Governing Body

337th Session, Geneva, 24 October–7 November 2019

GB.337/INS/3/3

Institutional Section

INS

THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Matters arising out of the work of the 108th Session (2019) of the International Labour Conference

Analysis of the measures taken to promote the effective functioning of the Conference

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Purpose of the document

This document reviews the arrangements implemented at the 108th (Centenary) Session of the Conference in 2019 and explores further areas where improvements could be considered. The review of such arrangements is intended to lay the groundwork for the proposals to be made in March 2020 with respect to the programme and working arrangements of the 109th Session of the Conference to be held in June 2020 (see draft decision in paragraph 65).

Relevant strategic objective: All four strategic objectives.

Main relevant outcome/cross-cutting policy driver: Enabling outcome B: Effective and efficient governance of the Organization.

Policy implications: Smooth and efficient functioning of the annual session of the Conference.

Legal implications: Continued suspension of specific provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference pending their comprehensive review.

Financial implications: Possible additional costs linked to the introduction or continuation of some measures to be absorbed within existing Conference resources or offset by savings achieved through other efficiency measures.

Follow-up action required: Elaboration and submission of proposals to the 338th Session of the Governing Body regarding the programme of work and working arrangements for the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2020.

Author unit: Official Meetings, Documentation and Relations Department (RELMEETINGS).

Related documents: GB.334/WP/GBC/1; GB.334/INS/2/2; GB.334/INS/12(Rev.); GB.334/PV; GB.335/INS/2/2; GB.335/INS/2/3; GB.335/PV.

Contents

Introduction

1. The 108th Session (2019) was the fifth session of the Conference held within the two-week format, but the first in that format to have a standard-setting item comprising two possible instruments: a Convention and a Recommendation. In addition, the Conference faced new challenges specific to the Centenary Session, such as the organization of a continuous plenary throughout the two weeks of the Conference to accommodate the visit of some 40 dignitaries, a series of thematic debates some in a new format and the negotiation of a Centenary Declaration in a relatively short time span.

2. Despite these many challenges, all the ambitious objectives of the Centenary Session were achieved in two weeks. While this success is no doubt the result of the unique joint effort of constituents and the Office, with the special support of the host State, the two-week format of the Conference, as adjusted and improved over the past five years, has demonstrated its viability.

3. This document analyses the effectiveness of the arrangements implemented at the 108th (Centenary) Session (2019) of the Conference and explores further areas where improvements could be considered, taking Office experience and the comments and feedback received from constituents into consideration. Arrangements specific to the Centenary Session will be examined only to the extent that lessons can be learned in the continuing process of improving regular sessions of the Conference. In developing proposals for the programme and arrangements for the 109th Session of the Conference (2020) and beyond, the constraints resulting from the renovation work at the Palais des Nations in the coming years must also be taken into account. [1]

Part I. Conference preparations and logistics

A. Preparatory processes

4. Although the process of identifying the Officers of the Conference and its various committees began earlier than in previous years, some nominations were made just a few weeks before the Conference. While it was possible to hold preparatory meetings of the Officers of each committee and of the plenary and to prepare them adequately for their duties, both the Office and the constituents should continue to strive to have such appointments made as early as possible before the Conference session.

5. Likewise, the Office and the constituents should support the organization of tripartite consultations as an indispensable mechanism for building consensus and facilitating substantive discussions in the context of the two-week format of the Conference. In this connection, constituents welcomed the preparatory meetings organized for the Centenary Declaration and the standard-setting item. If these consultations are to become part of the standard preparation for the Conference, the necessary resources (for instance the travel and interpretation costs of any tripartite meeting) should be identified and approved as part of the Conference budget.

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[1] See GB.335/INS/14/5.

6. As part of Conference preparations, the Office continues to work on making the Conference programme more accessible through an enhanced and constantly updated Conference website, rather than through the traditional *Conference Guide*. This was particularly the case during the Centenary Session, where frequent adjustments to the number and timing of high-level visits in plenary and to the key speakers and discussants at the thematic forums were necessary before and throughout the duration of the Conference. In the same vein, the Office is also working to improve the training of staff and delegates in Conference procedures, tools and practices, both through information sessions and web-based material and tutorials.

