

Guidance on the application of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Standing Committee in an online or hybrid meeting *(approved at the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee, Geneva, 2025)*

The Rules of procedure (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.

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 that are not members of the Committee will be entitled to participate in the online meeting with a maximum of four connections per Party. A Party may include more observers on the letter of credentials, but they will have to share the four connections to the meeting platform.

Rules 3-4: Each agency or body can take part in the meeting with a maximum of two connections per agency or body. As above, more than two persons can register, but they will have to share the two 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 The right of any agencies or bodies to participate in meetings of the Committees may be withdrawn in accordance with Rule 4 of the RoP at any time if so agreed by the Members present.

Credentials (Rule 5)

For Rule 5 on credentials, please note that signed credentials should be scanned and submitted to the Secretariat by email at least one week in advance of the meeting. The signature may be a handwritten signature or an electronic equivalent. In the case of Members of the Committee, the credentials must clearly indicate the name of the Representative, alternate Representative and any Advisors of that Member or Acting Member. The Secretariat will utilize the latest technology for the authentication and authorization of participants, including verifying identity via video when applicable, to ensure that the individuals joining the meetings are those whose credentials have been presented by the relevant Party.

Officers and the Secretariat (Rules 6-7)

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 platform.

Arrangement of the meeting (Rules 8-10)

Notice of the meeting of the Standing Committee should be done in accordance with Rule 8.

Rule 9 on seating arrangements will not apply in online setting. The screen of the meeting will at all times show the Chair, the Secretary-General and the person who has been given the floor by the Chair of the Committee.

Important: Participants logging on to the meeting platform, must indicate first the Member, 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 10 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 11-12)

Rule 11 on working documents requires no interpretation.

Rule 12 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.

Rules of order and debate (Rules 13-16)

Rule 13 on quorum shall mean that at least seven Regional 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 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 Procedure. However, Rule 21 of the RoP allows the Chair to apply the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties in matters not covered by the RoP of the Standing Committee; 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 9 above will be able signify their desire to speak using the “Request to Speak” button on the online 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. Once the intervention is completed, they will release the microphone and the camera will be turned off.

A Member or a non-member 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 Chair of the Standing Committee 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 Committee 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 regional Members/Acting Members from at least two regions may call for a vote. In case of a vote, regional Committee 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 regional 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 unless the tie is broken by the vote of the Depositary Government.

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 sessions.

Working groups (WGs) (Rule 17)

The Standing Committee 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 Committee without interpretation in a manner determined by the chair of the WG. The number of such WGs will be limited to those items where a discussion and agreement on a recommendation at the meeting is needed. 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 19)

The executive summary of the decisions of the Committee will be prepared by the Secretariat for endorsement by the Committee. Depending on the working programme, a consolidated summary of the sessions of the Committee 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 Committee for endorsement. The decisions shall come into effect as soon as the consolidated executive summary has been endorsed by the Committee.

The Summary record will be prepared based on paragraph 2 of Rule 19 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 Standing Committee 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.

Establishment of subcommittees (Rule 18), Procedure for intersessional decision-making (Rule 20) and Final Provisions (Rules 21-22)

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