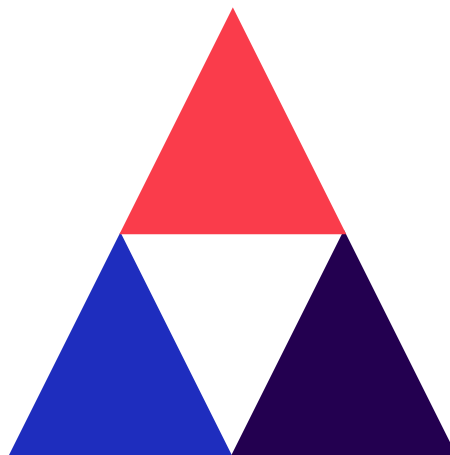




► Summary record

Tripartite Meeting on the Review of the Functioning of the Governing Body
(Geneva, 5–8 May 2025)



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► Introduction

1. At its 352nd Session (October–November 2024), the Governing Body decided to undertake a review of the areas of its functioning identified in section I of document [GB.352/INS/8\(Rev.1\)](#) and to convene, to that end, two tripartite meetings to which the [Standing Orders for technical meetings](#) would apply, with the suspension of article 3(2), and article 9(2), (3) and (8), and for which arrangements would be made to enable remote participation.¹ The outcome of the deliberations of the first Meeting would be presented to the Governing Body at its 355th Session (November 2025).
2. The first Tripartite Meeting on the Review of the Functioning of the Governing Body was held in Geneva, in a hybrid format, from 5 to 8 May 2025. The Meeting had before it a background note prepared by the Office, which contained an overview of the functioning of the Governing Body since the introduction of the reform package in 2011, reflected on the areas identified for review and set out proposals for improving the functioning of the Governing Body.² The agenda and programme of work were available on the Meeting's [web page](#), together with other useful information for participants.³ The Meeting was provided each day with a document prepared by the Office outlining the outcome of the discussions on the proposals in the background document and those made by the participants.
3. The Chairperson of the Meeting was the Chairperson of the Governing Body, Mr Yun (Government, Republic of Korea). At its first sitting, the Meeting elected three Vice-Chairpersons, as follows:

Government group

Vice-Chairperson: Mr Essah (Nigeria)

Employers' group

Vice-Chairperson: Ms Mugo (Kenya)

Workers' group

Vice-Chairperson: Ms Passchier (Netherlands)

4. The Meeting held six plenary sittings. At its first sitting, it adopted its programme of work. At its fifth sitting, and in accordance with the provisions of article 13 of the Standing Orders for technical meetings, it set up a subsidiary body to prepare a set of draft recommendations taking into account the views and proposals made during the discussion. The subsidiary body was chaired by the Government Vice-Chairperson and was composed of the following members:

Government members

Africa Mr Ambarka (Niger)
Mr Essah (Nigeria)

Asia and the Pacific Mr Babu (Bangladesh)
Mr Pushkar (Nepal)

¹ [GB.352/PV](#), para. 436.

² [TMRFGB/2025](#).

³ [TMRFGB/2025/Agenda](#) and [TMRFGB/2025/1](#).

Americas

Ms Goodyear (United States of America)

Mr Vela Málaga (Peru)

Europe

Mr Novales (Spain)

Ms Zeber (Poland)

Employer members

Mr Ahmed

Ms Chenard

Mr Mackall

Ms Mugo

Mr Oyerinde

Ms Pinto Lomeña

Mr Ricci

Mr Yllanes

Worker members

Mr Anthony

Ms Arfaoui

Ms Brown

Mr Guiro

Mr Norddahl

Ms Passchier

Ms Pujadas

Mr Vogt

5. The draft recommendations for improving the functioning of the Governing Body, as prepared by the subsidiary body, were submitted to the Meeting for adoption at its sixth sitting.
6. The Secretary-General of the Meeting was Ms Thompson (Assistant Director-General for the External and Corporate Relations Cluster) and the Deputy Secretary-General and Clerk of the Meeting was Mr Bormioli (Director of the Official Relations, Meetings and Language Services Department). The Executive Secretary was Ms Pinoargote, and Ms Ontal provided overall support during the Meeting. The Legal Adviser was Ms Kohiyama and the representative of the Legal Adviser was Mr Geckeler.
7. A total of 154 participants were accredited to attend the Meeting, including 138 Government representatives and advisers (from 80 Member States), together with 3 Government observers (from 1 Member State), and 8 Employer and 8 Worker representatives. Just over half of the participants were women.⁴

► Opening statements

8. The Deputy Secretary-General opened the Meeting and welcomed the Chairperson and participants.

⁴ The list of participants is available on the Meeting's [web page](#).

9. The Chairperson, after welcoming the participants, recalled that the purpose of the Meeting was to prepare a set of recommendations to be submitted to the Governing Body at its 355th Session (November 2025).
10. The Secretary-General also welcomed the participants and commended their commitment to the Organization.
11. The Employer Vice-Chairperson welcomed the timely review of the functioning of the Governing Body, the objective of which was to reaffirm the Governing Body's capacity to operate in a transparent, efficient and predictable manner, rooted in the principles of good governance. Its rules and practices should be applied consistently and impartially. Her group was not seeking to reopen past debates or dwell on institutional disputes; rather, it wished to focus on strengthening the Governing Body. A balanced and well-functioning Governing Body was essential to ensure the credibility and impact of the ILO's work. It was fully committed to the process and to working with all partners in good faith to reach meaningful and practical outcomes.
12. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that the smooth, effective and efficient operation of the Governing Body, based on the principles of good governance, legal certainty, fairness and flexibility, with appropriate safeguards, was critical to the delivery of the institutional mandate and objectives of the ILO and in the interests of all constituents. The *Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office* (Compendium of rules) had undergone several changes in recent years and was generally fit for purpose. The rules did not need to be reviewed at the current moment; nor should they be changed whenever a particular group or Member State was unhappy with a decision. Doing so would undermine the functioning of the Governing Body. Her group stood ready to consider improvements in the areas set out in the background document and wished to avoid discussing issues that were not on the agenda.
13. The Government Vice-Chairperson welcomed the opportunity to make recommendations that would deliver strong results and ensure that the Governing Body remained responsive to changing circumstances. He was confident that consensus could be reached on recommendations to be presented to the Governing Body and his group looked forward to engaging in productive discussions with all parties. The recommendations should address all the areas outlined for review and demonstrate that the principles of decent work could also be upheld in the conduct of ILO meetings.
14. Speaking on behalf of the group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC), the Government representative of the United States of America said that IMEC stood ready to engage in productive exchanges on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of ILO governance. Although it generally considered the Compendium of rules to be fit for purpose, IMEC remained open to proposals to improve clarity and certainty. It would also support measures to enhance efficiency in the broader context of the current reforms within the ILO and across the United Nations (UN) system. Specifically, recommendations should address how to streamline Office mandates without sacrificing transparency and oversight.
15. Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC), the Government representative of Peru encouraged the Office to provide guidance on the proposed measures and to propose viable options in areas lacking clear convergence. The Meeting presented a timely opportunity to work towards a more agile, representative and effective ILO in a challenging global context.
16. The Government representative of Türkiye said that a governance structure that better reflected the tripartite membership would deliver stronger and more legitimate outcomes. Overloaded agendas, limited time for debate and uneven participation signalled the need for a more

democratic, representative and effective Governing Body. Transparency and inclusivity were essential to sustaining trust and impact, and consensus was the only path to sustainable solutions. Practical improvements rather than abstract ambitions would define success. Flexibility must be institutionalized to make the Governing Body resilient to future challenges and to enable it to remain credible, responsive and authoritative. The reforms aligned with broader global demands for more agile, equitable and resilient governance.

► Consideration of the agenda items

I. Proposals for addressing the issues concerning the agenda of the Governing Body

17. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that the rationale behind the Office's proposal to reorganize agenda items under the three categories was unclear. Removing the requirement for the Governing Body to adopt decisions on items falling into the category "for debate and guidance" threatened to dilute the importance of those items and would prevent the Governing Body from commenting on a draft decision. She suggested retaining the current categories of items.
18. Her group did not object to the proposal to streamline the report of the Director-General and its supplementary reports, although doing so would not result in significant time savings and the regular report of the Director-General provided a useful overview of the ILO's work. Neither did her group object to the proposal to consolidate the programming of and reporting on all official meetings under the Social Dialogue Segment. It agreed with the proposals concerning the outcomes of technical meetings and the report of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. However, in the interest of accountability and good governance, it would prefer to retain the report concerning the follow-up to Governing Body decisions as an expedited agenda item rather than as a report for information only.
19. Her group was in favour of continuing the practice of reporting obituaries to the Governing Body. It should be clear at what point the constituents would be invited to pay their respective tributes. Obituaries could, for example, be included in a supplementary report to be discussed after the opening of the session.
20. If the items on the arrangements for and functioning of the International Labour Conference (the Conference) were merged into a single item, that item should be placed on the agenda of the November session of the Governing Body to allow sufficient time to evaluate the previous session of the Conference and prepare for the subsequent session. To avoid overburdening the agenda of the June session, and to include the most up-to-date information, it would also be more appropriate to move the item on the review of annual reports under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, to the November session.
21. The Employer Vice-Chairperson welcomed the efforts to provide greater clarity and discipline in the handling of agenda items but did not agree with the proposal to reintroduce the category "for debate and guidance". Only urgent and critical items should justify more than one discussion at a single session; the discussion of non-urgent items should be resumed at the following session if time did not allow for an exhaustive discussion. The repeated discussion of country cases diluted the significance of deliberations and reduced the impact of conclusions, draining time and resources and undermining the effectiveness of the supervisory system. In the absence of new

information, the documents concerning such cases could be moved to the category “for information”.

22. Her group supported the proposals regarding the restructuring of the Director-General’s reports and the discontinuation of the formal reporting of obituaries. Swearing-in ceremonies should be grouped together and take place at the opening or closing sittings. She agreed that the report concerning the follow-up to Governing Body decisions should be submitted for information. Expedited procedures could be considered for the outcomes of technical meetings: reports could be circulated as documents for information and, where required, approved by correspondence, reserving in-session time for cases requiring discussion or endorsement. Her group supported the proposals to consolidate the reporting on and programming of official meetings and to transfer to reports of the Officers matters concerning the appointment of members of standing bodies and the composition, agenda and other arrangements for official meetings. The item merging the analysis of each session of the Conference with arrangements for the next session of the Conference could be placed on the agenda of either the March or the November sessions. The item on the review of annual reports under the follow-up to the 1998 Declaration should be moved to the November session, and the short June session should be reserved exclusively for matters requiring immediate action.
23. Her group proposed two amendments to the Standing Orders of the Governing Body to address current procedural gaps. Three areas should be clearly specified – the conditions under which a special session could be convened, the procedural requirements for agenda-setting and the minimum thresholds for decision-making. The rationale for the first amendment was to clarify the procedural steps to address situations where there was no agreement on the agenda. It read:
 - 3.1.3. A provisional agenda, including an indicative plan of work, will be established as soon as possible after each session for one or more future sessions. The provisional agenda may be updated for any urgent matter arising between sessions by the Officers of the Governing Body following consultations with the other members of the tripartite screening group referred to in paragraph 3.1.1. If there is no agreement on the inclusion of the urgent matter in the agenda, the provisional agenda will be referred to the Governing Body for decision.
24. The rationale for the second amendment was to align the wording with that in article 7(8) of the Constitution to avoid any confusion and misunderstanding. It would also mean that a single group could not unilaterally convene a special meeting. It read:
 - 3.2.2. ~~Without prejudice to the provisions of article 7 of the Constitution of the Organization, the Chairperson may also convene after consulting the Vice-Chairpersons, a special meeting should it appear necessary to do so, and shall be bound to convene a special meeting on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by at least sixteen members of the Governing Body, Government group, or twelve members of the Employers’ group, or twelve members of the Workers’ group.~~
25. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that there was significant diversity within his group. It sought clarity on the distinctions between the different categories of documents. It would be useful to know who would decide on which category a document would fall into; whether the Governing Body would be able to consider a document for decision if the Screening Group had decided that it was for debate and guidance; how the categorization would contribute to improved time management; and how documents without a draft decision would differ from those to be discussed in the new Strategic Dialogue Section and in the Committee of the Whole.
26. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger sought clarification of the meaning and legal force of the wording “took note of” or “took into account” in a Governing Body decision. He observed that the items listed in paragraph 39 would by default fall into the category “for debate and guidance” and that it would be up to the Screening Group

to decide otherwise. He understood that, if the Screening Group was unable to decide, the matter would be referred to the Officers. He asked what would happen should the Officers be unable to reach agreement. Any discussion on agenda-setting could not disregard the composition of the body responsible for setting the agenda. Furthermore, his group was reluctant to remove draft decisions from Governing Body documents.