B. Conference attendance and room capacity

7. The Centenary Session of the Conference reached historic records in the number of accredited (7,636) and registered (6,341) participants, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1.   Accredited and registered participants at the Conference *

Participants		All delegations	Delegations from member States			Observer delegations		
			All categories	With institutional role	Other	Non-member States and Palestine	International organizations	INGOs
In 2018	**Accredited**	6 403	5 321	3 276	2 045	30	112	940
	Registered	5 235	4 578	2 968	1 610	26	97	534
In 2019	**Accredited**	7 636	6 379	3 317	3 062	37	153	1 067
	Registered	6 341	5 500	3 032	2 468	30	115	969
Difference 2018–19 (%)	**Accredited**	19	20	1	50	23	37	14
	Registered	21	20	2	53	15	19	81

* Members of delegations with an institutional role mentioned in the table include the following categories appearing on the List of delegations: Ministers attending the Conference, delegates, advisers, and persons appointed in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 3(i). Persons accredited to the Conference with no institutional role include three categories appearing on the list of delegations ("persons accompanying a Minister attending the Conference", "Representatives of a State or province of federal State", and "other persons attending the Conference") as well as persons accredited but not appearing on the list, such as administrative staff in support of national delegations or relatives of members of the delegation.

8. In anticipation of this surge in the number of participants, registration facilities were moved from the ILO Pavilion to the Palais des Nations, and the number of staff and badge-printing machines and the space to receive the delegations were increased. While it is the intention to keep accreditation services at the Palais for future sessions of the Conference, discussions are under way with the United Nations (UN) security services concerning their requirement for all badges to bear the photograph of the holder. The Office will report in due course on the possible implementation date, modalities and implications for Conference participants.

9. Also in anticipation of wide interest in attending the opening ceremony and the high-level sittings of the plenary, a dual badge system was put in place in 2019 to monitor and limit access to the Assembly Hall during these events so as not to exceed its actual capacity. In retrospect, the only sitting that may require access limitations to the plenary is the opening ceremony, but in view of the difficulties in the implementation of the dual badge system (badges distributed to each delegation did not reach those supposed to attend the ceremony), it might not be necessary to continue with this practice in the future.

10. Room capacity in the main committees again proved insufficient to accommodate all interested tripartite constituents, let alone observer delegations or the public. This was the case despite the implementation of a differentiated badge system based on whether or not the holder had an official role under the Standing Orders. Insofar as attendance at committees is physically limited by the capacity of the rooms at the ILO and UN buildings, the only solution to avoid disorderly competition for space among committee members would be to enforce a limited number of seats per Government delegation, as well as for the Employers' and Workers' groups, based on the number of registered members in each committee, as is already the case at the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS). While the Office will continue to broadcast the proceedings of the plenary and the CAS in overflow rooms, it might not be possible to extend that practice to other committees due to the scarcity of additional rooms at the Palais des Nations, all the more so during its renovation in the coming years.

11. The mismatch in 2019 between the number of registered participants (6,000) and the number of persons actually present on Conference premises to attend the plenary or any of the three committees and the thematic forums (estimated at no more than 3,000), raises the question of whether limitations should be imposed on the size of official national and observer delegations.

12. The Office is also exploring ways to improve the prevention of unauthorized access to rooms during closed sittings, in particular group meetings. Limiting the number of official members of a delegation would facilitate this effort.

C.   Outreach and communications

13. Innovations were introduced by the Department of Communications and Public Information as part of a holistic communication approach geared towards maximizing opportunities presented by the Centenary Session agenda and heightening the visibility of the Organization. These measures, which received favourable feedback from constituents, included:

■   Continuous live coverage of the plenary and thematic forums, and a daily live two-hour show with news and highlights of the Conference. The live streaming enabled an online audience to follow all the public events of the Conference without having to be physically present in Geneva. The live coverage of the plenary alone received almost 20,000 unique views compared to 7,500 in 2018. In total, the Conference live coverage generated 35,553 views.

■   Increased dissemination of short videos and still images across multiple social media platforms, as well as increased engagement with traditional media outlets, which resulted in significant and increased media coverage compared to previous years. ILO tweets were seen 2,900,000 times during the Centenary Session of the Conference compared to 1,600,000 times the previous year.

