

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Twenty-sixth meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 5 – 9 June 2023

Thirty-second meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 19 – 23 June 2023

Administrative and financial matters

EMERGING OPERATIONAL ISSUES OF THE COMMITTEES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the CITES Secretariat presented a document describing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operation of the Convention, including the permanent committees (see document CoP19 Doc. 24). Based on the recommendations of the Secretariat, the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions:

Directed to the Secretariat

19.1 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *prepare a document for consideration by the Standing Committee containing information relating to the risk-assessment approaches implemented by the Secretariat to determine the best course of action if intersessional work and meetings are affected by emerging operational issues, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and referred to in paragraph 2 g) of Annex 1 to Resolution Conf. 18.2 on Establishment of committees;*
- b) *prepare a document for consideration by the Standing Committee, Animals Committee and Plants Committee reflecting the Secretariat's recommendations for the exceptional circumstances under which it may be appropriate to hold an online meeting or make hybrid options available to Parties to facilitate participation in a face-to-face meeting of the Standing Committee, Animals Committee and Plants Committee; and*
- c) *based on the guidance provided to the committees relating to the use of the Rules of Procedures for the online meetings of the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee, 31st meeting of the Animals Committee and 25th meeting of the Plants Committee, provide the Standing Committee, Animals Committee and Plants Committee with a document highlighting the provisions in the Rules of Procedure that may require further consideration for online and hybrid meetings.*

Directed to the Animals and Plants Committees

19.2 The Animals and Plants Committees shall:

- a) *taking into account the document prepared by the Secretariat under Decision 19.1, paragraphs b) and c),*
 - i) *consider the exceptional circumstances under which it may be appropriate to hold an online meeting or make hybrid options available to Parties to facilitate participation in a face-to-face meeting of the Animals and Plants Committees; and*
 - ii) *consider whether adjustments to Rules of Procedures of the committees are required to facilitate online and hybrid meetings and decision-making where these are required and agreed; and*
- b) *propose amendments to Resolution Conf. 18.2 on Establishment of committees and their Rules of Procedure, as appropriate, to the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties.*

Guiding principles

3. To guide the reflection of the Committees on the risk-assessment approaches to determine the best course of action if intersessional work and meetings are affected by emerging operational issues and on the exceptional circumstances that would warrant the organization of their meetings online or in a hybrid format, the Secretariat proposes the following guiding principles:
 - a) In-person meetings are the default options for all meetings of the CITES permanent committees; these should be streamed live in the three languages of the Convention on the CITES YouTube channels. While the Conference of the Parties decided not to include funding for the livestreaming of committee meetings in the core budget of the Convention, the Secretariat will endeavour to find the necessary funding for this activity.¹
 - b) Online or hybrid options would be considered only when quorum as defined in the Rules of Procedure of each Committee might not be reached. While maximum participation is always welcome and sought after, the presence or absence of observers, be it Parties or observer organizations, does not prevent Committees from holding their meetings and taking decisions, provided quorum has been reached. The two scientific committees are composed of individuals and not of Parties. While Parties that are Members of the Standing Committee can be represented by different representatives, e.g., from the capital or from the embassy or Permanent Mission, quorum at the scientific committees is based only on the presence of individual Members or their alternates. As such, a hybrid option seems more likely for the Animals and Plants Committees when exceptional circumstances arise that would make international travel impossible (or difficult) to attend in-person meetings.

Exceptional circumstances

4. The CITES community, like the rest of the world, has unfortunately encountered several exceptional situations that have prevented the organization of in-person meetings as originally scheduled. The 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) originally scheduled to take place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, had to be rescheduled at a later date in Geneva, Switzerland, due to bombings in Colombo a few weeks before the meeting of the CoP was to take place in Sri Lanka. The meetings of the Animals and Plants Committees and of the Standing Committee were affected by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and in 2021.
5. Based on this experience, the Secretariat has identified two different sets of exceptional circumstances (scenarios) that could prevent the establishment of quorum in person:
 - a) Scenario A: Circumstances that are either global or at the location of the meeting preventing the organization of the meeting for a variety of reasons that could *inter alia* be political, or health- or security-related; or

¹ Respondents to the CITES Secretariat's survey to participants in the online meetings of AC31 and PC25 found the livestreaming of the meetings very useful and thought that future CITES meetings (whether face-to-face or online) should be livestreamed.