27. His group was also unwilling to accept the proposals concerning the report of the Director-General; that report, as well as being informative, constituted a legal instrument that allowed the Director-General to fulfil his or her responsibility to inform the Governing Body of the Organization's overall status. Obituaries should continue to be communicated to the Governing Body to allow members to prepare tributes. His group had not had time to discuss the Employers' proposals to amend the Standing Orders. Regarding the proposal on country cases, he said that, while he recognized that the examination of country cases was part of the ILO's constitutional mandate, consideration could be given to how the rules could be better implemented in practice and whether they served their purpose. It would be worth considering the extent to which the proposed approach would save time.
28. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States agreed that the agenda-setting process could be more strategic. IMEC was in favour of measures to avoid extended discussions; ensure that the agenda was manageable; avoid duplication of debates across sections and segments; and streamline the handling of certain standing items. As to the proposed category "for debate and guidance", she emphasized that the Governing Body was a decision-making organ. She asked whether the proposal pertained to standing items only and whether the Governing Body would have the discretion to determine that an item should have a draft decision.
29. IMEC supported the proposals on reviewing the content and periodicity of standing items, including the proposal to merge the standing items on official meetings currently in the Policy Development (POL) and Institutional (INS) Sections, but requested further information on the impact of such a move on sectoral meetings and noted that the Office should continue to indicate within the merged document the source of each meeting's mandate. She asked whether the report and supplementary reports of the Director-General could be issued as an information document and why the section highlighting publications would be removed. As to the document on the proposed programme of meetings, she asked whether it would still be published towards the end of the Governing Body session and whether there would be sufficient time to discuss future sectoral meetings.
30. IMEC was in favour of minimizing duplication in discussions related to past sessions of the Conference and arrangements for future sessions. The Governing Body could decide on arrangements for the following year's session in November, and in March receive a document for information or, if needed, have a very short discussion on final arrangements. Discussions on the follow-up to Conference agenda items must be in November to ensure timely responses to the outcomes of substantive discussions. Greater efficiency in agenda-setting could be achieved by enhancing the consultation process, ensuring that the rationale for each item was clearly indicated, and potentially dividing the INS Section into segments to improve clarity.
31. Her group had a reservation concerning the proposal to issue the list of intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations to be invited as observers to the Conference and to official meetings as a document for information once approved by the Officers, which it would raise in the context of the discussion of the proposal concerning the delegation of authority to the Officers.

32. Referring to the Employers' proposal to revise certain provisions of the Standing Orders, she said that, if there was to be a discussion on those provisions, it would be important to have a background note from the Office containing all the relevant information. In order to fulfil the mandate that had been given to it by the Governing Body and to ensure the efficient conduct of its work, the Meeting should not deviate from the items on its agenda.
33. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that the Office had made the proposals on the areas of convergence based on the constituents' input, what was feasible, and what had and had not worked in the past. The category "for debate and guidance" had been removed in the 2011 reform, but such items had continued to exist in practice. It was proposed that the standing items listed in paragraph 39 of the background document would be considered to be for debate and guidance by default, but the Screening Group could decide to submit any of those items for decision at a particular session if necessary. The Screening Group or the Governing Body could also decide to place any item normally submitted for information or decision – not only standing items – in that category. Removing the draft decision from such documents would make it clear that no decision was needed on the item and only one discussion would be scheduled in the order of business; it would not have an immediate impact on the size of the agenda or on time management. However, the possibility to move other items to that category could be used to lighten the agenda. Documents for the High-Level Section and the Committee of the Whole would also be for debate and guidance.
34. Responding to comments raised on behalf of IMEC, he clarified that the proposal was to move the reporting on non-sectoral meetings from the INS Section to the Social Dialogue Segment of the POL Section, and that sectoral meetings would continue to have a dedicated item in that segment. The proposed removal of the section on publications from the report of the Director-General was intended to prevent the duplication of information available elsewhere.
35. The Legal Adviser, responding to the question raised on behalf of the Africa group, said that the legal force or meaning of "take note of" or "take account of" in a Governing Body decision would generally depend on the document submitted or the item under discussion. There were no set legal consequences other than that the Office would take into account the instructions, guidance or points of view arising from the discussion when following up on the decisions.
36. The Worker Vice-Chairperson strongly disagreed with the proposal by the Employer Vice-Chairperson to reintroduce the possibility of approving certain urgent matters by correspondence. That practice – which had been used during the COVID-19 pandemic and had created legal and other problems – should be used only in emergency situations and not become a normal decision-making method. Reflecting on other comments made, she recalled that it had always been made clear that any member wishing to comment on a document that was dealt with in an expedited manner or listed as being "for information" could do so.
37. Expressing doubts about the list of items that would, by default, be considered for debate and guidance, she emphasized the need for clarity in the procedures to be followed. It was important to bear in mind that certain issues, such as the preview of programme and budget proposals, were brought before the Governing Body for the purpose of preparing for decision-making at the subsequent session. Her group was open to discussing the possibility of once again codifying that practice to prevent confusion about why there might be a brief discussion of an item at one session and a full debate at the next.
38. She cautioned against burdening the Screening Group and the Officers with decisions that went beyond their mandate and recalled that a discussion on the Screening Group's composition was for the Government group and had to take place in the context of the ongoing discussion on democratization. She also recalled that, according to the Standing Orders, if there was no

agreement among the Officers, the question should be referred to the Governing Body for decision. Clear procedures were also in place for extraordinary situations, including the option of holding special sessions, which were transparently codified. She objected to the attempts by the Employers to introduce such items in the current discussion. The Governing Body had agreed that the current Meeting would discuss only the areas of convergence identified in the background document.

39. The Employer Vice-Chairperson reiterated that the discussion should be conducted in an open spirit and agreed that it was important to get as much clarity as possible on how to move forward. All the points she had raised so far had been with a view to overcoming the identified issues. She suggested that, if the Office needed guidance on certain matters for which no decision was required, it could solicit written comments from the constituents ahead of a session so that those contributions could be included as appendices to documents and reflected in the minutes, ensuring transparency while also avoiding the consumption of valuable Governing Body time. She agreed with IMEC that the Governing Body was a decision-making organ. Lastly, she emphasized that the Office should not issue draft decisions on politically sensitive issues without consulting the Officers of the Governing Body.
40. Concerning the special sessions, her group was seeking clarity on the rules that applied to all meetings held under the aegis of the Governing Body; it was not trying to change them. She agreed that the same rules should apply to all meetings. The discussion could focus on the agendas of special sessions, not on whether those sessions should exist.
41. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that there was no consensus within the Government group on the proposals under consideration.
42. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru reiterated the importance of ensuring the balanced and active participation of the tripartite constituents in the process of setting agendas that were manageable, focused on ensuring the effectiveness of the Governing Body and facilitated prior exchanges and consensus-building. A careful analysis was needed of the feasibility and effectiveness of reducing the number of items for decision. The heavy agenda at recent sessions had resulted in extended sittings and decisions being taken by vote rather than by consensus, which weakened tripartism and generated additional costs. He asked how the category “for debate and guidance” would be reintroduced in practice, given that it had never actually been discontinued.
43. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that she disagreed with the Employers’ proposal to avoid repeated discussions on country cases by removing such items from the agenda. It was logical for the Governing Body to be able to hold governments to account and to ensure continuous follow-up to relevant and urgent country cases. If no progress had been made, that was not a reason to take the issue off the agenda; quite the opposite. Especially in such cases, the Governing Body needed to be able to consider next steps, which might be to set up a Commission of Inquiry.
44. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that she did not dispute the fact that country cases were important and relevant. However, when no new developments had been brought to its attention, the Governing Body often repeated previous discussions and decisions, which was not the best use of its time. Her group’s proposal was simply to place a country case in the category “for information” if no substantive developments had been made. Governments would still be held accountable, as they would need to explain the lack of developments. The Governing Body would not be required to make any decision but would just note the item.
45. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States stressed that the discussion should be limited to the agenda that had been agreed for the Meeting. A

government's failure to submit new information in a country case could indicate that the situation was serious and required discussion; her group was therefore not in favour of treating such cases as items for information.

46. In response to the question raised on behalf of GRULAC, the Deputy Secretary-General said that, if the Screening Group was unable to decide whether an item should be submitted for debate and guidance, the matter would be referred to the Officers, and then to the Governing Body if necessary. Although it was difficult to determine precisely how much time the introduction of the category would save, such items would be subject to a maximum of one round of discussion and would not require discussion for the sole purpose of adopting a decision.
47. The Secretary-General added that, although some of the proposals would have little impact on time allocated to discussions, reductions in the number and scope of documents would incur lower drafting, editing, formatting and translation costs.

II. Proposal for ensuring better time management

48. The Worker Vice-Chairperson welcomed the recent improvements in time management, but recognized that more work was needed. In introducing further measures, it was important to consider the human factor; the ILO was a person-centred organization. Groups could play a role by encouraging representatives to comply with indicative time limits, although some degree of flexibility should be retained to ensure that more time could be given to discussions where necessary. The structuring of items could also help maintain discipline. Her group supported the use of a time monitoring application with visible, but not audible, signals. The current system was helpful. If the chairing Officer asked speakers to conclude, they should comply directly. A warning should be issued when speakers considerably exceeded their time allocation. Due consideration should be given to the fact that many speakers were not speaking their native language and might therefore require more time. Attention should also be given to the growing number of contentious issues, which represented another challenge in setting speaking time limits. She agreed that greater control was needed over the duration of breaks during the sittings. Sittings must restart promptly at the time agreed. It was important, however, to allow reasonable time for consultation during sittings, as that provided an alternative way of reaching agreements through negotiation.
49. The Employer Vice-Chairperson welcomed the proposal for ensuring better time management. Her group further proposed introducing a deadline for speaker registration ahead of the discussion of each item, to improve time allocation and facilitate the preparation of a balanced list of speakers. Advance registration in the list of speakers worked well during the sessions of the Conference. The current practice of reading aloud lists of countries supporting group statements should be eliminated, with that information instead being submitted in writing and displayed on the screen in the meeting room. Only Governing Body members should be reflected on such lists.
50. She supported strict measures to enforce speaking time limits. It was important to treat speakers in a dignified way and ask them to conclude, but if they continued, their microphone should be cut off. That practice worked in other organizations and would promote fairness, accountability and order. To ensure equitable participation, the chairing Officer should reduce speaking time limits when the list of speakers was too long. Where items were not concluded within the scheduled time, they should be resumed at subsequent sittings rather than dealt with through extended sittings or by limiting debate. Sittings could be suspended for consultation, provided that the agreed consultation time was respected. In some cases, it might be more efficient to proceed with another agenda item and return to the issue requiring consultation during the following sitting.