■   An enhanced and multi-function communication area at the Palais des Nations, which included a virtual reality stand, a TV studio and a promotional and information space. The area was visited by some 6,000 Conference participants and generated a significant volume of photographs and films.

■   An internal and external blog, which provided a space for displaying and organizing multimedia contact and news for internal and external audiences. The blog registered 12,000 views in June, as compared to the monthly average of 5,000. A

number of additional TV screens were set up at the ILO and the Palais to keep delegates informed.

■   A poster campaign promoting the ILO, which was visible at the airport, in buses and trams in Geneva, as well as in certain parts of the city.

14. A general concern raised by some groups was the inappropriate use of social media by some Conference participants in disclosing or commenting on ongoing negotiations, in particular in committees, in terms that were prejudicial to trust and consensus-building between the groups. Pictures were taken and discussions were filmed during some committee negotiations and deliberations. Although impossible to monitor or eliminate, better awareness raising in Conference information material and through announcements of the chairing officer should help to minimize such practices.

D.   General logistics

15. This section reviews changes introduced in 2019 in a variety of areas and outlines possible changes in other areas. A number of other initiatives identified with the help of the Business Innovations Unit are not reflected in this document, but are also contributing to improved services for Conference participants, overall efficiencies and better working conditions for the staff assigned to service the Conference.

Catering services

16. The ILO negotiated with the caterer at the Palais des Nations to extend working hours and provide a larger choice of snacks at the Serpent Bar and hot meals at the Pasta Corner in building E, at a minimum turnover per day of CHF1,500 for the Serpent Bar and of CHF5,500 for the Serpent Bar and the Pasta Corner combined. The average utilization rate of the additional service was 60 per cent at a total cost to the ILO of CHF9,000.

17. While the additional services were generally well received, participants were not able to take full advantage of them, mainly due to the short duration of the pause between the afternoon and evening sittings of committees. Members of the two technical committees located in building E were offered the possibility of having breaks of 60 minutes, but the majority preferred shorter breaks of 30 minutes in order to end the evening sittings as early as possible. This factor, together with the fact that both committees in building E scheduled their evening breaks at the same time, increased the waiting time for service and limited the sales volume.

18. Based on this experience, it is proposed that consideration be given in future to the possible staggering of the pauses of the committees located in building E so as to limit bottlenecks and increase the number of persons benefitting from the service. Regarding the serving of hot meals, experience seems to indicate that the cost is not justified, especially if committees do not want longer evening breaks. Instead, the Office intends to negotiate with the caterer a larger space with more staff to accelerate the service during such breaks and offer a wider selection of food. No special measures were called for regarding the catering services at the ILO building.

Transport services

19. Transport facilities were increased in 2019, in respect of both working hours and locations serviced. Shuttle buses ran between the ILO and the Palais, servicing doors 15 (building A) and 40 (building E), except during the visits of dignitaries when, for security

reasons, the pick-up and drop-off at the Palais was limited to the Pregny gate. For evening committee sittings ending after 9 p.m., provisions were made for a shuttle service to run between the Palais and Cornavin railway station. The working hours of the shuttle service between the ILO and the UN on the eve of the Conference opening were also increased for the groups meeting on Sunday. All these measures were well received and will be repeated at future sessions of the Conference.

Security

20. Since the exceptional security measures deployed during the Centenary Session are not likely to be replicated on the same scale, the main difficulties encountered in June 2019 should not be faced in future. Indeed, it was not so much the visits of dignitaries but their number and frequency that required the setting up of several safety circles and controls. The Office has drawn lessons so as to ensure better coordination with the UN Security and Safety Service in future, particularly on the opening day of the Conference.

Safety and health

21. Special arrangements were put in place at the Palais des Nations to provide for emergency health services or evacuation to hospital, especially during the high-level section of the Conference. For non-urgent interventions, the ILO continued to provide first-aid and basic medical care during working hours at the Health Service Unit in the ILO building. No major health incident was reported during the Centenary Session, and all cases referred to local hospitals are known to have had a favourable outcome.