- b) Scenario B: Circumstances that prevent representatives from several regions from being present in-person at the meeting – this would include *inter alia* geographically localized health crisis not affecting the location of the meeting but other regions of the world or disruptions to international travel (for instance cancellation of transatlantic flights due to the eruption of the volcano Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland in 2010).
6. Unless a Party offers to host a meeting of the committees, the meetings of the scientific committees and of the Standing Committee would take place in Geneva at the *Centre International de Conférences de Genève* (CICG). The Secretariat secures preliminary dates with the CICG years in advance of the actual meeting (see Annex 1 for the tentative dates until 2027). If a Party offers to host a meeting, the reservations should be cancelled well ahead of the date of the planned meeting, as the CICG has introduced new requirements relating to reservations, increasing the financial risks to the Convention; however, cancelling early also increases the risks of unexpected events occurring after cancellation. . The following cancellation fees apply:
- between 18 months and 12 months prior to the date of the event: 10% of the hire charge;
 - between 12 months and 6 months prior to the date of the event: 25% of the hire charge;
 - Between 6 months and 3 months prior to the date of the event: 50% of the hire charge;
 - Less than 3 months prior to the date of the event: 100% of the hire charge.
7. The no-cost cancellation dates (18 months prior to the date of the meeting) for tentative future meetings are also included in Annex 1. The CICG reservations are however cancelled at no cost in case of force majeure when the Swiss Confederation requires lockdowns, which was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Enquiries made during 2020 have shown that standard United Nations Special Events insurance and Malicious Acts insurance which apply to events held by the Secretariat are too limited in scope to be useful in the sorts of circumstances that occurred in relation to the planned CoP18 in Sri Lanka and the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. The Secretariat has prepared a risk matrix for convening CITES meetings in the table below. The table indicates several possible risk factors and proposes mitigation measures that could be put in place when the meeting venue is decided. The Secretariat uses the risk matrix in the table below in the planning of the meetings of CITES permanent committees (and the Conference of the Parties), noting that Geneva is the default venue for meetings of the Standing Committee and of the Animals and Plants Committees. The Secretariat only organizes meetings outside Geneva when a Party offers to host the meeting. In those cases, the Secretariat agrees with the host country on the timing of the meetings in order to minimize most of the environmental and political risks outlined below. However, regardless of the reasons causing the exceptional circumstances, the two scenarios remain as (A) when there are matters that arise that are global or make the location of the meeting unsuitable, and (B) when travel to the location of the meeting becomes difficult from several regions/places. Based on these two scenarios, the Secretariat is proposing possible options in paragraphs 9 through 13 below.

RISK MATRIX FOR CONVENING CITES MEETINGS

Risk Scenarios	Risk types	Probability (high/med/low)	Severity of impact/consequences				Risk-minimizing measures
			Timeline for decision (short/long)	Geographical impact (global/regional)	Cost implications (high/med/low)	Impact on the effectiveness and representation of the meeting (high/med/low)	
A: Circumstances preventing representatives from having a meeting at the location of the meeting	Security (e.g., crimes, terrorism, etc.)	Low	Short	Global	High	High	Follow advice from UNDSS on the security situation in-country, including on the timing of the meeting
	Medical/health	Low	Short	Global	High	High	
	Environmental (e.g., extreme weather events, natural disasters, pollution, etc)	Medium	Short	Global	High	High	Take the seasonal weather events at location into account when planning meetings
	Infrastructure (e.g., unexpected structural problems with the venue, internet availability, etc.)	Medium	Long	Global	Medium	Medium	Choose meeting venues with reliable infrastructure – consider back-up provision of Internet/electricity etc.
	Political (e.g., unexpected changes in government, economic situation, etc.)	Medium	Short	Global	High	High	Ensure high-level political commitment to hosting the meeting and avoid meetings around the time of general elections
B: Circumstances that prevent several Members from being present in-person at the meeting	Travel restrictions (e.g., due to regional health situations, extreme weather events, natural disasters, and other disruptions)	Medium	Short	Regional	Medium	Medium	Plan for hybrid participation of Members/Acting Members affected
	Political (e.g., sanctions, other travel restrictions with regard to certain nationalities, etc.)	Low	Long	Regional	Medium	Medium	Plan for hybrid participation of Members/acting Member affected
	Operational/logistical (e.g., visa processes)	Medium	Long	Regional	Medium	Medium	Plan for hybrid participation of Members/acting Members affected

