

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

110th meeting
Geneva, 3 April 2020

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Informal document No. **2020/8**

Special procedures during the COVID-19 period

(for approval)

Note by the Secretariat

Special procedures during the COVID-19 period

1. Guided by the assessments of the World Health Organization and in line with legislation of the host country authorities, UNECE secretariat staff and much of the membership of the Commission are working in a home office setting until further notice.

2. The Bureau of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) wishes to express its appreciation for the commitment of the membership and the secretariat to continue its work remotely. In this spirit, it recommends to hold EXCOM meetings virtually when physical meetings are not possible. To facilitate deliberations, it proposes to make some temporary adjustments to the Commission's methods of work:

- a) To facilitate the conduct of official business, virtual meeting formats and amended decision-making modalities should be explored. UNECE has modified the format of its upcoming official meetings. Updated information is available on the UNECE website under <http://www.unece.org/covid-19.html>.
- b) As interpretation and translation services are not available, member States are invited to suspend temporarily the language-related provisions contained in its Rules of Procedures (ECE/EX/3/Rev.1) as stipulated in rules 18-20^a and agree to conduct business in English only.
- c) Member States may wish to encourage the subsidiary bodies of UNECE to explore innovative formats to conduct business remotely. On an exceptional basis and for business-critical issues, this may include i) conduct of business in English only; and ii) decision-making through virtual consultations and silence procedures outside the regular sessions of the respective bodies. In this regard, the Bureaux of UNECE intergovernmental bodies, supported by the UNECE secretariat, should propose specific modalities to its plenaries for virtual approval. These modalities would then apply to the relevant subsidiary bodies. Related information should be documented carefully with EXCOM being kept informed of these exceptional and time-limited arrangements throughout the COVID-19 situation.

^a "Rule 18: English, French and Russian shall be the working languages of the Committee.

Rule 19: Interventions made in any of the working languages shall be interpreted into the other working languages during formal meetings of the Committee.

Rule 20: Documentation for decisions shall be available in all ECE working languages."

Draft decision:

In light of the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Committee

- a) Welcomes with appreciation the commitment by its membership and the UNECE secretariat to continue its operations remotely and notes the importance of solidarity and collaborative partnership in these exceptional times.
- b) Decides to temporarily suspend its rules of procedure 18-20 and agrees to conduct its business in English only;
- c) Encourages the subsidiary bodies of UNECE to explore innovative formats to conduct business remotely. On an exceptional basis and for business-critical issues, this may include decision-making through virtual consultations and silence procedures outside the regular sessions of the respective bodies. In this regard, the Bureaux of UNECE intergovernmental bodies, supported by the UNECE secretariat, should propose specific modalities to its plenaries for virtual approval. These modalities would then apply to the respective subsidiary bodies.
- d) Requests the secretariat to report back to EXCOM on these exceptional and time-limited arrangements throughout the COVID-19 situation.