Signage at the Conference venue

22. The signage at the Conference venue in 2019, in particular at the Palais des Nations, proved insufficient to guide participants to the offices, services and meeting rooms they wished to locate in the most efficient manner. This was in part due to the challenges posed by the various security perimeters in place during the high-level visits. The Office will pay greater attention to signage in the preparation of the next session of the Conference.

Paper-smart policy

23. The only documents printed at the Conference in 2019, in addition to the outcomes of each committee proposed for adoption to the plenary, were the *Conference Guide*, the *Daily Bulletin* and the amendments and other working documents in committees. With the widespread use of mobile devices by almost all Conference participants and a constant availability of Wi-Fi on all Conference premises, the question arises as to whether the time has come to reduce or eliminate the print run of some of the remaining printed documents, in particular the *Conference Guide* and the *Daily Bulletin*, as the information they contain is easily accessible through the Conference web page, the app and the screens located near all meeting rooms.

E.   Side events

24. As in recent years, the only side event approved in 2019 as part of the Conference programme was the World Day against Child Labour. It was organized in conjunction with the first Centenary thematic forum under the title "Together for a brighter future without child labour".

25. The intensity of the Conference's work programme means that there must continue to be a very restrictive policy regarding side events. Not all delegations understand the need for such a policy and some were disappointed that presentations or exhibitions they had prepared for in advance could not take place. The Office therefore intends to better publicize the current policy, both on the web and in the convocation letters, to avoid unnecessary frustrations and misunderstandings.

26. If the number of bilateral meetings and activities organized by national delegations, the groups or other entities invited to the Conference (intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations), continues to rise (396 in 2019 compared to 309 in 2018), it will become necessary to develop and adopt objective criteria to guide the Office in deciding the order of priority for the allocation of the limited available resources (meeting rooms, interpretation capacity, spaces for receptions or social events). The shortage of space is likely to become more acute during the renovation of the Palais des Nations.

Part II. Conference plenary

A. Opening ceremony

27. In 2019 some of the Conference opening formalities previously discharged by the Selection Committee were performed satisfactorily by the Conference itself during its opening ceremony, as in 2018, as a time-saving and simplification measure. In view of this successful implementation, the necessary suspensions to the Standing Orders of the Conference will continue to be proposed until such changes can be incorporated into the Standing Orders in the context of their comprehensive review.

B. Discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General

28. The number of speakers involved in the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General was 317 in 2019, compared to 305, 295 and 294 in 2018, 2017 and 2016, respectively. All 317 speeches could be accommodated in the same number of sittings (nine) but in less working time (32 hours and 30 minutes in 2019 compared to 32 hours and 50 minutes in 2018) than in the previous year, thanks in particular to the timely commencement of sittings by all four presiding Conference Officers and stricter compliance with and enforcement of the five-minute time limit through the use of a visual and sound time management device. As a result, only one morning sitting and two evening sittings went beyond schedule.

29. One of the measures approved specifically for the Centenary Session was a derogation to the Standing Orders so that each Government represented at the Conference had the right to address the plenary only once, rather than having the two slots allowed for in the Standing Orders (one speech by a Government delegate or their substitute and one speech by the Minister from the same country). While it is difficult to assess whether this measure contributed to containing the rise in the number of registered speakers, consideration could be given to retaining this measure at future sessions of the Conference so as to further improve the time management of plenary sittings devoted to the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General and their duration.

C.   High-level section and thematic forums

30. The Office will build on the experience of the high-level section of the plenary and the thematic forums organized during the Centenary Session to prepare for future world of work summits, in terms of simplified protocol during high-level visits and more diverse and interactive formats for thematic panels, including the non-application of the Standing Orders to their conduct. The experience from the thematic forums could also inform the preparation of any high-level exchanges organized in the context of the approved framework for recurrent discussions. [2]

D.   Votes

31. The Conference held five record votes in 2019 using the electronic voting system: two concerning the recovery of the right to vote by two Members in arrears; one for the approval of the Programme and Budget for 2020–21; and two for the adoption of the Convention and the Recommendation concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. The first three votes were organized outside the plenary as a time-saving measure and the remaining two were held within the Assembly Hall in the course of the morning plenary sitting on the last day of the Conference to highlight the solemn legislative function of the Conference.