9. Under scenario A, the reservation of the meeting venue would most likely be cancelled at no cost for the Secretariat due to force majeure circumstances, as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Postponement of the meeting to a later date would be the preferred option in order to organize an in-person meeting. The postponed meeting would either take place in the original location because conditions improved or would take place in an alternate location, if the necessary funds can be identified to do so. This was the option chosen for CoP18 that was organized at a later date in Geneva with funding from *inter alia* Switzerland and the European Union. When the exceptional circumstances preventing quorum outlined above persist, the meeting would then be organized online. This was the option chosen for the 31st meeting of the Animals Committee and the 25th meeting of the Plants Committee and the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee.
10. Under scenario B, exceptional circumstances can arise days, if not hours, before the meeting and the only viable mitigation measures for the Animals and Plants Committees would be ensuring that quorum is reached by connecting online the Members/acting Members who are not able to travel to the meeting. For the scientific committees, the Secretariat proposes the organization of a hybrid meeting allowing Members who cannot travel to the meeting to connect remotely to participate in the meeting. The hybrid option would only be offered when both the Member and their alternate are unable to travel to the location of the meeting due to exceptional circumstances, external to the individual concerned. Financial reasons are not considered as exceptional circumstances. The Secretariat notes that provisions have been made in the core budget for travel of AC, PC and SC Members (see [Annex 2](#) to Resolution Conf. 19.1 on *Financing and the costed programme of work for the Secretariat for the triennium 2023-2025*) from developing countries.
11. Under scenario B, the Secretariat recalls that the Standing Committee, is composed of Parties, and not of individuals. If the meeting is held in Geneva or another city with wide diplomatic representation on-site, the Secretariat assumes that representatives from either the Party Member or the Party alternate could travel to the meeting or, alternatively, be represented by officials from the Permanent Mission or Embassy. As an example, despite a travel ban preventing representatives from one Party to travel to Lyon, France, for the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee in 2022, the Member was represented by officials of its embassy. As outlined in the guiding principle 2 above, the Secretariat considers that hybrid participation is less likely to be needed in the case of the Standing Committee. However, if a quorum is not possible for a meeting of the Standing Committee in the case of scenario B, exceptionally a hybrid meeting may need to be considered connecting the Members/alternates needed for quorum.

Timeline for decision-making

12. The Secretariat proposes that, should a meeting of a Committee be postponed under scenario A, the postponed meeting should take place no later than six months after its original date in order to ensure that progress is made in the implementation of the Decisions directed to the Committee concerned by the Conference of the Parties. The 2020-2022 intersessional period has shown that it is difficult for the Committees to deliver on their mandate with only one intersessional meeting. With that target date of the organization of a meeting within six months of its original date, the Secretariat proposes that, if an alternate location or date is not identified within two months after the original date, preparations should be made to organize the meeting online within the six months target date.
13. To summarize, under scenario A with the impossibility to hold meetings at the meeting's location, postponement and possible relocation would be the preferred option. If no viable in-person option is identified within 2 months of the original date of the meeting, the meeting would be rescheduled as an online meeting with participation of Member, observer Parties and observer organizations. Under scenario B that affects quorum, the preferred solution would be a hybrid for the Animals and Plants Committees, but unlikely to be needed for the Standing Committee. The scientific committees' Members who are unable to travel to the location of the meeting would be connected online. Observers unable to travel to the meeting would be able to follow the live streaming of the meeting .

