

Aide Memoire

Question & Answer Session about the options for SC73

Held online on 1 July 2020 from 13.20 -15.15 Geneva time.

Standing Committee participation

Africa	
Congo	Absent (comments sent in writing after the call)
Ethiopia	Absent
Namibia	Elly HAMUNYELA
Morocco	Hayat MESBAH
Asia	
China (Vice-Chair)	ZENG, Yan WU Zhongze WU Zhimin YUAN Liangchen SU Rui PING Xiaoge HE Jinxing
Kuwait	Shereefa AL-SALEM
Indonesia	Nining PURNAMANINGTYAS BELLARINI Permanent Mission of Indonesia in Geneva Sunan RUSTAM
Central and South America and the Caribbean	
Bahamas	Maurice ISAACS Deandra DELANCEY-MILFORT
Honduras	José Julián SUAZO CERVANTES
Peru	Jessica María GÁLVEZ-DURAND BESNARD
Europe	
Poland	Karol WOLNICKI Wojciech PIWOWARSKI
Israel	Simon NEMTZOV Yatir SHAMIR
Belgium	Apologies for absence
Russian Federation	Anton MEZHNEV
North America	
Canada (Chair)	Carolina CACERES Cecilia LOUGHEED
Oceania	
New Zealand	Sarah BAGNALL

Depositary Government	
<i>Switzerland</i>	Mathias LÖRTSCHER
Next host country	
<i>Costa Rica</i>	Carlos Mario ORREGO VÁSQUEZ

1. Welcome and introduction of the session

CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero welcomed all participants and introduced the objectives of the meeting.

2. Introductions from members

Representatives from all delegations present on the call introduced themselves.

3. Review of scenarios

The Secretary-General introduced the scenarios outlined in the Secretariat's background document (attached to this note), addressed some of the comments made in writing in advance of the meeting and invited comments.

Scenario 1: Postponement

In relation to the 'mini-meeting', further questioned by Israel, the Secretary-General explained that the nature of such a meeting would depend on a) whether a Party would be willing to pay the costs of a full SC meeting or a Members-only meeting, which might not take decisions and b) the extent of COVID-19 travel and meeting restrictions in spring 2021.

Scenario 2: Online meeting during the period 5-9 October 2020 with sessions of limited duration

The Secretary-General recalled that the Interprefy platform currently being used, allowed 300 speakers to join a call which is in excess of the number of delegations which usually attend CITES Standing Committee meetings. An online meeting could potentially be held at times to suit the Members, spaced out over a number of days and with sessions of a limited duration to suit time zone constraints. The agenda would necessarily need to be reduced. There were many options for deciding priorities of Standing Committee obligations which need to be addressed and this would be a matter for the Chair to suggest (under Rule 6) and the Committee to agree, when it approved the agenda.

She explained that 'in-session' working groups could be organized if the Committee so wished, but there would be cost implications and timing of the plenary meetings may need to be adjusted for in session working groups to meet.

Regarding the timing of any online meetings, the present call was fixed for the least inconvenient moment for most Members. Further meetings on this timetable would however inconvenience certain Members more than others. The Secretary-General mentioned that some MEAs had organised different start times for each day of the meetings so that the same Parties were not always inconvenienced because of very early or very late starting times.

Scenario 3: Hybrid in person/online meeting during the period 5-9 October 2020

Addressing concerns expressed by Poland, echoed during the call by the Bahamas, Canada, China, Israel, and New Zealand the Secretary-General explained that it seems most unlikely that representatives from capitals will be free to travel from all Parties in October. She noted that missions in Geneva were very well represented at CoP18 held in Geneva in August 2019 and are increasingly called up to represent their States in technical discussions in Geneva held since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Concerns were however expressed about the ability of missions to engage in detailed technical discussions related to CITES. The Secretary-General mentioned that it would be possible to find ways of planning the timing of the meeting to address the need for Missions and Party MAs to discuss issues that arose during the meetings.

4. General discussion for clarification of the information provided

Honduras and Indonesia raised questions about possible meetings in 2021. The Secretariat explained that any meetings in 2021 would need to balance the sequencing between AC/PC and SC meetings, the cost of holding the meetings and the identification of a venue. They explained that to date no Party had offered to host AC31/PC25 in 2021. Any meeting held outside of the CICG would have cost implications. In these circumstances the Secretary-General was concerned that it may be a challenge for Parties to pay to host a full or a 'mini-meeting' of the Standing Committee in 2021 and timing in early 2021 was difficult given the pandemic uncertainties. She also explained that it would be necessary for a Party to step forward almost immediately to offer to host given the planning that would need to be initiated.

Canada, on behalf of the North American region, wished to ensure that any way forward was fair, transparent and equitable and highlighted the continuing uncertainty surrounding travel for delegates. She said that the North American region favoured scenario 1, with scenario 3 as the least preferred. They noted that actual decision-making is most sensitive and that there may be a way for the Committee to advance its work online without taking decisions in that format. They wished the Finance and Budget Subcommittee to be involved in any discussions over the budgetary consequences of any decision taken.

Costa Rica stressed the major financial and government commitment required to host CoP19 and emphasized that any decision taken by the Standing Committee should ensure there is no change to the March 2022 date for CoP19. This was acknowledged by Peru.

Israel ruled out scenario 3 and preferred scenario 1 with any decisions before a 2021 meeting of the Standing Committee being taken by written procedure under Rule 20. They emphasized though that in the interests of transparency this should be limited to urgent matters.

Peru and Honduras favoured option 3 as the Committee needed to make progress on its business. The Bahamas favoured option 2, as they felt missions in Geneva are under pressure at present. China supported scenario 1 and opposed scenario 3.

5. Process for follow up and timing of the final recommendation

The Standing Committee Chair explained that a short summary of the call would be circulated, together with a recapitulation of the options and informed members that they should indicate their preferred option by 8 July.

She explained that if any form of online meeting was favoured this would likely require a prioritization of the business which the CoP had addressed to the Standing Committee. The Chair said she would reflect on this before coming back to the members for their inputs on this prioritization.

Echoed by the Standing Committee Chair, the Secretary-General thanked the Members for the constructive meeting and all those who had been involved in organizing it.