32. Until 2019, votes in plenary were held within a dedicated Wi-Fi network only available inside the Assembly Hall and with the use of specially configured tablets; votes held outside the plenary were web-based but only possible using the devices made available by the ILO (outside the Assembly Hall and the Governing Body room). For the first time in 2019, all votes were web-based and were possible using any device connected to the web, not only using dedicated tablets provided by the Office.

33. While the time necessary in 2019 for the web-based votes on the Convention and the Recommendation was similar to the average time of votes conducted in a closed network using configured tablets (between 15 and 20 minutes per vote), the experience in 2019 showed that over 95 per cent of the votes were cast within the five minutes following the opening of the vote: the vote was kept open for a longer period to allow a dozen delegates who had logged into the voting system to cast their vote by validating their options. The difficulty faced by these few delegates had to do with the size of the interface screen, as on some small devices or smartphones the final validation button did not appear on the screen. The Office is already working on a solution to make sure that the full voting interface becomes compatible with all mobile devices and will provide more detailed explanations and demonstrations before each vote. With this simple fix, it should be possible in future to conduct any vote within less than ten minutes.

34. The advantage of a web-based vote is that delegates can vote regardless of their location, such as from their group meetings or during committee sittings, without a plenary sitting having to be reserved for the conduct of the vote. At the same time, some consider that it is not appropriate for delegates to cast a vote if not present on Conference premises or even in Geneva. Experience in 2019 has shown that the possibility of voting from outside the Conference premises did not increase the number of participants in the vote. On the contrary, of some 580 delegates entitled to vote, barely more than half took part in the three votes held outside the plenary (310 delegates in the votes on the arrears of contributions from Sierra Leone and Somalia and 338 delegates in the vote on the

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[2] GB.331/INS/3.

Programme and Budget proposals for 2020–21), compared to the 476 and 453 delegates who cast votes on the Convention and the Recommendation concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, respectively. The time during which the vote remained open for the three votes held outside the plenary was announced in the *Daily Bulletin* and repeated on the electronic boards and the app and in announcements made in committees.

35. This difference in participation rates depending on whether a vote is held inside or outside the plenary is consistent with votes held at recent sessions of the Conference and seems to indicate that there is a clear preference for votes to be held in plenary. In view of the speed and efficiency of accessing the web-based system from any device, there no longer seems to be any time-saving reason for holding votes outside the plenary. If votes are organized in plenary with a short lead time announced by the presiding Officer, the possibility for delegates not present in Geneva to take part in the vote will be significantly reduced, as they would not know the exact time of the vote nor for how long it would remain open.

36. It is therefore proposed to continue trialling this approach in 2020, all the more so as at least 32 votes may be required: the abrogation of eight Conventions and withdrawal of 20 Conventions and Recommendations, as well as two votes as a minimum in each of the three electoral colleges for the Governing Body elections for the 2020–23 term.

E. Adoption of committee reports in plenary

37. As recommended by the Governing Body in March, [3] in 2019 only the outcomes of the technical committees were presented to the Conference. The report or summary of proceedings of each committee was finalized and web-posted after the end of the Conference, with committee members having as a minimum two weeks to request any corrections to their own statements. [4] This measure was introduced with a view to providing technical committees with additional sittings for their deliberations, and committee secretariats with more time to finalize and translate the committee's summary of proceedings. This approach seems to have achieved its purpose without raising any major difficulties and it is proposed to maintain it at future sessions of the Conference.

38. The Governing Body may also wish to review the relevance of appointing a Reporter in each committee set up by the Conference. Under article 57 of the Standing Orders, each committee has to elect "from among its members one or more Reporters to present the result of its deliberations to the Conference on [the committee's] behalf. Before presenting a report to the committee for its approval, the Reporter or Reporters shall submit it to the Officers of the committee". However, it should be recalled that as per current practice, the summaries of proceedings of technical committees are no longer produced in session nor presented to the committees or the Conference, while the work and outcomes of technical committees are presented to the Conference by the three Officers of each committee. It should also be noted that the Government group, which is normally called upon to appoint Reporters often has difficulty to identify volunteers.