Scenario	AC/PC	SC
A (circumstances at the location)	Postpone meeting for a maximum of six months. If no alternative location is found within two months, the meeting to be organized fully online (possibly with an adapted agenda and working programme).	
B (circumstances in several regions)	Hybrid option for Members/acting Members only to ensure quorum	Hybrid option to be considered only in exceptional circumstances

How to conduct online and hybrid meetings – application of the Rules of Procedure

14. Based on its experience with SC73, AC31 and PC25 and the feedback collected via the Secretariat's survey to participants in AC31 and PC25, online meetings would be organized based on the following modalities:
- The length of the meeting will be two to three times longer than an in-person meeting, i.e. over two to three weeks, with one three-hour session every day. The meeting would take place in the middle of the day, Central European Time. Indeed, out of 16 regional members, eight (4 from Europe and 4 from Africa) are based in Central European Time.
 - The plenary would break for two to three weeks in order to organize, hold and conclude the work of possible in-session working groups.
15. In 2020, the Secretariat prepared a *Guidance on the application of the Rules of Procedure in an online meeting* for the AC and PC, as contained in information document [AC31/PC25 Inf. 1](#). This guidance would also apply to hybrid meetings (see Annex 2). The Secretariat proposes to continue to apply the Rules of Procedures and the Guidance for online and hybrid meetings and does not foresee the need of amending the Rules of Procedure. However, the Secretariat would propose amending the Guidance in order to allow the interventions posted in the meeting's chat for participants (Members only in case of a hybrid meeting) who cannot take the floor due to technical reasons to be considered as part of the record of the meeting. This would entail adding the following sentence in the section on Executive summary and summary record (also indicated as underlined text in Annex 2):

“Statements posted in the chat will be included in the record when a participant is unable to take the floor for technical reasons and is requested by the Chair to include its intervention in the chat.”

Additional considerations: expanding online intersessional work

16. The volume of Decisions directed to the committees by the CoP has increased substantially over the past decade (see Table 1 below). The role and significance of committee meetings has thus increased accordingly, resulting in significant impacts if meetings of the committees cannot be held. Resolution Conf. 19.1 affirms that no more than two regular meetings of each of the three committees should be convened between regular meetings of the CoP. However, it is a challenge to implement the Decisions even in the absence of extraordinary events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Decisions directed to the SC and scientific committees since 2010

Decisions directed to	CoP15 (2010)	CoP16 (2013)	CoP17 (2016)	CoP18 (2019)	CoP19 (2022)
Animals Committee	15	19	31	40	53
Plants Committee	20	12	26	27	61
Standing Committee	30	49	79	86	102
Secretariat	57	60	129	122	132
Parties and others	36	56	87	95	101
Total²	126	196	352	357	367

17. The increase in workload for the committees has reinforced the need for two meetings to take place during the intersessional period, but also the need to explore ways to facilitate online intersessional decision-making. Online meetings present a valuable tool that can assist in moving intersessional work forward. Despite the pandemic having a significant impact on the face-to-face meetings of the Standing Committee (SC), Animals Committee (AC) and Plants Committee (PC) and their intersessional work, the Committees managed to implement some of the Decisions directed to them through intersessional decision-making procedures provided for in the Rules of Procedures of the committees and the establishment of intersessional working groups (SC: 17 working groups; AC and PC: 6 each) that addressed prioritized and complex matters through electronic means.

² The total number of Decisions adopted at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties is lower than the sum of the Decisions directed to the AC, PC, SC, Secretariat and Parties and others because some Decisions are directed to two entities at the same time, for instance to the Animals and Plants Committees.

18. The current processes for intersessional decision-making contained in the Rules of Procedure (AC/PC Rule 19, SC Rule 20) is a lengthy (65-70 days) and relatively complex process irrespective of the nature of the matter to be decided upon. The Secretariat wishes to consult the Animals and Plants Committees to establish whether they would be interested in exploring ways to simplify this process for certain matters. A new Rule could be drafted in order to establish a simplified intersessional decision-making process, possibly as an expedited non-objection procedure by email, for:
- a) establishing leads for each of the instructions as part of their workplans;
 - b) establishing intersessional working groups;
 - c) commenting on terms of reference, also published on the intersessional webpages of the Committees.

