to modifications according to progress made in the Plenary and in the Commissions.
6. The Committee notes that, since His Holiness Pope Francis will be granting an Audience for Conference participants on the morning of Thursday 11 June, Plenary proceedings would not begin until 14.30 hours on that day. It was also noted that Heads of State may wish to address Plenary meetings of Conference, and that this would be announced in the Daily Journal.
7. The attention of the Conference is drawn to the fact that, in order to accommodate requests for speaking time, the duration of each intervention during the "general debate" under item 10 *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture* should not exceed five minutes.

C. Appointment of the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Two Commissions³

8. In accordance with Rules VII and XXIV.5(b) of the General Rules of the Organization (GRO) and as indicated in document C 2015/LIM/8, the Council at its 151st Session proposed the following candidates as Chairpersons of the Commissions: Mr Luca Fratini (Italy) for Commission I and Mr Abdelbaset Ahmed Aly Shalaby (Egypt) for Commission II.
9. On 11 May 2015, the Secretariat received a Note Verbale from the Embassy of Egypt in Rome informing the Organization that Mr Khaled Mohamed Eltaweel, Alternate Permanent Representative of Egypt to FAO would replace Mr Abdelbaset Ahmed Aly Shalaby as the nominee for the position of Chairperson of Commission II.
10. The Committee recommends that the Conference endorse the nomination of:
 Mr Luca Fratini (Italy) as Chairperson of Commission I
 Mr Khaled Mohamed Eltaweel (Egypt) as Chairperson of Commission II
11. In accordance with Rule X.2(c) of the GRO the Committee recommends that the Vice-Chairpersons of the Commissions be as follows:
 Commission I: Ms Natalie Feistritzer (Austria)
 His Excellency Charles Essonghé (Gabon)
 Commission II: Mr Tazwin Hanif (Indonesia)
 Ms Marieta Okenkova (Slovakia)

¹ C 2015/1; C 2015/INF/1; C 2015/12; C 2015/INF/2

² C 2015/12; C 2015/INF/1

³ C 2015/LIM/8

D. Resolutions

12. The 148th Session of the Council recommended that the 39th Session of the Conference discontinue the practice of establishing a Resolutions Committee of the Conference to carry out editorial review functions in respect of draft Resolutions presented in the course of the session of the Conference. The Council noted that the editorial review functions of the Resolutions Committee could, if necessary, be taken by an *ad hoc* committee to be established in accordance with the General Rules of the Organization, or entrusted to the Secretariat⁴. The General Committee recommends that these arrangements be followed by the Conference. The existing criteria for draft Conference Resolutions are described in document C 2015/12, *Appendix B*.

E. Appointment of the Director-General⁵

13. By the date established by the Council, i.e. 31 January 2015, the following nomination had been received for the post of Director-General:

Brazil Mr José Graziano da Silva

This nomination was notified to all Members by Circular Letter C/CF 4/2 on 2 February 2015.

14. Under the terms of Rule XXXVII.1(d) of the GRO, the General Committee determines and announces the date of the election, it being understood that the appointment of the Director-General at a regular Session shall begin and be effected within three working days following the opening date of the Session.

15. Notwithstanding the fact that only one candidate was nominated, a secret ballot is required in accordance with Rule XII.10(a) GRO.

16. The Committee recommends that secret balloting for the appointment take place on the afternoon of Saturday 6 June 2015, as is envisaged in document C 2015/INF/1, *Provisional Timetable for the Thirty-ninth Session of the Conference*.

F. Appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council⁶

17. By the date determined by the Council, i.e. 8 April 2015, two nominations had been received for election to the office of Independent Chairperson of the Council, namely: Mr Peter N. Mwanza (Malawi) and Mr Wilfred Joseph Ngirwa (United Republic of Tanzania).

18. These nominations were notified to all Members by circular letter C/CF 4/3(a) of 15 April 2015.

19. By means of a Note Verbale dated 7 May 2015 the Embassy of the Republic of Malawi in Brussels announced the decision of the Government of Malawi to withdraw the candidature of Mr Peter N. Mwanza for the post of Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council. The withdrawal was notified to all Members by circular letter ref. C/CF 4/3(w) of 11 May 2015.