39. It will also be recalled that time limits were introduced in 2019 for the discussion of technical committee reports in plenary, with 15 minutes in all being allowed for the presentation of the report by the Chairperson and Reporter of each committee; ten minutes for the presentation by the Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons of

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[3] See para. 23 of GB.335/INS/2/2.

[4] The production and adoption of the report of the CAS is referred to in paras 47–48 of the present document.

committees; five minutes for group interventions; and two minutes for individual interventions. Table 2 shows the time required for the discussion and adoption of each committee's outcome in 2019, including the time spent on the introductions made by the Officers of each committee

Table 2.   Time devoted to the discussion and adoption of committee reports in plenary

	Overall duration of the discussion	Presentation by Committee Officers				Group and individual interventions and adoption of outcomes
		Chairperson and reporter	Employer Vice-Chairperson	Worker Vice-Chairperson	Total Officers	
CAS	1h 40 min	20 min	30 min	17 min	67 min	33 min
Standard-Setting Committee	2h 50 min (including 35 min for the two votes)	17 min	7 min	12 min	36 min	2h 13 min
Committee of the Whole	1h 40 min	22 min	12 min	20 min	54 min	46 min

40. In view of differences in adhering to the time limits decided in 2019, the question arises as to their suitability in terms of length and whether they should be formalized and applied more strictly. This might prove essential if the adoption of the outcomes of all four major committees at a standard Conference session (the CAS plus three technical committees) is to take place on the last day of the Conference (where no committee manages to finalize its work on the Wednesday afternoon of the second week).

F.   *Provisional Records*

41. On the recommendation of the Governing Body, [5] in 2019 all records of the proceedings of plenary sittings were produced and published after the Conference session.

42. The opening statements and those of the dignitaries were posted online in the original language soon after being delivered, together with the video and audio recordings of the interventions, including the audio recording of the interpretation in the three official languages of the Conference (English, French and Spanish). The *Provisional Records* of these sittings, of the sittings in which committee outcomes were adopted, and of the closing ceremony were prepared by the Office in the three official languages and published on the Conference website as they became available, one month after the end of the Conference at the latest.

43. As in 2018, the verbatim record of the discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General comprised in 2019 the transcription of the speeches and of their interpretation in the three official languages. They were posted on the Conference website at the end of August 2019. In order to meet the demands of many constituents, in 2019 a separate video recording of each speech delivered during these discussions was made available in addition to the audio recording and pdf file of the speech in the original language provided at previous Conference sessions. [6] All *Provisional Records* of the 2018 and 2019 sessions will be compiled into a single

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[5] See para. 13 of GB.335/INS/2/2.

[6] See the "Videos on demand" and "Audio recordings of the delegates' speeches in English, French and Spanish" links in the Media centre or Live coverage web pages of the 108th Session of the Conference.

searchable pdf file for each year, including the verbatim of the plenary discussions, and made available on the Conference website.

44. Unless constituents see reasons to review these arrangements, it is proposed to maintain them for future sessions of the Conference.

Part III.   Conference committees

A.   Standing committees

Selection Committee and Finance Committee

45. The measures introduced in 2018 to streamline the opening formalities of the Conference (by having those formalities approved directly by the Conference, without the Selection Committee's intervention) and to simplify the work of the Finance Committee and the Selection Committee (by web-posting their working documents and having the Officers adopt the committee reports subject to subsequent corrections by committee members) were repeated in 2019. Moreover, it did not prove necessary to convene the Selection Committee in 2019, as no substantive matter required its intervention.

46. It is proposed to maintain all these measures as they represent an important factor contributing to the simplification and streamlining of Conference procedures. In 2020, however, it may prove necessary to convene a meeting of the Selection Committee to consider the proposed abrogations and withdrawals on the Conference agenda.

Committee on the Application of Standards

47. On the recommendation of the informal tripartite working group on the working methods of the CAS, in 2019 most of the committee's report was verbatim, rather than in summary form as in previous years. As the verbatim part of the report was significantly longer than the summary of proceedings, the compilation, finalization and translation of part II of the Report of the Committee required additional time and was therefore made available on the Conference website in the three working languages one month following the Conference closure. Part 1 of the CAS report continues to be published in three languages for its adoption by the Conference Plenary. The proposed approach was developed by the Business Innovations Unit in their support to the International Labour Standards Department (NORMES) with two objectives: (i) improve transparency, and (ii) reduce legal staff time devoted to the production of the report. Initial feedback from constituents seems to suggest that the testing of the new approach has produced positive results in both the above-mentioned dimensions and it would therefore appear appropriate to continue producing the verbatim report, while examining ways of making it more cost-effective.

