



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Eastern Mediterranean

World Health Organization
Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean
Sixty-eighth session
Provisional agenda item 1

EM/RC68/2
July 2021

Draft decision

Special procedures for a virtual 68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean

Preamble

1. At its previous meeting in February 2021, the Subcommittee had agreed to an extensive agenda for RC68, which was scheduled to take place at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt, from 11 to 14 October 2021. However, due to the current volatile situation implicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unlikely that the Regional Committee session can proceed as originally planned, since it would be both logistically challenging, if not impossible, and a potential health risk for Member State delegations and other participants to gather together at the Regional Office. It was therefore necessary to consider alternative arrangements for the RC session.
2. At its meeting on 29 June 2021 the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean considered the proposals presented by the Regional Director of the Eastern Mediterranean Region concerning arrangements for the 68th Session of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the uncertain development of the epidemiological situation in the Region, the Subcommittee endorsed the proposal to hold the 68th Session virtually, similar to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly held from 24 May to 1 June 2021, as well as other Regions' planned committees.
3. Special procedures need to be put in place so that the Regional Committee can pursue its work in a virtual session. The special procedures to regulate the conduct of the virtual session of the Regional Committee are set out in Annex 1 to the draft decision below. The said special procedures shall apply to the meetings of the Regional Committee opening on 11 October and closing not later than 14 October 2021.
4. Both the text of the draft decision and the special procedures detailed in Annex 1 closely follow the arrangements adopted by the Sixty-seventh Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean held in 2020, as well as other global governing bodies meetings held in 2021.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, the Regional Committee,

- Recalling its decision to hold its 68th session virtually if the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for an effective in-person meeting;
- Taking note of the assessment reached by the Subcommittee members that the conditions for an effective in-person meeting could not be ensured and that the Regional Committee should therefore meet in a virtual session;
- DECIDES to adopt the special procedures to regulate the conduct of its Sixty-eighth virtual session set out in the Annex to this decision.

Annex 1

Special procedures to regulate the conduct of the virtual 68th Session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean

RULES OF PROCEDURE

1. The Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean shall continue to apply in full, except to the extent that they are inconsistent with these special procedures, in which case the Regional Committee's decision to adopt these special procedures shall operate as a decision to suspend the relevant Rules of Procedure to the extent necessary, in accordance with Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee.

ATTENDANCE AND QUORUM

2. Attendance by Members, States not Members of the Committee, invited representatives of the United Nations, specialized agencies and other international and regional organizations, and non-State actors in official relations with WHO or accredited by the Regional Committee shall be through secure access to videoconferencing or other electronic means allowing representatives to hear other participants and to address the meeting remotely.

3. For the avoidance of doubt, virtual attendance by Members shall be taken into account when calculating the presence of a quorum.

ADDRESSING THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

4. Members, States not Members of the Committee, invited representatives of the United Nations, specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, and non-State actors in official relations with WHO or accredited by the Regional Committee are invited

to submit written statements of no more than 600 words in one of the working languages of the Regional Committee for posting on the website for the Regional Committee under the related agenda item. They may provide translations of their written statements into one or more of the working languages of the Regional Committee if they so wish. Such translations should be clearly marked with the words “unofficial translation”. Written statements should be sent in advance of the opening of the 68th session of the Regional Committee. They may be submitted in lieu of an oral intervention or to complement an oral intervention. Written statements shall remain posted on the website of the Regional Committee until the adoption of the report of the 68th session of the Regional Committee. The content of the written statements submitted in lieu of an oral intervention will be summarised, as appropriate, in accordance with the usual practice in the report of the 68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean.

5. Members, States not Members of the Committee, invited representatives of the United Nations, specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, and non-State actors in official relations with WHO or accredited by the Regional Committee shall have the opportunity, if they so wish, to submit pre-recorded video statements in advance of the opening of the session, to be broadcast during the virtual session in lieu of an oral intervention, with an indication of the agenda item to which they refer. Members’ statements will be limited to three minutes, and other entities for two minutes.