51. Other measures that should be considered included greater consolidation of statements, especially within official regional groups, and a reduction in the speaking time limit for Governments that had aligned themselves with a group statement. Group meetings could be scheduled to end 15 minutes earlier to ensure that all delegates arrived for plenary sittings on time. Clearer rules limiting rights of reply and limiting the total number of replies would also help stop debates overrunning. Written inputs, strictly limited to issues addressed during the sitting, could be used to complement oral statements where there were time constraints. The Office could produce guidance for speakers outlining expectations and good practices, particularly for new members or group spokespersons.
52. The pre-screening of non-controversial items for adoption via expedited procedures should be clearly reflected in the agenda or the order of business. Non-substantive protocol statements such as routine congratulations should be discouraged to preserve time for meaningful contributions. She agreed on the need to start sessions promptly and reduce unnecessary breaks. Evening sittings should be clearly indicated in the order of business and interpretation arranged only as needed. Time management was fundamental to the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the Governing Body. The Office should provide more information on the additional costs incurred due to time overruns to enhance awareness of their financial impact. The overall aim should be to use time intelligently, efficiently and respectfully, safeguarding the diversity of voices while protecting the integrity of decision-making. The Employers' group supported the implementation of the Office's proposal and called for it to be reflected in the Standing Orders.
53. Speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG), the Government representative of the Republic of Korea said that the time management measures already introduced had brought improvements. However, persistent challenges included delayed starts to meetings, even where start times had been communicated in advance. Such delays significantly reduced the time available for constructive discussion. Relying heavily on the discretion and individual capacity of the chairing Officer would not address the root cause of the issue; there must be a stronger shared commitment among Governing Body members to uphold agreed schedules. Other steps to support punctuality should also be considered, drawing on the practices of other organizations, such as: using a time monitoring application with audible and visible signals; sending reminders via the ILO Events app; and nominating time management focal points within each group to improve internal coordination and collective responsibility.
54. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru asked whether the Office had identified a particular time monitoring application and, if so, how it would work. It would be crucial to ensure that all plenary discussions started and ended on time, including by adjusting the arrangements of group meetings and meetings of the Officers. His group had not had time to discuss the Employers' proposals. He wondered whether the practice of advance registration in the list of speakers would prevent members from asking for the floor during a discussion. He also wondered who would check whether written inputs complementing oral statements were strictly limited to issues already addressed during the sitting. His group did not agree with the proposal to grant reduced speaking time to Governments that had aligned themselves with a group statement. Individual Governments sometimes wished to elaborate their position on certain items.
55. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger highlighted the importance of ensuring that plenary discussions started on time. The ILO's unique tripartite structure and the importance of social dialogue and consensus often meant that more time was required for discussion in comparison to other organizations; he therefore cautioned against implementing time management measures for their own sake. Holding transparent, inclusive consultations with groups prior to sittings would allow groups to express their views in advance,

thereby saving time in plenary. The speaking time allocated to the Office and groups of countries that were not regional groups should be limited, and the social partners should bear in mind the importance of time management when delivering statements. The increasingly heavy agenda and reduced length of sessions had a human cost and must be addressed. He was reluctant to support the introduction of a time monitoring application. The Compendium of rules already granted broad powers to chairing officers, who should strike a balance between good time management and the need to foster consensus and mutual respect. On occasions when the Governing Body was ahead of schedule, the Screening Group should be consulted before making any changes to the tentative order of business.

56. Consideration should be given to scheduling for breaks – perhaps every 90 minutes – in the discussions. The fact that group meetings were held back-to-back with Governing Body sittings meant that members were continuously on the go.
57. His group was still consulting on the proposals made by the Employers' group. It did not support the proposal to cut off microphones and was not in favour of extended sittings, which should be used only as an exceptional measure. It would prefer not to introduce advance registration in the list of speakers, which would prove complicated for Governments, although the proposal merited a more careful review. Regarding the proposal to limit the time allocated for the right to reply, he recalled that the right was enshrined in the Standing Orders. He suggested that limits could be applied to replies by the social partners.
58. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States called for better use to be made of time management measures already in place, including by ensuring that plenary discussions started on time and by making announcements at certain intervals during breaks to ensure a timely resumption of business. To inform the allocation of time for each item, the Office could track which agenda items or statements tended to require extended speaking times. It would be important to confirm that an item merited discussion before placing it on the agenda. She emphasized the importance of clarifying the composition of ad hoc groups or groups whose composition was unknown and of naming non-Governing Body members contributing to or aligning with statements made on behalf of such groups.
59. While IMEC had not had an opportunity to discuss in detail the various proposals made by the Employers, it appreciated the spirit in which they had been put forward and would be willing to discuss them in due course. Further clarification was needed on the intention behind the proposal on the right to reply, given that the right was already enshrined in the Standing Orders.
60. The Government representative of Japan called on the Office to ensure that its representatives were seated before the start time of a plenary discussion to ensure that sittings could begin on time. Implementing a word limit for statements could help speakers to avoid significantly exceeding time limits.
61. The Deputy Secretary-General said that the limited space available in the speakers list software used during Governing Body sittings would make it difficult to list all countries belonging to a particular ad hoc group; the Office would explore alternative options for clarifying the composition of such groups. Given the dynamic nature of Governing Body discussions and the importance of social dialogue, it was common for speakers to offer clarifications or respond to other members' statements; it would therefore be difficult to implement measures to limit the number of times speakers could take the floor. While the Office did not have a specific time monitoring application in mind, most other organizations used some kind of time-tracking device. The Office took note of the points raised regarding the time required for genuine social dialogue and the need for representatives of the Office to share responsibility for time management.

62. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that her group had made a number of proposals and had not heard any objections. She suggested revisiting those proposals and seeking agreement.
63. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that, if she did not express support for a specific proposal, it meant that she did not support it. In response to the proposals put forward by Governments, she sought clarification on what reminders would be sent through the ILO Events app and to whom. Noting that commitment to adhere to agreed times was needed and mechanisms to improve such adherence were being sought, she said that she did not see the added value of designated time management focal points. She did not have strong objections to the proposal to provide a list of items where speaking times were exceeded to determine whether allocated times were sufficient, but recalled that there were already pre-session discussions on how much time would be needed for different items, and indicative speaking times were allocated on that basis. She supported holding early consultations with regional groups and adjusting the times of in-session group meetings to avoid overlap with the plenary.
64. She did not consider an advance deadline for speaker registration to be feasible, as speakers may need to take the floor to respond to points raised by other speakers; however, she agreed that the Chairperson could shorten the speaking times allocated if the list of registered speakers became too long. She was in favour of eliminating reading out lists of countries supporting a group statement where it was clear, but there was a need to clarify when statements by ad hoc groups were made. Cutting off microphones should be a last resort only and used only in the event that a speaker had ignored earlier indications to stop.
65. Deferring incomplete discussions to subsequent sittings in the same Governing Body session should be dependent on the urgency of the item under consideration. There was no need to reduce the times allocated for individual Government statements, as they were already allocated shorter speaking times than groups. She strongly supported starting and ending group meetings 15 minutes earlier and Office support for Chairpersons in respect of time management. It was not appropriate to limit the times allocated to replies, as sometimes speakers would make a short initial statement followed by a longer response after hearing other speakers' views. The practicality of submitting written inputs to complement oral statements was questionable, as speakers needed to listen to others before responding, with interpretation from and into other languages.
66. Guidance for speakers and spokespersons was already provided within the Workers' group; it would also be useful to develop guidance for Governments. Consolidation of statements within regional groups was already encouraged and uncontroversial items were already pre-screened for adoption via expedited procedures. She did not support discouraging non-substantive statements on protocol, as many cultures considered them a sign of respect. She would prefer not to have evening sittings and would prefer to add a day to the Governing Body sessions instead. However, if evening sittings were held, there must be interpretation.
67. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that her group was surprised by the dismissal of many of its proposals. She appealed to her fellow participants to engage in the discussions in a respectful manner and to recognize each group's right to make proposals. She clarified that her group's proposal was not have evening sittings without interpretation. As there had been cases where the Office had made arrangements for interpretation when no evening sittings had been scheduled, with financial implications, the proposal was to arrange interpretation only when such sittings were indicated in the order of business.
68. In principle, her group had no objection to the proposals made by the regional groups. She wondered, however, how effective it would be to send reminders to participants through the ILO Events app during breaks. As for providing a list of items where speaking times were exceeded to

determine whether allocated times were sufficient, she suggested that the data should be shared with members so that they could consider ways to better manage their own time.

69. The Secretary-General provided assurances that the Office had been emphasizing the need to limit the time taken by its staff members in their responses to the Governing Body.

III. Proposals concerning the use of the High-Level Section

IV. Proposals concerning the use of the Committee of the Whole format and the right to speak of States that are not represented in the Governing Body

70. The Employer Vice-Chairperson stressed that the High-Level Section should be used on an exceptional basis; making it a regular occurrence risked diluting its impact and placing unnecessary pressure on time and resources. The participation of guests and external speakers must, without exception, be approved in advance by the Officers to ensure relevance, balance and respect for tripartism. The Standing Orders should state clearly that no decisions could be adopted during the High-Level Section. To avoid rendering it a de facto decision-making body, a report of the discussions could be submitted for information only, at the end of the same session or at the following session.
71. She supported maintaining sufficient flexibility to employ the Committee of the Whole format when appropriate. Its purpose and procedural boundaries must, however, be clearly understood, particularly the fact that, while it served to inform Governing Body deliberations, it could not adopt decisions. Her group supported the proposed amendment to paragraph 1.8.3. of the Standing Orders that would specify that non-members of the Governing Body could speak on matters affecting their interests “specifically and substantively”, which reflected current practice. It also supported the proposed deletion of the phrase “with respect to matters concerning their own situation” from paragraph 4.3.1. of the Standing Orders. Nevertheless, it was important to take due account of statements given in the Committee of the Whole by non-members of the Governing Body. To that end, she proposed amending the Standing Orders to include an explicit requirement for the Chairperson’s report of any Committee of the Whole discussion to duly reflect the views expressed by non-members.
72. The Worker Vice-Chairperson expressed flexibility with regard to the proposals. Her group welcomed the use of the High-Level Section to increase policy discussion in the Governing Body; its use should not be restricted. That said, the proposed Strategic Dialogue Section should not replace policy discussion among the constituents, and the four segments of the POL Section should be retained and expanded.
73. She recalled that States involved in country cases had an automatic right to speak on them. The Standing Orders already contained suitable provisions governing the identification of States involved in other matters; the proper application of those provisions was required, rather than their amendment. There was also no need to amend the Standing Orders with regard to the Committee of the Whole, as the broadly accepted practice was to use that format as an inclusive platform allowing non-members of the Governing Body to participate in debates. She did not support the Employers’ proposed amendment to the Standing Orders concerning reports on Committee of the Whole discussions; by their nature, such reports faithfully reflected all aspects of the debates.
74. The Government Vice-Chairperson, referring to the use of the Committee of the Whole format and the right to speak of States that were not represented in the Governing Body, asked for

clarification from the Office with regard to the proposal to add in paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders the condition that the matter under discussion had to affect the interests of the State concerned “specifically and substantively”. The Government group had some reservations about the inclusion of the word “substantively”, as it was not clear how the impact of a matter under discussion could be measured.

