



FOR INFORMATION

NINETEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General

Fifth Supplementary Report: Draft guidelines to improve the functioning of the Governing Body meetings

1. At its 301st Session (March 2008), the Governing Body endorsed a statement by the Government group requesting the Office to develop a draft set of good practice guidelines to improve the functioning of Governing Body sessions. Accordingly, the Office has prepared the appended draft guidelines. The guidelines cover, in the key areas highlighted in the statement, practical steps which, within the current format of the Governing Body, could meet the expectations and needs of members and enable them to make the best use of the limited time available for the meetings of the Governing Body and its committees. The draft guidelines are structured in the light of the major objectives to be reached in each of the key areas.
2. The members of the Governing Body will be invited to make their comments and suggestions via the Internet. This feedback will be included in a consolidated draft which will be submitted for consideration at the 304th Session (March 2009) of the Governing Body.

Geneva, 3 November 2008.

Submitted for information.

Appendix

Draft guidelines

Information sharing and transparency

Objective

Ensure that all three groups receive, at the same time, clear and accurate information on the order of business, scheduling of meetings, documents and materials available and other relevant matters.

- In addition to the information already provided on Governing Body procedures, its committees and the organization of its work¹ key information would be published in a clear and concise format such as ***Frequently asked questions (FAQs)***, both in a web version and in the form of a pocket-sized booklet.
- The Governing Body web site would be updated to provide easier access to information. The ***Featured*** section would draw users' attention to documents or web content that would help them prepare for the forthcoming session. The ***References*** section would contain not only practical information such as dates, timing and agendas of the forthcoming session, but also reference materials prepared by each committee's secretariat.
- A new page would be developed containing detailed information on the meetings organized with the approval of the Governing Body, together with the relevant Governing Body procedures.
- Regular user surveys and feedback from Governing Body members would help ensure that both the presentation and the contents of the web site meet their needs.

Distribution of Governing Body documents

Objective

Ensure that Governing Body documents are made available early enough to allow sufficient time to hold adequate consultations both within and between the groups.

- To ensure that Governing Body documents are available at least 15 days before their discussion, the current practice is to place these documents on the Web as soon as they are ready. In the event of an unexpected delay preventing the publication of a document 15 days before its discussion, members would be informed accordingly.
- In-session documents would continue to be published on the Web as soon as possible after committee meetings and distributed to the Governing Body members in the meeting rooms and published.
- In order to simplify the distribution process before the Governing Body session, an RSS² feed system is currently being developed to enable Governing Body members who subscribe to the system to be informed immediately of the availability of new documents and to print them directly from the Internet.

¹ See *Introduction to the Governing Body and Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*, on the Governing Body web site.

² Really Simple Syndication (RSS).

- Should members find that the new system better meets their need for timely access to documents, the practice of mailing documents could be discontinued, in line with the “greening” of the Office, for those Governing Body members who indicate that they have adequate Internet access and printing facilities. In this case, members would still receive a full set of printed documents on their arrival in Geneva.

Drafting of Governing Body documents

Objective

Prepare well-conceived, well-focused and well-drafted documents to facilitate discussions, promote substantive decisions and save time and resources, while enhancing relations between ILO constituents and the Office.

- The Programme and Budget for 2008–09 set the target of a 5 per cent reduction in the number and length of Governing Body documents. Through a recent Office Directive, the Director-General gave instructions to ensure that Governing Body documents “are of high quality, clear, well-presented and as concise as possible so that they meet the needs and expectations of ILO constituents”. To give effect to this Directive, a revised guide for the preparation of Governing Body documents would be issued. The guide would explain to authors the function of each category of document in the Governing Body’s decision-making process, and would include target lengths for each type of document.
- A new format for Governing Body documents would include a standard cover page (model template attached), which would indicate whether a document is for information, for decision or for debate and whether it has financial implications. It would also contain a brief summary of the contents as well as references to the Governing Body request or decision to which it responds, if any.
- To reduce document length the new format would contain less detailed technical information but rather links to online references providing additional information on the item. These “layers of information” should reconcile the needs of those who require detailed information and those who prefer a concise and efficient summary.
- The budgetary implications of document length would be taken into account, since long documents often result in extended sittings, which have cost implications. Document length should also be carefully considered in the agenda-setting process.
- Committee reports which are submitted to the plenary would be shortened by summarizing the positions and proposals formulated during the debate, rather than describing the whole discussion on a specific issue when there is no decision recommended to the plenary for adoption.

Agenda setting

Objective

Ensure that all three groups are involved in the establishment of agendas containing a realistic number of items, reflecting priorities and allowing for focused debate within the time allotted for discussion. Taking into account the specific mandate of each committee and the overall structure of the Governing Body, adopt a strategic approach in each committee so as to improve governance and avoid duplication of discussions.

- The secretariat of each committee should ensure that the three groups are fully involved in all the decisions related to agenda setting, by remaining in contact with the regional coordinators and the secretariats of the Employers' and Workers' groups.
- Based on current practice in the committees, regular feedback should be provided in a very concise format (such as a table or annex) on the action taken by the Office on decisions adopted or guidance given at previous sessions.
- According to the number of sittings and amount of time allotted to each committee, a reasonable limit should be fixed for the number of items to be placed on each committee's agenda.
- A careful review of all committees' agendas by the Officers of the Governing Body should help to avoid overlapping items for discussion.
- The Officers of each committee should identify for the next session the items which could be submitted for information or decision without debate. A careful assessment of the issues to be placed on the agenda of the next session should ensure a suitable ranking of the different documents on the agenda. Items which are likely to generate an in-depth discussion should be placed at the top of the agenda, and no more than one or two such items should be scheduled per committee sitting.

Time management

Objective

Ensure that all meetings start on time and avoid, as far as possible, extended or evening meetings. In accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders, which give the chairpersons full responsibility for managing meetings and debate, set time limits on interventions so as to ensure a more efficient use of the time allotted to the committees.

- In order to start plenary meetings on time, all three groups should be committed to the principle of strict time management.
- Meetings often start late because one or more of the groups require more preparation time. As a matter of courtesy, when a group meeting is expected to run late, the group should inform the Chairperson at the end of the previous sitting of the estimated time it needs to finish its meeting, so that the latter can then make an announcement to that effect to the other members.
- Before each committee begins its work, its Officers should carefully assess the time to be allotted to each item. The Chairperson should make an announcement accordingly at the beginning of each sitting.
- More disciplined time management should be encouraged by the Chairpersons, by setting a time limit on interventions and instructing speakers to make joint statements where possible and to keep their statements focused.



**FOR INFORMATION
FOR DECISION
FOR DEBATE AND GUIDANCE**

XXX ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Title of paper

Overview

Issue(s) covered

Financial implications

Action/Decision required

The Governing Body/Committee may wish to ...

**References to other Governing Body
documents and ILO instruments**