20. Further to the withdrawal of the candidature of Mr Mwanza by the Government of Malawi, Mr Wilfred Joseph Ngirwa is now the sole candidate for the office of Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council.

21. Under the terms of reference of Rule XXIII.1(b) GRO, the General Committee determines and announces the date of the election. The Committee recommends that the election be held on Friday 12 June in the morning.

22. Rule XII, paragraph 10(a) provides that the appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council shall be decided by secret ballot even when there is one candidate. An amendment to that rule has been proposed to the Conference and a vote has been scheduled to take place on the morning of Friday 12 June on this issue, prior to the election of the Independent Chairperson of the Council. Should the Conference approve the proposed amendment to Rule XII.10(a), the Committee

⁴ CL 148/REP, paragraph 20(c)

⁵ C 2015/7

⁶ C 2015/9

recommends that the appointment of the Independent Chairperson of the Council be decided by clear general consent.

G. Election of Members of the Council⁷

23. Rule XXII.10(a) of the GRO provides that the Conference, on the recommendation of the General Committee, shall, not later than the end of the third day of the Conference Session, decide the date of election of Members of the Council and the date by which nominations are to be submitted.

24. The Committee accordingly recommends that:

- a) nominations for the Council seats to be filled at the present session be communicated to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Council by 12.00 hours on Monday 8 June 2015; and
- b) the election be held in the morning of Friday 12 June 2015.

25. In this connection, the Conference will note in particular the following provisions of paragraphs 3 to 7 of Rule XXII of the GRO:

“3. In selecting Members of the Council, the Conference shall give due consideration to the desirability of:

- a) including in its membership a balanced geographical representation of nations interested in the production, distribution and consumption of food and agricultural products;
- b) ensuring the participation in the work of the Council of such Member Nations as contribute in a large measure toward the success of the Organization;
- c) giving to the greatest possible number of Member Nations an opportunity, by rotation of membership, to serve on the Council.

4. Member Nations shall be eligible for re-election.

5. No Member Nation shall be eligible for election to the Council if it is in arrears in payment of its financial contributions to the Organization in an amount equal to or exceeding the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years.

6. The Conference shall, at any regular or special session, fill all other vacancies on the Council which may have occurred since the last regular session. In the case of a special session, the General Committee shall recommend to the Conference such readjustments as circumstances may warrant to the time limits provided for in paragraph 10(a) and (d) below.

7. A Member of the Council shall be considered to have resigned if it is in arrears in payment of its financial contributions to the Organization in an amount equal to or exceeding the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years, or if it has not been represented at two consecutive sessions of the Council”.

H. Right to Vote

26. The Committee noted that the Member Nations listed in the Annex to this Report have not paid a sufficient amount of their assessed contributions to retain their vote in the Conference.

27. Article III.4 of the Constitution states: “A Member Nation which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contribution to the Organization shall have no vote in the Conference if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the two preceding calendar years. The Conference may, nevertheless, permit such a Member Nation to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member Nation”.

28. The General Committee will consider at a subsequent meeting the right to vote of the countries in arrears listed in the *Annex* to this Report. In the meantime, the Committee recommends, in accordance with prevailing past practice, that all Member Nations in attendance be authorized to vote on Saturday 6 June 2015, on the understanding that contacts with those Member Nations in arrears shall continue with a view to regularizing their situation before the votes scheduled for 12 June. The

⁷ C 2015/11

General Committee noted, in this connection, that the election was uncontested and that the issue of the treatment of arrears was under review by the Governing Bodies

I. Right to Reply

29. At its previous sessions, the Conference decided that, if delegates wished to reply to criticisms of their Governments, they should preferably do so on the day on which such criticism had been voiced after all those wishing to participate in the discussion had had an opportunity to speak.

30. The Committee recommends that these same arrangements be followed at the present session.

J. Verbatim Records

31. Rule XVIII.1 of the GRO lays down that verbatim records shall be kept for all Conference Plenary and Commissions' meetings. The right of delegates to check the accuracy of the record of their interventions is recognized in Rule XVIII.2 of the GRO.

32. The Committee noted that for the General Debate under item 10 – *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture*, a dedicated Web page had been set up for statements provided by delegations and related audio recordings. Such statements and recordings would be uploaded immediately after delivery in the plenary meeting. The statements published on this page would be treated as Verbatim Records for item 10.