75. His group would welcome further insight from the Office on the proposal to remove from paragraph 4.3.1. of the Standing Orders the requirement for the Committee of the Whole to report to the Governing Body. On occasions where only Governing Body members participated in the Committee of the Whole, it could indeed not be necessary for the Chairperson to report to the same audience what had been said in that sitting; however, on those occasions where the report would reflect the views of non-members, there could be an added value to the discussions of the Governing Body. He questioned the value of the report, if it did not include a draft decision. Turning to the proposals on the use of the High-Level Section, some members of his group were open to them but would welcome clarification on the distinction between the Committee of the Whole and the Strategic Dialogue Section.
76. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru noted that the High-Level Section in its current form had not produced tangible results, which was why, in the context of the Screening Group, his group had not been in favour of including such a section in recent sessions of the Governing Body. His group welcomed the proposal to introduce a Strategic Dialogue Section, which would simplify the approach to strategic issues and allow for more inclusive participation. It also welcomed the proposal that, on occasions where the topic discussed in that Section would require a decision to ensure follow-up action by the Office, the draft decision would need to be submitted in a short report to be considered in a subsequent sitting of the same Governing Body session. Such an approach would help steer discussions towards tangible results. It was important, however, to be meticulous when establishing criteria for including items on the agenda of the Strategic Dialogue Section. Concerning the use of the Committee of the Whole format, he said that, as his group was in favour of a more inclusive ILO, it supported the proposal set out in paragraph 69(b), but it did not fully understand the intention behind the addition of the words “and substantively” proposed in paragraph 69(a).
77. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger reiterated his group’s call for a genuine commitment to change and said that his group had no objection to the proposal to change the name of the High-Level Section to “Strategic Dialogue Section”. Recalling that the Governing Body would not take decisions in that Section, he would like to know the extent to which the discussions on global issues in that Section would enable the Governing Body to provide useful guidance to the Office leading to tangible changes in the world of work. Similarly, he would like to know how the work of the Committee of the Whole would have an impact on the ground. As the Committee of the Whole would also discuss general issues, he wondered whether there was a risk of duplication between its work and that of the Strategic Dialogue Section.
78. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States said that IMEC could generally support the proposal to rename the High-Level Section and to convene it in the Committee of the Whole format. She recalled that the Section should be held on an as-needed basis and should clearly contribute to the Governing Body’s governance and decision-making roles. IMEC would appreciate more information from the Office about past practice regarding the use of the Section and instances where convening it had been considered to have added particular value. It would also be interested to know how convening in the new format would be distinct from convening a policy discussion as a Committee of the Whole. It was important to ensure that the format allowed appropriate time for the constituents to express their views. IMEC would also like further clarification of what was meant by the statement in paragraph 62 that policy

discussions had been shifted to the INS Section and, to a lesser extent, to the POL Section. The Office should clarify which criteria would be used for determining which policy discussions would be assigned to which section. All policy discussions and their related documents should clearly establish how they were linked to other areas of ILO work.

79. IMEC could support the proposals concerning the use of the Committee of the Whole and inclusiveness. In particular, it agreed that representatives of all interested Member States, including non-members of the Governing Body, should be able to speak. It was open to the proposal to remove the obligation for the Committee of the Whole to report back to the Governing Body, as an efficiency measure. Nevertheless, it agreed that the Governing Body should take full account of the views expressed in the Committee of the Whole in any related subsequent decision-making.
80. The Secretary-General said that the Officers would be tasked with deciding on whether a matter under discussion “substantively” affected the interests of the State concerned. Regarding the obligation for the Committee of the Whole to report to the Governing Body, she recalled that the format allowed for a broad, inclusive discussion with non-members of the Governing Body and that, in some cases, the report served to inform the Governing Body in its decision-making. It made sense in those cases for the Committee of the Whole to report to the Governing Body. However, if the purpose of the Committee of the Whole was to discuss a subject that would not lead to a discussion or a decision in the Governing Body, a report would not be necessary. Regarding the difference between the Committee of the Whole and the High-Level Section, she explained that the Committee of the Whole was not a section, but a format that could be applied to any Governing Body section. The proposal was for the Strategic Dialogue Section to always meet in the Committee of the Whole format to allow for an inclusive discussion. In view of the questions raised, another option would be to have only the Strategic Dialogue Section functioning as a Committee of the Whole, instead of maintaining the possibility for other sections to meet in Committee of the Whole format.
81. In her experience, the High-Level Section had been a useful way of drawing on additional expertise for addressing emerging issues and identifying potential future action by the Office in those areas. It would make sense to continue to use the POL Section to discuss policy decisions. The proposed Strategic Dialogue Section would be used on an exceptional basis, where a new subject or one with a broader scope of application across the Organization required special attention. It would be essential to clarify the objectives of such an event and who would be expected to participate.
82. The Deputy Secretary-General added that the aim of the proposal concerning the use of the High-Level Section was to clarify how the Governing Body worked, in particular for new members. The wording currently used in the Compendium of rules to describe the features of the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization was convoluted and the proposal was aimed at simplifying it.
83. The fairly limited use that had been made to date of the High-Level Section should provide reassurance that use of the new Section would remain limited to specific circumstances, as decided by the tripartite constituents within the Screening Group. He clarified that the Chairperson’s report on the work of the Committee of the Whole was usually very short, as it was prepared overnight, while detailed minutes of sittings held in the Committee of the Whole format were prepared and published a few weeks afterwards, as for all other Governing Body sittings. Regarding the proposal to add in paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders the condition that the matter under discussion affected the interests of the State concerned “specifically and

substantively”, the aim was to clarify the rule, which had come to be applied quite flexibly in practice.

84. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that her group had reservations about removing the obligation for the Committee of the Whole to report to the Governing Body. Alternative reporting formats could be considered, such as a short summary by the Chairperson for immediate reference. Reports were much more visible and political than minutes and did not require much time to prepare. She had appreciated the Chairperson’s report on the most recent Committee of the Whole discussion, as it had informed subsequent debate and decision-making.
85. She recalled that recent sittings of the Committee of the Whole had not been attended by many non-members of the Governing Body. There should be an option for cancelling a Committee of the Whole sitting if there was insufficient interest from non-members, which could be established by setting a registration deadline. That would save time and effort in terms of organization and reporting.
86. Her group was open to improvements, but would prefer to consider changing practices rather than altering the rules, which should be considered only where absolutely necessary and on non-contentious issues.
87. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that it was important to make adjustments to the rules where necessary, with the shared goal of improving the functioning of the Governing Body. A full record of proceedings, rather than a shorter report, should be provided for the Committee of the Whole; it was important to take into account the views of the non-members of the Governing Body who were allowed to speak in that forum.
88. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger recognized the need to change practices while considering the human factor. In addition to the identified points of convergence, his group wished to raise other connected points it deemed important. For his group, the composition of the Screening Group, which the Workers’ group had refused to include on the agenda, was a crucial issue that affected the functioning of the Governing Body. He therefore called for greater openness and flexibility in the discussions.
89. The Worker Vice-Chairperson clarified that she was not categorically against changing the rules, but simply believed it should not be the first step in addressing any issues. Regarding the composition of the Screening Group, she recalled that it was not her group, but the Governing Body, who had acknowledged that the matter should be dealt with by the Government members as it primarily concerned them. Similarly, it had decided at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024) to undertake a review of specific areas of its functioning and her group was faithfully following that decision.
90. The Government representative of Samoa, recalling that the Pacific small island developing States had never held regular or deputy membership on the Governing Body, said that inclusive dialogue was critical. The Committee of the Whole was a vital mechanism that enabled States not represented in the Governing Body to have a voice in deliberations of general concern – it was, consequently, important to improve its functioning. Samoa did not support the proposals that had been made in that regard. It reaffirmed its support, however, for strengthening the Standing Orders under article 1.8, specifically paragraph 1.8.1, and noted the importance of continuing dialogue on those proposals.

V. Proposals for improving the support provided to the Government group

91. The Worker Vice-Chairperson asked whether Governments considered that the existing support provided by the Office, including the dedicated senior Professional position created as part of the 2011 reform package to increase liaison with and support to Governments, was sufficient. Both she and the Employer Vice-Chairperson expressed the wish to hear the views of the Government representatives before taking a position.
92. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru expressed appreciation for the Office's support to Governments. It was important to have a permanent repository for matters related to the Government group. An online platform would be beneficial for new delegates participating in the Governing Body and other meetings. He noted the costs involved in the creation of a unit to support the Government group and requested additional information on the proposed cost-shared position in a permanent mission. The Office's proposals would require detailed analysis and broad consultations within the group to ensure that any measures adopted responded to its needs. Furthermore, any proposals must be financially sustainable and not entail additional costs for governments.
93. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG, the Government representative of Japan said that the Office should consider practical, responsive and cost-effective measures to support the Government group, taking into account the ILO's financial situation. He requested further details of the proposed knowledge-sharing platform. The Office could take internal measures that did not entail additional costs, such as sharing information directly with the constituents and designating contact points in technical departments. That would reduce the burden on regional coordinators and enable the Government group to focus on substantive tasks.
94. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger thanked the Office for the support it provided to Governments. He welcomed the proposed knowledge-sharing platform.
95. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States said that a knowledge-sharing repository could be useful for storing information relevant to the Government group, particularly as the group's Chairperson rotated; however, she would like details of the costs involved. IMEC did not support the proposal to create a dedicated unit within the ILO and did not consider the proposed cost-shared position within a mission to be feasible. It welcomed the information sessions organized by the Office for the Government group before key ILO meetings, which contributed to more productive sessions; costs permitting, they should be maintained. IMEC considered that the ILO could share information more transparently on its public website about its internal structure and key contact persons.
96. The Government representative of Colombia supported the creation of a knowledge-sharing platform that would not be restricted to Government members of the Governing Body, as other governments would benefit from the information when they participated in regional and other meetings. Creating a dedicated unit to support governments would be a good idea, but not easy to implement in a period of budgetary restrictions. He asked who funded the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and what the approximate costs were. Establishing a position in a permanent mission was a good idea in theory, but might be complex to put into practice.
97. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed that it would be useful to enhance the information sessions provided to Governments through ILO regional and national offices, and suggested that the social partners should be invited to such sessions. The Office support provided to the social partners

could not be compared to that provided to Governments. It would therefore be inappropriate to establish a bureau to coordinate the Government group's activities. The discussion should focus only on providing support for participation in the Governing Body. The Government group should outline the specific needs of Governments in that regard, while remaining mindful of the need to avoid incurring additional expenses, and it would be helpful if the Office could expand on the cost implications. Her group would be open to the establishment of a knowledge-sharing platform in a transparent manner, and sought further details on what that would entail.