For any other more complex issues, the existing intersessional decision-making process would remain unchanged.

Additional considerations: Exploring the option of participation for Parties directly concerned by an agenda item

19. Within the broader discussion of hybrid participation at meetings (beyond exceptional circumstances), the Secretariat is of the view that remote participation could be considered with respect to Parties directly concerned by an agenda item that could potentially lead to compliance procedures.³ The Secretariat is aware that lack of available funding is often one of the reasons Parties that are directly concerned by an agenda item, such as the Review of Significant Trade, are unable to attend meetings of the Animals and Plants Committee. When these agenda items are discussed at meetings of the Animals and Plants Committee and Parties concerned are not able to attend a face-to-face meeting and furthermore cannot be represented by the Permanent missions, remote participation could be considered. The rationale behind this proposal would be to ensure that Parties that risk being affected by compliance procedures would have the opportunity to present additional information to the Committees.
20. To facilitate their engagement, as a first option, regional representatives could read a statement on behalf of that Party (and by extension of any other Party directly affected by a specific agenda item). The Secretariat recommends that the language below be added to Annex 2 to Resolution Conf. 18.2 on *Establishment of committees* in order to explicitly allow regional representatives to take that role as a spokesperson:

13. *The duties of the Members elected to the Animals and Plants Committees and their alternates are as follows:*

[new sub-paragraph to be inserted after sub-paragraph g)]

x) during meetings of the Committee, if so requested by a Party of its region not present at the meeting, the Member may make statements and present information on their behalf when a specific agenda item directly affects the absent Party;

21. As a second option and subject to the availability of funding, the Party directly affected could connect to the meeting via an online platform when the specific agenda item that affects it is considered by the Committee. For the Animals and Plants Committees, this would be relevant for the agenda items on the Review of Significant Trade and for the Animals Committee, also the agenda item on the Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity. This second option is intended to be implemented as a low-cost option, i.e., a laptop used to call in the Party when the agenda item is discussed, when all other options, such as representation by the Permanent Mission (or the embassy) or statements and information presented by the regional Member on behalf of the Party, are not possible.

Recommendations to the Plants Committee

22. The Plants Committee is invited to:
- a) consider the guiding principles outlined in paragraph 3 and the exceptional circumstances described in paragraph 5 and suggest other possible guiding principles or exceptional circumstances;

³ See Resolution Conf. 14.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *CITES compliance procedures*

- b) consider whether the *Guidance on the application of the Rules of Procedure* in Annex 2 to the present document would allow the Committee to pursue its work in an online or hybrid format or whether changes to the Rules of Procedure would be warranted;
- c) comment on the possibility of developing a simplified intersessional decision-making process as outlined in paragraph 18; and
- d) comment on the proposed amendments to Annex 2 to Resolution Conf. 18.2 on *Establishment of committees* as outlined in paragraph 20 in order to explicitly enable regional representatives to read a statement on behalf of a Party directly affected by a specific agenda item.

Recommendations to the Animals Committee

23. The Animals Committee is invited to:

- a) consider the recommendations of the Plants Committee as reported in the executive summaries of the 26th meeting of the Plants Committee; and concur or make further comments and recommendations, as appropriate.

CITES COMMITTEE AND COP MEETINGS
TENTATIVE DATES FOR 2024-2027

2024:

22 April to 3 May: AC33 and PC27 (cancellation deadline: 22 October 2022)

26-30 August: SC78 (cancellation deadline: 26 February 2023)

2025 CoP Dates and venue TBD

2026:

29 June to 3 July: PC28 (cancellation deadline: 29 December 2024)

13-17 July: AC34 (cancellation deadline: 13 January 2025)

2-6 November: SC81 (cancellation deadline: 2 May 2025)

2027:

28 June to 9 July: AC35 and PC29 (cancellation deadline: 28 December 2025)

TBC SC82

Guidance on the application of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Animals and the Plants Committees in an online or hybrid meeting

The RoP of the CITES committees have been developed with physical meetings in mind and the application of some of the provisions may need some guidance in the context of an online or a hybrid meeting. As the RoPs of the two committees are identical, the information document is intended to serve both committees.