48. All other working arrangements put in place over the past years in the CAS (programme of work of the committee, time management, seating arrangements, etc.) continue to be subject to continuous improvements. The informal tripartite working group on the working methods of the CAS remains the forum to continue discussing possible further enhancements in the Committee's functioning.

Credentials Committee

49. Following the positive experience in 2018, the Credentials Committee and its secretariat were again located at the ILO headquarters building in 2019. In addition, the Credentials Committee met in Room I equipped with simultaneous interpretation facilities, thereby improving efficiency and also enhancing the visibility of the Committee to the satisfaction of its members. It is proposed to maintain these arrangements, which will also facilitate the allocation of the reduced space available in the Palais des Nations during its renovation between 2020 and 2023.

50. The caseload of the Credentials Committee experienced a significant reduction in 2019 to 20 monitoring cases, objections and complaints, compared to the peak years of 2017 and 2018, with 40 monitoring cases, objections and complaints each year. The 2019 figure is more in line with the caseload average of 25 cases per year seen in previous sessions. It is, however, difficult to assess whether the reduction in 2019 represents a return to a normal levels of workload or whether it was an exception due to the special nature of the Centenary Session of the Conference. The Office will continue to monitor and report on the situation in case special measures become necessary to cope with a new surge in the volume of work of the Credentials Committee. In the meantime, no further changes are proposed beyond those already introduced in the context of the two-week format of the Conference. It is important to recall that continuity in the membership of the Credentials Committee and familiarity with its mandate are a major contributing factor to the efficiency of its work and its ability to review thoroughly all cases submitted to it.

51. Consideration could be given to simplifying the determination of the quorum required for the validity of any vote in plenary. Under article 20, paragraph 1(2) of the Standing Orders of the Conference, the Conference provisional quorum is determined in a brief report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body issued as a *Provisional Record* on the eve of the Conference. [7] It is based on the number of delegates accredited at that time. Thereafter, the quorum should be determined under the authority of the Credentials Committee on the basis of registered delegates. [8] In practice, however, the quorum is automatically calculated and determined by the Conference Management System on the basis of the number of delegates registered at the Conference a few minutes before any vote is taken, with no actual intervention from the Credentials Committee.

52. The provisional quorum fixed on the eve of the opening day serves only in the event of a vote prior to the appointment of the Credentials Committee and would be unlikely to be attained in practice as it is based on the number of accredited delegates, many of whom are not yet in attendance. It is therefore proposed to abolish the determination of the provisional quorum based on accreditations and, instead, determine it at the start of the opening sitting, on the basis of registered delegates, under the authority of the Chairperson of the Governing Body.

53. In addition, the information on the composition of the Conference contained in the brief report of the Governing Body Chairperson could appear on a webpage dedicated to such information, which would be updated on a daily basis and before a scheduled vote based on the registration data contained in the Conference Management System. This would eventually permit the abolition of the brief report by amending the relevant provisions in the framework of the comprehensive review of the Standing Orders, and in the meantime

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[7] See for instance *Provisional Record* No. 3A issued on Sunday, 9 June 2019.

[8] See the first report of the Credentials Committee of the 108th Session of the Conference in *Provisional Record* No. 3B.

by means of a suspension of the relevant provision. The information on the webpage would also constitute the basis for comments made by the Credentials Committee in its reports on the composition of the Conference.

B.   Technical committees

54. At regular sessions of the Conference, a distinction is made between standard-setting committees and non-standard-setting committees (corresponding to general and recurrent discussions) in terms of their methods of work and work programmes. Since the two technical committees set up in 2019 (the Standard-Setting Committee: Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (second discussion) and the Committee of the Whole constituted to consider an ILO Centenary outcome document) faced similar challenges, it is proposed to review their functioning jointly.