98. The Employer Vice-Chairperson cautioned against establishing new structures or making arrangements that would be difficult to sustain over time, especially in the current financial context, noting that the entire Office already provided tailored support to Governments, the Chairperson of the Governing Body and regional coordinators. Establishing a bureau to coordinate the Government group's activities would require significant human and financial resources and introduce an unjustified asymmetry into the institutional framework. Unlike the social partners, Government delegations benefited from the support of permanent missions and ministries and were well represented in the multilateral system. Convinced of the crucial role that Governments played in the Governing Body, her group would support measures to address the need for more administrative support to the Government group by making a better use of existing structures and maintaining the focus on capacity-building rather than bureaucracy.
99. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger thanked the social partners for their engagement on the topic.
100. The Secretary-General expressed willingness to have an open discussion in a separate forum to better understand the Government group's needs. The support provided to the Employers' and Workers' groups through ACT/EMP and ACTRAV was comparable to the support provided by the Office to Governments in terms of technical and normative assistance. She understood from the comments made that Governments were asking for additional support to enhance their participation in the Governing Body and the Conference, in other words in the ILO's governance, particularly in terms of retaining and making use of institutional memory and helping newer Government representatives to learn about the ILO. In the case of the Employers and Workers, that role was mostly played by their secretariats – the International Organisation of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation – and not by ACT/EMP and ACTRAV. In that regard, the idea of creating an online platform could be helpful, but it would be necessary to clarify what type of information would be provided in the platform, considering that all Governing Body and Conference documents and decisions were already publicly available. The Office was also willing to hold more information sessions to new representatives and could explore options for developing with the Government group a course about the ILO's work.
101. The Deputy Secretary-General said that Government members had expressed concern about the lack of institutional memory within the Government group and the difficulties faced by regional coordinators in sharing information owing to their ever growing workload. For the online platform, one possibility would be to create a specific Microsoft Teams channel enabling all Government group members and subregional groups to share information systematically and to store information about past decisions of the Government group. As the technology was already in place, he anticipated that the cost would be minimal. Arrangements concerning the administration of the platform and information storage procedures and for ensuring confidentiality remained to be put in place.
102. The proposal to create a cost-shared position in a permanent mission had been developed in recognition of the fact that some missions assuming the coordination role had more resources

than others. One of the objectives was to ensure that information was shared with each incoming Chairperson of the group in order to preserve institutional memory.

103. Acknowledging that access to information on the ILO's internal structure and key contact persons could be improved, he recalled that the first point of contact for information for Governments was the Official Relations and Correspondence Unit (RELOFF). He noted the call for guidelines on the preparation of statements that would comply with time limits and the calls made during informal discussions for pragmatic administrative support for the work of the Government group and its subgroups. The questions of independence, conflict of interest and information management had to be taken into consideration.
104. Recalling that the resources allocated to ACT/EMP and ACTRAV were reflected in the programme and budget, he said that their main mandate was to support employers' and workers' organizations in all activities outside the scope of the ILO governing organs. For their participation in the governing organs, the Employers' and Workers' groups received support from their secretariats. The Government group was requesting specific support to manage its participation in the ILO governing organs, with a specific focus on the Governing Body, and the proposals under consideration had been developed to that end.
105. The Government representative of the United States recalled that, owing to its tripartite nature, the ILO required governments to engage differently and was the only organization in the UN system where every Member State was included in one group, which in many situations was required to reach a common position. Many procedural activities, which in other UN organizations were governed by rules and conducted "on the record", were, at the ILO, carried out autonomously within the group, including, for instance, nominations. Recognizing that additional efforts were required within the Government group to effectively apply tripartite working methods, she appreciated the willingness of the social partners to review the provision of support to her group.
106. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that further discussion would likely be needed. The social partners were certainly open to accommodating Governments' specific needs in respect of their participation in the Governing Body. There was some convergence regarding the usefulness of a repository or knowledge-sharing platform, which would be neither complicated nor expensive to set up. She emphasized the value of information sessions and tripartite consultations in preparation for certain debates.
107. The Employer Vice-Chairperson reiterated her group's support for the efforts to identify the needs for Office support to the Government group.
108. The Government representative of Japan said that the support provided by RELOFF was good, but that provided by technical departments could be increased.

VI. Proposals for improving document production

109. The Secretary-General said that, in addition to the proposals contained in the background document, the Office was considering other cost-saving measures in the area of document translation as part of the drive towards a zero-nominal-growth budget in 2026-27. Those measures would be submitted to the Governing Body in June or November 2025.
110. The Employer Vice-Chairperson stressed the importance of adhering to the provisions of the Standing Orders on the timely publication of documents, including with regard to the automatic deferral of items if deadlines were missed. Proposals to publish certain documents late should be considered by the Officers only in justified and exceptional circumstances. Documents should be concise, to ensure focused and high-quality discussions. Her group was not in favour of

introducing a publication deadline of ten days before the session for some documents, which would encourage delays. Letters or other communications submitted by the social partners concerning matters on the Governing Body's agenda should be published or shared with all Governing Body members automatically and without delay at the request of the sender to ensure transparency and equal access to information in the governance process.

111. The Worker Vice-Chairperson, recalling that governments often failed to submit information on country cases in a timely manner, impacting document production and negotiations between the Officers on draft decisions, acknowledged the difficulties faced by governments in preparing positions on complex cases within short spaces of time. Her group therefore supported the proposed alternative publication deadline of ten working days prior to the session for documents concerning the follow-up to complaints submitted under article 26 of the ILO Constitution and did not object to the application of that deadline to documents relating to other items. As one of the Officers involved in preparing the draft decisions on those cases, she would be willing to advance the consideration of the matter by the Officers to be able to publish the draft decisions earlier. The issue of there being insufficient time to prepare the review of annual reports under the follow-up to the 1998 Declaration would be resolved by moving its publication to the November session, although further discussion on the possible implications of such a step was required. Establishing word limits for documents was an internal administrative matter for the Office; the decision taken should merely be communicated to the Governing Body. She asked what the rationale was for the proposal to have the Governing Body's endorsement.
112. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that early constructive engagement and consultation would help limit the length of documents, as Governing Body members would require less additional information. Documents should be more concise, without compromising content quality or omitting facts and figures. His group would prefer to maintain the established publication deadlines; it was better to have incomplete information earlier than to have to digest a lengthier document in a shorter time frame.
113. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru highlighted that documents should continue to be prepared in line with the Standing Orders. Documents should be shorter and more didactic, without compromising content quality. Moreover, they should be clear, impartial and use previously agreed language. In documents pertaining to the ILO's normative framework, certain footnotes that could generate controversy should be eliminated. It was vital that documents were published simultaneously in all three of the ILO's official languages.
114. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG, the Government representative of Australia did not support the proposed alternative publication deadline and encouraged the Office to continue to explore measures to track and streamline document production. There had not yet been a persuasive explanation of the difficulties in meeting the deadline for documents concerning the follow-up to article 26 complaints. Deliberations among the Officers on the draft decisions contained in those documents should occur at an earlier date to ensure their timely publication as well. Governing Body documents should be more concise and reader-friendly by including, for instance, bulleted lists, tables and images to reduce word counts. The key points to be considered for decision-making should be highlighted and documents that were based on previous texts should include a summary of the changes made.
115. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States did not support the proposed alternative publication deadline. As the documents concerned were being published only a few days late, she suggested adjusting the document production process instead of the time required by Governing Body members to review them and develop positions in consultation with capitals and other Governments, to contribute to efficient decision-making. Her group would

welcome shorter documents, provided that quality was not compromised, particularly in relation to oversight and accountability, and she welcomed ASPAG's suggestions in that regard. She would welcome clarification of the current guidance on word limits and of how endorsement by the Governing Body would help.

116. The Deputy Secretary-General explained that having word limits endorsed by the Governing Body could promote compliance among authors and be used as a point of reference when constituents made requests to include additional information in the documents. Having noted that remarks always concerned the late publication but not the length of documents and that there were frequent requests for including more detailed information in Governing Body documents, the Office had put forward that proposal to receive clear guidance from the constituents on the desirable length of documents. The views expressed during the Meeting had emphasized the need for more concise and reader-friendly documents. Therefore, it would not be necessary to submit the word limits to the Governing Body for endorsement. He thanked participants for the suggestions to improve document presentation and recalled that the nature of the subjects addressed by the ILO would make it difficult to avoid long written explanations for certain documents.
117. The alternative publication deadline had been proposed to allow for the inclusion in documents concerning article 26 complaints of information that was often received from the constituents late in the production process. Significant efforts had been made to expedite the document production process, and it would be difficult to shorten it further. Postponing the consideration of country cases to later sessions in the case of late submissions would impact the effectiveness of the supervisory system. The alternative of publishing the document on time and publishing any information received late in addenda was not very helpful as members would still be required to analyse the information. Whether or not it would be possible to advance the consideration of those documents by the Officers would depend on them having available all the required information.

VII. Proposals for clarifying certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body and for updating the introductory note

A. Delegation of authority to the Officers (paragraph 2.3.1)

B. Functions within the Government group exercised by non-members of the Governing Body (article 7.1)

118. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that, despite its reservations about the inclusion of the item on the agenda, her group would faithfully participate in the discussions. It was not in favour of amending the Standing Orders except in relation to technical issues on which there was consensus. Concerning the delegation of authority to the Officers, she understood that there was no intention to assign a new delegation of authority and the proposal was simply to introduce greater clarity on the subject. The preparatory work carried out by the Officers for decision-making by the Governing Body was transparent, involved a considerable amount of consultation and was intended to prevent overburdening the Governing Body. It was incumbent on the Officers to govern the process properly. She requested further information on how the process functioned in practice. With regard to the second proposal, there should be no need to codify that the functions within the Government group should be held only by Governing Body members; that should go without saying. However, she was prepared to listen to the Government group's views on the matter.