An online meeting is a meeting held via an online platform, where the participants are not physically present at a meeting venue but are connected to the meeting via the Internet. A hybrid meeting is a meeting held in a physical location where some participants connect to the meeting via an online platform on the Internet.

This document provides guidance to the Chair and the participants on how to apply those provisions of the RoP where guidance for the online or hybrid settings seems necessary.

Representation and attendance (Rules 1-4)

Rule 1: It is understood that presence in meetings means physical or online presence. The former through physical presence in a room in the physical space, the latter through a connection to a meeting held online.

Rule 2: Parties will be entitled to participate in the online meeting with a maximum of four connections per Party. A Party may include more observers on their delegation, but they will have to share the four connections to the meeting platform.

Rule 3: UN, specialized agencies and non-Party States may participate in the meeting with a maximum of two connections per agency or non-Party State.

Rule 4: Each agency or body fulfilling the criteria in Rule 4 can take part in the meeting with a maximum of two connections per agency or body. More than two persons can register, but they will have to share the two connections to the meeting platform. The right of any agencies or bodies to participate in meetings of the Committees may be withdrawn in accordance with Rule 4 of the RoP at any time if so agreed by the Members present.

Officers and the Secretariat (Rules 5-6)

The Chair will preside the online meeting from their remote location or from the physical location of the meeting for a hybrid meeting. The Vice-Chair will assist the Chair from their remote location or from the physical location of the meeting for a hybrid meeting. The Secretariat will service and act as secretary for the meeting and will also assist with the technical aspects of the meeting in collaboration with the operators of the online meeting platform.

Arrangement of the meeting (Rules 7-9)

Notice of the meetings of the two Committees should be done in accordance with Rule 7.

Rule 8 on seating arrangements will not apply in an online setting. The screen of the meeting will at all times show the Chair, a representative of the CITES Secretariat and the person who has been given the floor by the Chair of the Committee.

Important: Members logging on to the meeting platform must indicate their first name and last name. Other participants logging on to the meeting platform, must indicate first the Party or agency or body that they represent and then their first name and last name (COUNTRY/ORGANIZATION – NAME). Participants who have not identified themselves this way will be requested to do so in order to be able to take the floor. Participants are strongly encouraged to log in at least 30 minutes before the start of the meeting.

Rule 9 on working languages of the meeting will be applied as simultaneous interpretation into the three working languages of the plenary sessions of the meeting will be provided through the online platform.

Documents (Rules 10-11)

Rule 10 on working documents requires no guidance.

Rule 11 on information documents will apply with the exception that paper copies will not be required for distribution. Information documents submitted by Parties and by the Secretariat will be made available on the CITES website as usual. Information documents submitted by a clearly identified observer body or agency will be made accessible by the Secretariat as well.

Declaration of conflict of interest (Rule 12)

Each Member and acting Member of the two committees must declare any financial interests that he or she considers calls into question his or her impartiality, objectivity or independence regarding any subject on the agenda for that meeting of the Committee. The declaration must be made on the standard form, agreed by the Standing Committee and provided by the Secretariat to the Members and acting Members. The form must be submitted by email to the Secretariat before the meeting.

Rules of order and debate (Rules 13-16)

Rule 13 on quorum shall mean that at least six Members or Acting Members from at least four regions are connected to the session, either in person or online. If a Member or Acting Member participating remotely steps away from the meeting while leaving the device connected, they will be considered to be present in the meeting and count for the quorum.

If a Member or Acting Member is unwillingly disconnected for technical reasons, they should immediately alert the Secretariat (contact information will be provided in advance of the meeting) by an alternative means of communication and a technical solution should be found as soon as possible; the meeting will not be disrupted. The Member or Acting Member who was unwillingly disconnected from the meeting will be able to make their position known during the adoption of the executive summary or the summary record of each session (see below).