6. During the virtual session, Members, States not Members of the Committee, invited representatives of the United Nations, specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, and non-State actors in official relations with WHO or accredited by the Regional Committee shall be provided with the opportunity to take the floor at the invitation of the Chairperson or on her or his acceding to a request from the organization concerned, in the case that no pre-recorded statement is submitted in advance. Individual statements by Members will be limited to 3 minutes, and any other intervention will be limited to 2 minutes.

7. Any Member wishing to take the floor should signal their wish to speak.

8. Any Member wishing to raise a point of order or exercise a right of reply in relation to an oral or pre-recorded video statement made at the virtual session of the Regional Committee should signal their intention to do so. The right of reply shall be exercised at the end of the relevant virtual meeting. Any Member wishing to exercise a right of reply in relation to a written statement submitted in lieu of an oral intervention should do so in writing as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than 10 working days following closure of the Regional Committee Session. A Member wishing to respond to such a reply should do so in writing as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than 10 working days following the posting of the reply to which they respond. Statements so submitted shall form part of the report of the 68th session of the Regional Committee in the language of submission.

REGISTRATION AND CREDENTIALS

9. Online registration will follow the normal practice. Additional information is provided in the related circular letter.

10. In accordance with Rule 3, the names of representatives, which in the case of Members shall take the form of credentials, shall be communicated electronically to the Regional Director, if possible, no later than 15 September 2021. Given the need to facilitate virtual access to the meeting, all credentials and lists of representatives should be submitted electronically.

11. The Officers of the 67th session of the Regional Committee, having assessed before the opening of the 68th session of the Regional Committee whether the credentials of Members are in conformity with the requirements of the Rules of Procedure, shall report to the Regional Committee accordingly during the opening with a view to the Committee making a decision thereon.

MEETINGS

12. All meetings of the Regional Committee shall be held in public. The virtual Regional Committee shall be broadcast on the website for the Regional Committee, in line with usual practice.

DECISION-MAKING

13. All decisions of the Regional Committee taken in virtual meeting should as far as possible be taken by consensus. In any event, given the virtual nature of the meeting, no decision shall be taken by show of hands vote or by secret ballot.

14. In the event that a vote is required, voting shall take place by roll-call conducted through the virtual system. During a roll-call vote, should any delegate fail to cast a vote for any reason during the roll-call, that delegate shall be called upon a second time after the conclusion of the initial roll-call. Should the delegate fail to cast a vote on the second roll-call, the delegation shall be recorded as absent.

RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS

15. Proposals for substantive amendments to proposed resolutions and decisions shall be introduced in writing and transmitted to the Regional Director at least 24 hours prior to the opening of the virtual session of the Regional Committee. The Regional Director shall circulate copies of such amendments to the delegations no later than the opening of the first day of the session.

16. Proposed amendments shall be considered by the Officers of the Regional Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat, with a view to submitting a revised draft

resolution or decision to the Regional Committee for adoption before the closure of its session. If adoption of the revised draft resolution or decision is not feasible before the closure of the session, the Regional Director will transmit to Member States any such proposal for consideration under a written silence procedure, as follows:

(a) The communication will contain the text of the proposal to be considered under this written silence procedure and will set a date for the receipt of any objections by Members. Any such objection is to be conveyed in writing and addressed to the Regional Director. The date for receipt of any objection will be 14 days from the date of dispatch of the communication.

(b) In the absence of the receipt by the set date of any written objection from a Member, the proposal concerned will be considered as validly adopted by the Regional Committee.

(c) In the event of the receipt by the set date of one or more written objections from a Member, the proposal concerned will be considered as having not been adopted by the Regional Committee.

(d) The Regional Director will inform Members about the outcome of the written silence procedure as soon as possible after the set date referred to in paragraph 16 (a) and will finalize the report of the session of the Committee by summarizing the process outlined above and including the resolution(s) and/or decision(s) as adopted.

USE OF LANGUAGES

17. For the avoidance of doubt, Rule 22 shall continue to apply, whereby oral and pre-recorded video statements made in one of the official languages shall be interpreted into the other official languages.

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