119. The Employer Vice-Chairperson acknowledged the need for ongoing improvement. Her group supported the proposal to amend paragraph 2.3.1 of the Standing Orders and would like to include an explicit reference to the Officers' authority to convene meetings of and appoint the members of the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. The Employers would not support any changes allowing the Government group to assign key roles to non-members of the Governing Body. Doing so would allow Governments to indirectly expand their influence and would compromise the institutional balance and integrity of the Governing Body.
120. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that his group had mixed views on the proposals regarding delegation of authority and the functions within the group exercised by non-members. While the composition of the Officers reflected the tripartite structure of the Organization, it was unclear whether the Chairperson, who was supposed to be neutral, was truly acting as a Government representative in that context.
121. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru said that allowing non-members to exercise functions within the Government group would alter the nature of the Governing Body and should not be allowed.
122. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger welcomed the opportunity to address inconsistencies between practice and rules within the functioning of the Governing Body. His group had reservations regarding the provisions of the Standing Orders on delegation of authority, notably in relation to extending invitations to Member States, official international organizations and non-governmental international organizations. Any permanent delegation of authority would be problematic. If decisions made under that delegation were then reported to the Governing Body for information, it would be too late for the latter to express an opinion on the matter. The Governing Body should be able to examine such matters ahead of any decision. He requested clarification on the following aspects: why the Governing Body had never explicitly decided to delegate its authority in respect of the matters enumerated in paragraphs 2.3.1 (a)–(d) of the Standing Orders; at what point it was possible to challenge the actions or decisions taken by the Officers that did not appear to be in the best interest of Member States; whether such decisions could be reversed; and which body was responsible for deciding on the dates of Governing Body sessions. In that regard, he suggested that religious holidays could be taken into consideration in the scheduling of key ILO meetings.
123. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States said that, although her group was open to the proposals, it had reservations about permanent delegation of authority. She asked why delegation of authority did not consistently take place in accordance with the current rules and why certain delegations of authority to the Officers seemed to have expired. The matter had repercussions for Governing Body members, who had long been under the impression that the Officers had been delegated the authority to make decisions on issues such as meeting dates without requiring the Governing Body's approval. She also requested clarification on which meetings were included in the programme of meetings mentioned in paragraph 2.3.1(a) and the process for identifying the States that were not Members of the Organization, official international organizations and non-governmental international organizations that would be invited to specific meetings. She asked whether the constituents were consulted before a list was drawn up, whether they would be consulted if the Officers received permanent delegation of authority on the matter, and whether governments would have the opportunity to suggest relevant additions to the list or appeal any decisions of the Officers. IMEC would oppose any such delegation on financial matters, given the primacy of the Government group with respect to financial decisions. Furthermore, it was important to balance the time efficiencies gained by any changes against the need to maintain proper governance.

- 124.** The Government representative of Malawi suggested that consideration should be given to the delegation of authority referred to in the resolution concerning the procedure for requests to the International Court of Justice for advisory opinions, adopted by the Conference at its 32nd Session (1949).
- 125.** The Government representative of Zimbabwe requested clarification regarding the legal implications of delegating authority to the Officers, given that the established ratio for the participation of Governments, Employers and Workers in the Governing Body was 2:1:1.
- 126.** The Legal Adviser recalled that paragraph 2.3.1 of the Standing Orders listed the matters on which the Governing Body could delegate authority to its Officers. It was only in respect of the financial matter stipulated under subparagraph (e) that authority was systematically delegated each year at the March session. The Governing Body had never explicitly decided to delegate its authority to its Officers on the matters enumerated in subparagraphs (a)–(d). That practice dated back to 1993, when the Governing Body had decided to delegate to its Officers the authority to invite non-governmental international organizations, as well as official international organizations whose relations with the ILO were not governed by a specific agreement, to attend a particular session of the Conference. Between 1996 and 2008, there had been a perception that the 1993 delegation of authority had remained valid in relation to the newly elected Governing Body. In 2011, the Governing Body had decided that an explicit delegation of authority should be instigated as part of a package of reforms; however, no measures had been taken and there continued to be a lack of clarity as to whether the delegation of authority to the Officers undertaken in 1993 remained in force. The Officers had thus continued to invite States that were not Members of the Organization, as well as official international organizations and non-governmental international organizations, to ILO meetings without an explicit and lasting delegation of authority from the Governing Body. She recalled that there was a standing item on the agenda of each session of the Governing Body on the composition, agenda and programme of standing bodies and meetings. The document produced for that item contained detailed proposals for the arrangements of all official meetings and described the process followed for inviting observers to official meetings. As there was a certain ambiguity in the Governing Body's decisions as to how the Officers exercised their duty in that regard, some clarification might be warranted.
- 127.** Responding to the Government representative of Malawi, she said that the delegation of authority referred to in the 1949 resolution was not relevant to the matter under discussion. As to the question raised by the Government representative of Zimbabwe, she recalled that the ILO Constitution provided for the Governing Body to elect a Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons, “of whom one shall be a person representing a government, one a person representing the employers, and one a person representing the workers”.
- 128.** The representative of the Legal Adviser added that paragraph 2.3.1 applied to all ILO official meetings. Non-Members were identified by the Office but were invited only at their own request. The same applied to international organizations. A legal analysis was carried out and the approved requests were submitted to the Officers. A particular process, involving various departments, as well as ACT/EMP and ACTRAV, applied for non-governmental international organizations, which had to fulfil certain criteria included in Annex V to the Compendium of rules.⁵ There were no further consultations with the constituents and no possibility to appeal the decisions made. However, all decisions by the Officers were brought before the Governing Body.

⁵ ILO, *Compendium of rules applicable to the Governing Body of the International Labour Office* (2024), [Annex V: Representation of non-governmental international organizations at ILO meetings, including international employers' and workers' organizations](#).

- 129.** The only point on which there was total clarity concerned the delegation of authority on the financial matter set out in subparagraph (e), which was extremely limited in scope. It concerned the requirement to consult the Governing Body under article 17 of the Standing Orders of the Conference in relation to proposals involving expenditure during a financial period for which a budget had already been adopted. As it was not possible to convene a Governing Body meeting for such purposes, the provision allowed the Governing Body to delegate authority to its Officers.
- 130.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson wondered whether she had incorrectly understood that she had certain delegated authorities that she did not actually have. Her understanding of the situation was that the Officers dealt with details to avoid overburdening the Governing Body, but if a problem arose the matter was put before the Governing Body. During her time as an Officer, the situation covered by subparagraph (e) had not arisen.
- 131.** The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that the discussion had demonstrated the need for clarity. It was clear that some technical work was conducted by the Officers to reduce the time spent by the Governing Body on certain discussions.
- 132.** The representative of the Legal Adviser said that, when it had given a delegation to its Officers in 1993 to invite non-governmental international organizations and official international organizations that did not have a standing invitation to ILO meetings, the Governing Body had specified that the delegation had been given under the rules in force and that requests for invitations presenting a particular problem would continue to be submitted to the Governing Body through the Officers. The delegation of authority to approve programmes of meetings and the dates of symposia, seminars and similar meetings appeared to have existed before 1993. From 1996 to 2008, the delegation of authority had been mentioned in the *Guide to the reforms in the procedure and functioning of the Governing Body and its committees*, which had been submitted every three years at the June session of the Governing Body following the election of a new Governing Body.⁶ However, there had never been an explicit decision to renew the delegation.
- 133.** In 2005, when the Governing Body had adopted the Compendium of rules with the aim of consolidating the applicable rules and codifying applicable practices, it had included paragraph 2.3.1 in the Standing Orders with explicit reference to the delegation referred to in paragraph 17 of the *Guide to the reforms*. When it had later adopted amendments to implement the reform package in June 2011, it had been noted that the French text, which had suggested that there was a standing delegation, was not consistent with the English text, which had provided that “the Governing Body may delegate authority”. The French text had then been aligned with the English, confirming the need for the Governing Body to take a decision to delegate authority to the Officers. However, no such decision had been taken. The document, which had included the reference to the 1993 delegation, had no longer been published because the 1993 reform had been replaced by the 2011 reform. That might explain why the document on the composition, agenda and programme of standing bodies and meetings was inconsistent regarding the exercise of the delegation by the Officers. There was more consistency with respect to the approval of the programme of meetings, as the Officers approved the programme and the Governing Body took note of the approval.
- 134.** The intention of the Office’s proposal had been to list all the functions exercised by the Officers on behalf of the Governing Body in a comprehensive, albeit non-exhaustive, provision. The proposed provision would grant a standing delegation of authority to the Officers to undertake the functions contained in paragraph 2.3.1, while also making clear that the Governing Body could

⁶ See [GB.302/3](#).

delegate other matters to them. However, in view of the lack of convergence on that proposal, it would be useful to know how it was envisaged that the Governing Body would make use of paragraph 2.3.1. From a governance point of view, the best way forward would be to renew through an explicit decision at the beginning of each term of office of a new Governing Body the delegation to the Officers, at least on the matters enumerated in subparagraphs (a)–(d) and leave the delegation on subparagraph (e) for each March session. Should the delegation of authority on subparagraphs (a)–(d) no longer be acceptable, then the Officers could make a recommendation on those items, meaning that they would be submitted to the Governing Body for decision.

135. The Deputy Secretary-General said that the dates of ILO and other meetings as well as important holidays were taken into account by the Office when it proposed meeting dates. Governing Body and Conference sessions could not be moved significantly, due to logistical and other constraints. In the event of conflicting dates, options were provided to the Officers, who made recommendations and a decision. Members could request alternatives during the discussion of the document on the composition, agenda and programme of standing bodies and meetings. He recalled that the proposal to streamline the agenda included the possibility of discontinuing the standing item on the composition and agenda of meetings and including the programme of meetings in the new item in the Social Dialogue Segment that would also contain the arrangements for proposed future official meetings.
136. Some international organizations were regularly invited to attend the Conference as observers as they had a standing arrangement approved by the Governing Body. A second category consisted of international intergovernmental organizations authorized by the Officers. Non-governmental international organizations were not automatically invited, except for six that had consultative status. Organizations asking to attend for the first time underwent very stringent assessment procedures. Once their applications had been reviewed, the Office provided recommendations on the suitability of invitations to the Officers. If approved by the Officers, the organizations were listed in the document regarding arrangements for future ILO official meetings. Eliminating the pre-assessment by the Officers would not be conducive to improving time management. If the provisions of paragraph 2.3.1 were not clarified, at least through the regularization of an explicit delegation for the duration of the Governing Body's mandate, the matters would have to be dealt with by the Governing Body.
137. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that certain misunderstandings could have been avoided if some of the information provided by the Office had been included in the background document. There was a need for clarity to enable her to take a position on what was advisable. Her group must judge whether the issues being addressed at the Meeting warranted a revision of the Standing Orders or whether clarification by other means was sufficient. It was useful to understand the formal context in which the pre-assessment exercise carried out by the Officers was performed. The preference of the Workers' group was to retain that pre-assessment and not to burden the Governing Body with excessive detail.
138. The Employer Vice-Chairperson welcomed the Worker Vice-Chairperson's recognition of the need to clarify the powers delegated to the Officers. The delegation of authority, which should be limited to the matters listed in paragraph 2.3.1, helped to reduce the workload of the Governing Body.
139. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States asked what criteria were used to select international organizations and non-governmental international organizations for invitation to technical meetings and meetings of experts and whether

governments could suggest organizations before the matter was submitted for consideration by the Governing Body.

140. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger said that the Governing Body could be asked to approve a list of observers rather than engage in detailed discussions on the subject. It was his understanding that any recommendations to amend the Standing Orders could be made during the second meeting, in 2026.
141. The Secretary-General clarified that it had been agreed that the current Meeting would culminate in recommendations to the Governing Body, including for amendments to the Standing Orders if necessary. The second meeting in 2026 had been scheduled tentatively to address any pending issues, and the Governing Body would decide whether it was required.
142. The Deputy Secretary-General explained that lists of possible observers at technical meetings and meetings of experts were submitted to the Officers for approval, drawing on the recommendations of the technical department organizing the meeting. The current practice did not allow for amendments to those lists. It was hoped that the relevant organizations would be aware of the meetings through the Office's outreach work and because the events in question were often standing meetings. The Office could examine the Africa group's suggestion regarding lists of observers, bearing in mind the need to involve the social partners. Given that there were around 200 observers at each session of the Conference, consideration of such a list by the Governing Body could take some time. Other options, such as addressing the matter by correspondence, could be considered.
143. The Worker Vice-Chairperson recalled that the aim was to reduce items on the Governing Body's agenda and improve time management. Although legitimate questions of transparency and accountability had been raised, existing processes should not become more burdensome.