33. The accuracy of the records may be maintained either by correcting typing and other errors, or by amending a word or phrase actually used. In practice such corrections or amendments to statements are accepted only from the delegation which made the statement, and should be submitted within one week of publication of the draft verbatim record concerned.

34. In 1961 a procedure was formally adopted by the Conference whereby speakers who so desire may have their statements inserted in the record without delivering them in Plenary. This procedure is still followed and is recommended in the interests of saving time.

35. While the Committee sees no objection in principle to the insertion of statements in the records when time does not permit them to be delivered, it recognizes the difficulties which might arise if no occasion is given to delegates to exercise the “right of reply” to any criticism of their government’s policy made in the inserted statement.

36. The Committee therefore recommends that the Conference continue to permit the insertion of such statements on condition that:

- a) the Plenary, or the Commission concerned, be informed by its Chairperson that a statement not actually delivered, or a substantive addition to a statement that has been delivered, is being inserted in the record;
- b) the text handed over to the Chairperson for insertion should preferably be in digital format;
- c) the provisional verbatim record containing the additional statement be circulated before the close of the Session; and
- d) delegations attending the Session be able to avail themselves of the right of reply by having an opportunity to make, prior to the close of the Session, an intervention relating to the inserted statement.

K. Statements by Heads of Delegations

37. The Committee recommends that a list of speakers for the General Debate under Item 10 – *Review of the State of Food and Agriculture on the theme Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and Hunger by Strengthening Rural Resilience: Social Protection and Sustainable Agricultural Development*, be published daily in the Journal of the Conference, in the order in which they will be called upon to take the floor by the Chairperson, and further recommends that statements be limited to a maximum of five minutes.

L. Admission of Observers from Intergovernmental and International Non-Governmental Organizations⁸

38. The list of Intergovernmental and International Non-Governmental Organizations which have been invited by the Director-General to be represented in an observer capacity at this session of the Conference is given in document C 2015/13. The invitations sent to Intergovernmental Organizations with which FAO does not have a formal agreement and to International Non-Governmental Organizations which do not have consultative status with FAO are extended on a provisional basis and are subject to approval by the Conference.

39. After having reviewed this list, the Committee recommends that the Conference confirm such provisional invitations.

M. Attendance by Palestine

40. In conformity with the suggestion made by the Council at its 150th Session⁹, Palestine has been invited to attend the Conference in an observer capacity. The Committee recommends that the Conference confirm this invitation, in line with the practice followed, and the terms applied, since 1975.

N. Conclusion

41. The Committee recommends that the Conference confirm all the detailed arrangements for the Session and that the normal working hours for meetings of both Plenary and Commissions be 09.30 to 12.30 hours, and 14.30 to 17.30 hours. Given the number of items on the Provisional Agenda, it is likely that the work of the Plenary and Commissions may need to continue after 17.30 hours. The Committee also invites all delegations to observe the working hours with the maximum punctuality.

⁸ C 2015/12; C 2015/13

⁹ CL 150/REP

GC 2015/1 – Annex

Member Nations with Potential Voting Rights Problems at 4 June 2015

	Member Nation	Amount in Arrears USD	Amount in Arrears Euro	Minimum Payment required to Ensure Vote in USD
1.	Antigua and Barbuda	\$ 260,291.98	€ 44,842.91	\$ 297,969.04
2.	Comoros	\$ 134,366.64	€ 3,814.26	\$ 129,293.14
3.	Dominica	\$ 11,841.22	€ 9,897.95	\$ 15,145.96
4.	Grenada	\$ 6,856.80	€ 3,814.26	\$ 1,783.30
5.	Sao Tome and Principe	\$ 240,142.96	€ 20,636.23	\$ 256,857.55
6.	Solomon Islands	\$ 2,594.25	€ 5,716.82	\$ 108.23
7.	Somalia	\$ 364,166.96	€ 20,636.23	\$ 380,881.55
8.	Tajikistan	\$ 43,618.70	€ 10,349.70	\$ 31,983.36
9.	Turkmenistan	\$ 674,429.50	€ 210,921.46	\$ 726,629.36
10.	Ukraine	\$ 763,504.31	€ 618,829.18	\$ 647,358.04
		\$ 2,501,813.32	€ 949,459.00	\$ 2,488,009.53