If more Members or Acting Members are disconnected from the meeting for technical reasons, the Chair may decide to adjourn the session until the matter is resolved. There is no Rule on adjournment of the session in the Rules of Procedures. However, Rule 20 of the RoP allows the Chair to apply the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties in matters not covered by the RoPs of the Animals and Plants Committees; in this case Rule 18, paragraph 2 e) of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties would apply.

Rule 14: Participants that are duly identified in accordance with Rule 8 above will be able to signify their desire to speak using the "Request to Speak" button on the online meeting platform. Once the Chair calls upon the participant to take the floor, they will be able to turn on their microphone and camera and keep it on while they speak.

A Member or a Party wishing to make a point of order will be able to do so by using the "Point of Order" button on the online meeting platform. This will allow the Chair to take up the point of order immediately.

The Chairs of the Committees can propose to limit the time to be allowed to each speaker, for instance a maximum of 5 minutes per intervention for Committee Members, 4 minutes for Parties and 3 minutes for other observers. The Committee may be invited to agree to this proposal in line with paragraph 6 of Rule 14. The meeting platform has a timer that may or may not be used by the meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair may call a speaker to order if their remarks are not relevant for the subject under discussion or if they are not respecting any time limits on interventions agreed by the Committee.

Participants are invited to submit written statements in advance of the meeting.

Rule 15: In accordance with the Rules and normal practice, the Committees will as far as possible take decisions by consensus. Consensus means that no Member/Acting Member objects to the decision proposed by the Chair. If the Committee fails to reach consensus, the Chair or Members/Acting Members from at least two regions may call for a vote. In case of a vote, regional Members/Acting Members will be called upon one by one by the Chair in the order decided by the Chair. They will express their vote by orally stating yes, no or abstain. In the event of such a roll-call vote, should any Member/Acting Member fail to cast a vote for any reason during the roll call, they

shall be called upon a second time after the conclusion of the initial roll call. Should the Member/Acting Member fail to cast a vote on the second roll call, they shall be recorded as absent. The decision shall be taken by simple majority of the Members/Acting Members expressing an affirmative or negative vote. In case of a tie, the motion shall be considered rejected.

Rule 16 on closed sessions will apply in the following way: If a motion for a closed session is carried, the Committee shall postpone the discussion of the item to a later session that will be closed to other observers than Parties. The Secretariat will assist the Chair during the closed session.

Working groups (WGs) (Rule 17)

The Committees may establish such intersessional and in-session working groups as necessary in accordance with Rule 17.

In-session WGs will work in between the sessions of the plenary of the Committees without interpretation in a manner determined by the chair of the WG. The chair and membership of in-session WGs will be determined by the Chair. Members and observers will be invited to express their interest in taking part in in-session WGs during the session at which the WG is established.

Executive summary and summary record (Rule 18)

The executive summary of the decisions of the Committee will be prepared by the Secretariat for endorsement by the Committee. A consolidated summary of the sessions of the Committees in the first week will be produced and posted during the break for adoption during the sessions in the last week. A consolidated executive summary of the sessions in the last week will be circulated for approval as soon as possible after the meeting to the Members/acting Members of the Committees for endorsement. The decisions shall come into effect as soon as the consolidated executive summary has been endorsed by the Committees.

The summary record will be prepared based on paragraph 2 of Rule 18 and include further details on the discussions at the meeting.

Any comments or views expressed in the chat of the meeting must be made in a cordial and respectful manner and should be related to the issues discussed by the Committee. Comments or views expressed in the chat of the meeting will not be included in the summary record unless such comments have been read into the record of the meeting. Statements posted in the chat will be included in the record when a participant is unable to take the floor for technical reasons and is requested by the Chair to include its intervention in the chat. Reference is made to Rule 4 of the RoP of the Animals and Plants Committees and to Rule 31 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties in case of abusive language orally or in the chat.

Procedure for intersessional decision-making (Rule 19) and Final Provisions (Rules 20-21)

No further interpretation of these provisions is required for the meeting in an online or hybrid setting.