C. Designation of a Government deputy member to vote when a regular member has lost the right to vote (paragraphs 1.5.3 and 6.1.4)

D. Definition of consensus (article 6.1)

E. Duties of the Chairperson (paragraph 2.2.3)

F. Suspension of a provision of the Standing Orders (article 7.2)

144. The Employer Vice-Chairperson supported the proposal to clarify, by amending the Standing Orders, that a regular member that had lost the right to vote due to arrears would not be able to transfer its vote to a deputy member. While agreeing with the proposal to amend the Standing Orders to clarify that the Chairperson should not vote, she stressed that the rule should apply to the individual and not to the government that they represented, which could designate another accredited representative to vote on its behalf. She supported the proposal to align the Chairperson's responsibilities in the Standing Orders with those in the Standing Orders of the Conference, which would strengthen coherence across the ILO's governance structures.
145. The Worker Vice-Chairperson sought clarification from the Office regarding the legality of the proposals concerning the designation of a Government deputy member to replace a member that had lost the right to vote due to arrears. Preventing the Government group from replacing a voting member that had lost the right to vote would weaken its overall voting strength, which should not be affected by the actions of an individual Member State. The Government group should be permitted to replace a member by a deputy member and transfer the respective voting

rights if it so wished. She reiterated that her group would support a limited and targeted amendment of the Standing Orders only if necessary and only if there was consensus.

146. She suggested that, rather than amending the Standing Orders of the Governing Body to align them with the Standing Orders of the Conference, it would be much more logical to consider aligning those of the Conference – with regard to the definition of consensus contained therein – with the more comprehensive definition contained in paragraph 46 of the introductory note. However, her group was not yet convinced of the need for any revision of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body or of the Conference. It would be more important to remind the Governing Body and the Chairperson, at the start of each term, of that definition, especially given the increasing use of voting to resolve disagreements. She agreed with the point made by the Employer Vice-Chairperson regarding the participation of the Chairperson in votes; however, she did not see the value in forbidding the Chairperson from participating in debates. She would like to know the rationale behind the proposals concerning the suspension of provisions of the Standing Orders; her group did not see the benefit in removing the restrictive conditions currently in place.
147. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that his group was unsure of the reasoning behind the proposal to codify a definition of consensus, given that it was generally successfully applied in practice. An explanation of the rationale behind the proposals concerning the suspensions of provisions of the Standing Orders would be appreciated.
148. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger asked the Office to define the term “regional coordinator” and to explain how such coordinators could fulfil their functions in the absence of a definition. He also asked the Office to specify which deputy members had been allowed to participate in the elections of the Director-General at the 242nd and 271st Sessions (March 1989 and March 1998) of the Governing Body and requested clarification regarding the enjoyment by a deputy member of the rights held by the regular member that they were replacing. He agreed with the Worker Vice-Chairperson regarding the risk of creating an imbalance in voting rights and noted that the matter was one for the Government group to address, using past practice as a basis for any decision.
149. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States said that regular members of the Governing Body having lost the right to vote due to arrears should not nominate deputy members to vote in their place. IMEC was open to maintaining the exception for the election of the Director-General so as to maintain the Government group’s relative voting power. She agreed that the current definition of consensus in the introductory note was sufficient and did not need to be changed or included within the Standing Orders themselves. The group was open to the proposal concerning the duties of the Chairperson but questioned the impact of such a change. It did not support abolishing the conditions for the suspension of the Standing Orders, as the rules ensured that meetings were conducted predictably, transparently and fairly; any suspension should continue to be an exception.
150. Speaking on behalf GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru observed that, as the designation of a deputy member to vote when a regular member lost its right to do so was not a common practice, a reference in the introductory note was sufficient. The utility of including a definition of “consensus” in the Standing Orders was questionable. The role of Chairperson must continue to be supported; the role was crucial not only in the conduct of discussions but also in overcoming obstacles.
151. The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted that paragraph 1.5.3 of the Standing Orders provided for two situations in which a Government deputy member could vote, reflecting that it was in the

Government group's interest to exercise all its 28 possible votes. Therefore, it would be logical to follow that doctrine.

152. The Deputy Secretary-General, responding to a question from the Africa group, explained that the functions of regional coordinators had existed for decades but had only been codified to an extent as part of the 2011 reform. There was no definition in the introductory note or the Standing Orders, but paragraph 19 referred to regional coordinators as being one of the facilities necessary for the participation of the three groups in the Governing Body. The Office had drafted guidance on the role of regional coordinators, which was provided to newcomers to that role.
153. The Legal Adviser explained that there were two schools of thought concerning the designation of a Government deputy member to vote when a regular member had lost the right to vote due to arrears, both of which had been reflected in the practice of the Governing Body. The first considered that the right to vote was personal to a regular member and could not be transferred to a deputy member, because a deputy could not have greater rights than the regular member who had lost the right to vote. The second doctrine, which was unique to the ILO, was based on paragraph 1.5.3, under which the Government group "may" (not "must") designate a deputy member to replace a regular member "who is not voting". Prior to 1950, the provision had referred to a regular member "who is absent". Consequently, it had been considered that, to ensure equal voting power among the three groups, the Governments could take a group decision to authorize a deputy member to replace a regular member unable to vote due to arrears. Because of the two different schools of thought, the Office had considered that clarification was necessary, especially when voting was mandatory, as in the election of the Director-General. In 1998, the Government of Senegal had been authorized to replace a member in arrears for the election of the Director-General.
154. The representative of the Legal Adviser noted that the Office considered it useful to codify a number of practices in the interests of legal clarity and transparency, as standing orders were intended not only to regulate but also to provide information on how procedures worked in practice. A number of proposals were intended to ensure consistency between the standing orders of different ILO bodies. The first time that a definition of consensus had been included in standing orders had been in those governing technical meetings, and it was close to that in the introductory note to the Standing Orders of the Governing Body. A definition that was shorter and more normative in character had then been included in the Standing Orders of the Conference.
155. The intention of the proposal concerning the duties of the Chairperson was to increase clarity by aligning with article 13(3) of the Standing Orders of the Conference. As the Chairperson needed to speak to facilitate consensus and decision-making, the wording "may not participate in the debates" meant that they could not participate as a representative of their government. The Office was proposing to remove the restrictive conditions on suspensions of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body for consistency with those of the Conference, where the Standing Orders had been suspended more frequently and in different situations, some of which arguably did not fulfil the conditions for suspension.
156. The Worker Vice-Chairperson noted that paragraph 1.5.3(ii) of the Standing Orders clearly stated that the Government group had the prerogative to replace a non-voting member, and did not specify the reason for which the member was not voting. It was questionable whether the provision needed to be clarified. She cautioned against aligning the Standing Orders of the Governing Body with those of the Conference. On the question of consensus, the introductory note was clearer than the text in the Standing Orders of the Conference and should be retained. The role of the Chairperson was entirely different from that of the President of the Conference,

which was a formal role that did not require any participation; the provisions should not, therefore, be aligned.

157. The Government representative of Austria agreed that the Standing Orders of the Governing Body were distinct from those of the Conference. Concerning the filling of seats, she noted that a regular member could lose the right to vote due to arrears. If the purpose of withdrawing the right to vote was to provide an incentive to countries to pay their contributions, it seemed counterproductive to allow another country to step in to vote in their place. She wondered whether losing voting rights also meant losing regular member status, and whether that would be permanent or for the session in question only.
158. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru suggested that a reference to the participation of deputy members could be included in the introductory note – which provided information on practices without fixing them as a legal rule – to give Governments a degree of flexibility in organizing their participation in the Governing Body.
159. The Legal Adviser shared the reasoning behind the doctrine that a deputy member could not take part in a vote in lieu of a member in arrears. First, paragraph 1.5.3(a)(ii) did not explicitly refer to the situation of a regular member disqualified from voting, but simply to a regular member that did not vote, presumably due to absence. Second, including the wording “who has not been replaced by a substitute” would not make sense in the case of a loss of a right to vote, as a substitute – who was necessarily a representative of the same Government – could in any event not validly replace the member for the purpose of voting. Third, allowing a deputy member to vote in such circumstances would weaken the constitutional provisions concerning the loss of the right to vote and would remove any incentive for Members to pay their arrears.
160. The representative of the Legal Adviser recalled that, although deputy members were no longer appointed by regular members, the provision set out in paragraph 6.1.4 embodied the principle according to which a deputy member replacing a regular member at the latter’s demand could not be granted rights that the regular member did not or no longer possessed. The question had arisen as to how to apply that provision to the current situation, where deputy members were elected by the Conference and not nominated by regular members.
161. The Secretary-General said that all international organizations had a provision in their rules suspending the right to vote due to arrears, with the objective of encouraging Members to pay. The ILO was particular in that there was a need to ensure balance in a tripartite system. The Government group had to decide which doctrine it wished to apply with regard to voting rights.
162. The Government representative of the Niger said that the suspension of voting rights could be seen as a sanction rather than an incentive. If a Member State’s voting rights were suspended, it should perhaps be relieved of its obligations to implement the mandate of that organization. He wondered whether, if a Member State lost the right to vote, the social partners should also lose a vote, and how the calculations should be done. He supported the calls for legal clarity and predictability.
163. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that it was for the Government group to decide which doctrine it wished to apply with regard to voting rights and on the other matters raised by the Africa group.
164. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that the provisions of the Standing Orders relating to voting rights were ambiguous and there was a need for greater clarity.
165. The Deputy Secretary-General said that the way in which regional coordinators discharged their duties was based on practice over the previous 30 years at least. The introductory note contained

provisions allowing for their participation in the Screening Group. A number of other functions stemmed from those provisions.

G. Proposals for updating the introductory note

- 166.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that the decision-making process of the Officers was governed by the general principle of consensus rather than unanimity. Paragraph 46 of the introductory note already specified that the Governing Body took decisions usually by consensus, while paragraph 2.3.2 stated that the Officers must refer questions to the Governing Body where they could not agree. There was therefore no need to clarify the matter in the introductory note. Similarly, the right to reply did not need further codification, as it was governed by well-established practice. The nomination of substitutes was a matter for the Employers' and Workers' groups, which should be given the autonomy to manage their internal affairs in accordance with the Standing Orders. Seat-sharing arrangements were a matter for the Government group to decide.
- 167.** The Employer Vice-Chairperson expressed support for the proposed clarification regarding the Officers, as it would improve coherence between the introductory note and the operative provisions of the Standing Orders. She agreed that the introductory note should be aligned with the Standing Orders regarding the modalities of the exercise of the right to reply. On the status of substitutes, her group largely agreed with the Workers' group. It strongly disagreed with the Office's interpretation of the rules limiting the role of substitutes. Each group should retain autonomy in organizing representation, including the capacity to delegate authority to substitutes who could act at any time, upon notification to the Office. That would ensure continuity and flexibility in representation, which was crucial for effective participation. Regarding seat-sharing arrangements, her group supported the proposal to clarify that such arrangements among Governments must follow the same formalities as those for replacing members following resignation. While the arrangements themselves were a matter of group autonomy, official notification and compliance with the formal process were essential for legitimacy and transparency.
- 168.** The Government Vice-Chairperson requested the Office to provide further details of the issues affecting the decision-making process of the Officers and asked whether the proposals relating to the right to reply would also apply to non-members. He would like to know the reasoning behind the proposals concerning the status of substitutes nominated by the Employers' and Workers' groups and to have more information on the proposal to clarify the rules regarding seat-sharing arrangements.
- 169.** Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger asked for more information on the decision-making process for the Officers and on the status of substitutes nominated by the Employers' and Workers' groups.
- 170.** Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States expressed support for the proposal to clarify the decision-making process for the Officers, as it would help enhance the transparency of decision-making and the predictability of proceedings. She was open to the proposed clarification on the right to reply; it would be helpful to have written guidance on how that right could be exercised. On the status of substitutes nominated by the Employers' and Workers' groups, IMEC agreed with the Office's interpretation of the issue. It was therefore open to the proposed clarification. The group was open to the proposals regarding seat-sharing arrangements, but was unsure why that clarification was needed.
- 171.** The Deputy Secretary-General said that the aim of the proposals on the decision-making process for the Officers was to address cases where it was not possible to reach consensus. Such cases

were eventually referred to the Governing Body, but it might be useful to state in the introductory note that consensus should be sought before taking that step.

172. The Legal Adviser underscored that the proposals under discussion did not concern amendments to the Standing Orders, but simply clarifications to the introductory note. The information in the background document regarding seat-sharing arrangements reflected the Office's consistent position when it had received questions about the matter in the past. It might be useful to include that information in the introductory note.
173. The representative of the Legal Adviser said that paragraph 2.3.2 stated that the Officers must refer questions to the Governing Body where they could not agree, reflecting the general principle that decision-making powers remained with the Governing Body. Strictly speaking, that provision applied only to the matters for which authority had been delegated to the Officers under paragraph 2.3.1. Concerning substitutes, the long-standing legal position of the Office was that set out in article 1.6: substitutes were to replace a regular delegate who could not be present. That was not compatible with allowing substitutes to serve as titular members of a committee.

► Consideration and adoption of the draft recommendations

174. The Secretary-General noted that the Office had circulated, in English, French and Spanish, the draft recommendations prepared by the subsidiary body. Consensus had been reached in the subsidiary body on all but three paragraphs: 7, 10 and 20. Paragraph 21 had not been considered.
175. The Government Vice-Chairperson proposed an amendment to the chapeau of paragraph 7. In that connection, he recalled that paragraph 20 referred to the need for legal clarity and transparency regarding the delegation of authority. The amendment read:

The item "Composition, agenda and programme of standing bodies and meetings" should be removed from the agenda and the contents of the document distributed as follows, taking into account that these responsibilities will continue to be discharged by the Officers, pending legal clarity and certainty on the delegation of authority to the Officers: the functions currently assumed by the Officers for those matters:

176. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States confirmed that the aim of the amendment was to make it clear that the Officers would continue to exercise those functions until such time as the Governing Body had clarified the delegation of authority.
177. The Worker Vice-Chairperson could not support the use of wording that implied that the responsibilities that had been exercised by the Officers since 2011 had not had a sound legal basis. Moreover, the list that followed also included matters not dependent on the delegation of authority. The second part of the chapeau could be subamended to read: "that these functions will continue to be discharged by the Officers on the understanding that further legal clarity and certainty is required regarding the delegation of authority to the Officers". In response to a question raised on behalf of the Africa group, she explained that the word "functions" had been proposed precisely because not all the actions listed in paragraph 7 were undertaken by the Officers on the basis of the delegation of authority.
178. The Employer Vice-Chairperson said that the wording proposed by the Government group might inadvertently imply that the powers exercised by the Officers over time had been outside their delegated authority. Moreover, the word "pending" implied a problem that needed to be resolved. In the interest of consensus, her group could accept the text as subamended by the Workers. The

word “certainty” could be replaced by “transparency”, to align with the wording used in paragraph 20.

179. In response to a question by the Worker Vice-Chairperson on the proposed terminology, the representative of the Legal Adviser said that, while “clarity” and “transparency” were similar concepts, “certainty” tended to be used in relation to legally binding agreements. In the context in question, the intention was understood.
180. The Government Vice-Chairperson expressed appreciation for the efforts to accommodate his group’s concerns. In the interest of consensus, his group could accept the proposed subamendments.
181. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed that the same wording should be used in paragraphs 7 and 20. In the light of the Office’s explanation, she could support the proposal made by the Employer Vice-Chairperson.
182. The Worker Vice-Chairperson and the Employer Vice-Chairperson said that they could accept the wording in subparagraph (viii) as agreed upon in the subsidiary body.
183. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that subparagraph (iii) was not relevant.
184. Following a discussion on subparagraph (x) in which the Worker Vice-Chairperson, the Employer Vice-Chairperson, the Government representative of the United States on behalf of IMEC and the Government representative of the Niger on behalf of the Africa group took part, it was agreed that subparagraph (x) would read: “deferring incomplete discussions to the next or subsequent sitting of the same session rather than extending the sitting or compressing the debate”.
185. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group, the Government representative of the Niger recalled that the mandate of the Meeting was to review the functioning of the Governing Body so that it would run more smoothly and have less of a human and financial cost. Reducing the number of agenda items or increasing the number of days would achieve that objective. His group had hoped to have a discussion on extending Governing Body sessions by one day. Such a matter could not be decided in the framework of the Screening Group. He proposed the addition of a new paragraph 22, to read: “The Governing Body will discuss the matter of having an extra day at its 355th Session (November 2025).”
186. The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that her group was in favour of introducing the possibility of extending a session by one day, to avoid evening sittings. However, the current Meeting was not the appropriate forum to discuss that matter. She hoped for majority support to bring that proposal before the Governing Body.
187. The Government representatives of Zimbabwe and Malawi agreed that either the Governing Body’s agenda should be shortened or its sessions extended, to prevent exhaustion among Governing Body members. In their view, the current Meeting, to review the functioning of the Governing Body, was the appropriate forum for the discussion.
188. The Secretary-General said that the decision to increase the number of days in a session must be made by the Screening Group well in advance to allow the necessary technical and logistical arrangements to be made. A session could not be extended once it had begun, owing to organizational constraints. While the Screening Group had considered the possibility on several occasions, no agreement had been reached.
189. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC, the Government representative of Peru said that the task at hand was to review the draft recommendations, which reflected the points on which agreement had been reached. The question of the length of sessions should have been raised in the context of the item on time management.

190. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States recalled that paragraph 10(v) reflected the concerns raised in the subsidiary body regarding whether there was sufficient time for debates and the divergence of views in that regard.
191. The Chairperson recalled that the recommendations would be submitted to the Governing Body in November, when there would be a further opportunity to discuss the number of days per session.
192. The Worker Vice-Chairperson and the Government representative of Nigeria agreed that further discussions should be held in the Governing Body on whether an additional day was needed or other measures should be taken.
193. The Government representative of Peru acknowledged the concerns expressed, but cautioned against the addition of a new paragraph 22. It would make more sense to make provision in paragraph 10(v) for the discussion on extending sessions by a day.
194. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that, although his group's preference would be to include the proposed new paragraph 22, in the interest of consensus, he could accept instead amending paragraph 10(v) to include, after "allocated times", the wording "and duration of the sessions".
195. The Worker Vice-Chairperson welcomed the elegant solution proposed by the Government group.
196. The Employers' group could support the amendment proposed to paragraph 10(v) as an alternative to adding paragraph 22.
197. The Worker Vice-Chairperson proposed adding the following sentence to the end of paragraph 20: "The Meeting recommends the Office to conduct tripartite consultations with a view to find a consensual way forward on this matter and present proposals as appropriate to the Governing Body, as soon as possible." She also proposed that paragraph 21 should come under a separate heading and some other minor amendments for clarity.
198. The Employer Vice-Chairperson preferred the text of paragraph 20 as originally drafted. Tripartite consultations had in effect already taken place; the next steps could be left to the discretion of the Governing Body.
199. The Secretary-General said that the aim of paragraph 21 was to clarify that if the Governing Body agreed with the recommendations, the Office would undertake further preparatory work with a view to submitting proposed amendments to the Standing Orders and the introductory note for consideration by the Governing Body. However, the paragraph could be removed if preferred.
200. Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States said that paragraph 21 should be removed. The recommendations had been formulated based on the background document and the discussions during the Meeting. Any suggestion that further preparatory work was required would negate the efforts made thus far.
201. The Employer Vice-Chairperson expressed a preference for retaining paragraph 21, the purpose of which was not to give instructions to the Governing Body but to inform it of the need to explore ways to achieve legal clarity and transparency. However, her group could accept its deletion in the interest of consensus.
202. The Government Vice-Chairperson said that his group was reluctant to accept the proposed amendment to paragraph 20 and would prefer to retain the wording as originally drafted. It did not see the merit in paragraph 21 and was in favour of its deletion.

- 203.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson said that, in the light of the comments made, her group could accept the deletion of paragraph 21. Furthermore, in the interests of reaching consensus, her group would withdraw its proposed amendment to paragraph 20 and accept the original wording.
- 204.** The Meeting unanimously adopted the recommendations to be submitted to the Governing Body at its 355th Session (November 2025). ⁷

► Closing remarks

- 205.** The Secretary-General thanked the Chairperson and his fellow Officers – including the Government Vice-Chairperson who had steered the work of the subsidiary body – and all the participants for their efforts to ensure that agreement was reached on a set of recommendations that would serve as a basis for what would be an interesting discussion at the 355th Session (November 2025) of the Governing Body.
- 206.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson expressed her appreciation to the Chairperson for his patience and to the Office for the advice it had provided. She thanked her Employer and Government counterparts for their efforts to achieve an outcome that would be positive for the Governing Body and the other members of her group for their dedication and solidarity, emphasizing the importance that the group attached to the proper functioning of the Governing Body. Her group looked forward to the implementation of the recommendations.
- 207.** The Employer Vice-Chairperson acknowledged the progress made, but recalled that the review was an ongoing process. She would be in favour of a bolder approach that would have a real impact on the functioning of the Governing Body, allowing for greater efficiency, transparency and responsiveness to constituents' needs. The ILO's relevance depended on the proper and efficient functioning of its governance structures, especially in the light of the challenging global context. Her group remained committed to continuing the discussions in an open and constructive spirit. She expressed her gratitude to all those who had contributed to the outcome of the Meeting, noting in particular the dedication of the other members of her group.
- 208.** The Government Vice-Chairperson thanked the Chairperson and his Employer and Worker counterparts. He also thanked the Office, which had worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the Meeting. In particular, he thanked the representatives of regional groups and individual governments for their collaboration and willingness to compromise on some very difficult issues. His group looked forward to future discussions and to seeing how the recommendations would be implemented.
- 209.** Speaking on behalf of IMEC, the Government representative of the United States commended the Office for its professionalism and hard work in ensuring that the Meeting was a success.
- 210.** The Chairperson noted with appreciation the constructive approach taken by all the participants, which had contributed to the success of the Meeting. He declared the Meeting closed.

⁷ In accordance with the decision by the Governing Body at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024) to suspend article 3(2) of the Standing Orders for technical meetings for this Meeting, the recommendations will not be published on the Meeting's web page, but included in the document to be submitted to the Governing Body in November 2025.