55. A number of adjustments were made in 2019 to the internal working methods as a result of improvements proposed by the Business Innovations Unit or requested by the technical committees themselves to ensure that they could complete their work within the two-week duration of the Conference. While the challenge seems to have been successfully met, several lessons can be learned to further improve the efficiency of committees, while ensuring better conditions for delegates and members of the Conference secretariat.

Committees' working hours and time management

56. In order for committees to have additional sittings and working time without having to resort to night work, provision was made, following the practice of the CAS, for technical committees to hold three sittings each day (morning, afternoon and evening), with the last sitting to end at 10 p.m.; extended sittings beyond this time were to become an exception subject to committee approval. In addition, it was possible for committees to hold sittings on Thursday of the second week, rather than having to finalize their work on Wednesday evening. A consequence of this measure was that the draft reports of the committees (the summaries of proceedings) only became available in the three official languages after the Conference closure, with committee members being given an extended deadline of two weeks to submit corrections to their own interventions.

57. Table 3 shows the number of committee sittings used by each committee to conclude its business and their overall duration (excluding the drafting committee for the Standard-Setting Committee), as well as the number of hours worked after 10 p.m.

Table 3.   Sittings and working hours of committees

	CAS			Standard-Setting Committee			Committee of the Whole		
	Sittings	Hours	After 10 p.m.	Sittings	Hours	After 10 p.m.	Sittings	Hours	After 10 p.m.
Monday 10	1	2h15		1	2h30		--	--	
Tuesday 11	3	5h40		2	6h15	15min	3	5h30	
Wednesday 12	3	7h55		3	7h		2	5h40	30min
Thursday 13	3	8h10		3	7h		2	6h	
Friday 14	3	8h20		3	8h		3	8h	
Saturday 15	3	8h		3	8h		3	8h	
Monday 17	3	7h20		3	8h		3	10h	2h

Tuesday 18	3	8h	3	9h	1h	3 *	10h	2h
Wednesday 19	2	4h50	2	6h15		3 *	11h	3h
Thursday 20	1	2h15	1	2h		2	8h	
Total	**24**	**62h30**	**–**	**24**	**56h**	**1h15**	**24**	**73h10**	**7h30**

* As drafting group.

58. These figures show that it is possible to eliminate or limit night sittings through more regular working schedules determined in advance, as well as through tighter chairing of committee discussions with less recourse to suspensions for group consultations or negotiations during scheduled plenary sittings. Such regularity also helps to ensure better management and distribution of overall Conference interpretation capacity.

Reduction of the time devoted to opening remarks and general discussion

59. In the Standard-Setting Committee this was reduced to a single sitting of 2 hours and 30 minutes, due in part to the consultations held and preparatory work done before the Conference, and in part to the introduction and enforcement of time limits for interventions through a new visual and sound time management device. The general discussion of the Committee of the Whole was significantly longer due to the specificity and uniqueness of the exercise, which included extended discussions on the working methods of the committee. The use of the time management device was nevertheless also appreciated.

Introduction of a new online system for the submission of amendments

60. A new online system to facilitate and expedite the submission, processing and translation of amendments was successfully trialled in 2019 in both technical committees. The system enabled delegates to start preparing their amendments before the opening of the Conference session. In the case of the Standard-Setting Committee, it was even agreed through informal tripartite consultations to set the first deadline for the submission of amendments prior to the first sitting of the committee. This allowed for the discussion of amendments to start a day earlier than usual, on Tuesday afternoon of the first week. In order to avoid possible challenges to this unusual situation, it would be important to have the Conference make a decision in this regard at its opening sitting.

Committees' working methods

61. Both the Standard-Setting Committee and the Committee of the Whole adopted at times more flexible procedural approaches to the discussion of draft text, in particular through the simultaneous discussion of several amendments submitted to longer text segments, rather than the traditional sequential discussion of amendments provision by provision. This proved particularly efficient although the need to ensure legal certainty as well as the clarity and transparency of the amendment process was also emphasized.

62. The flexible approach of the Committee of the Whole in the use of a drafting group as a mechanism to deal with more controversial matters unresolved in plenary also contributed to a great extent to the success of the Committee's work. While the Committee of the Whole was unique in many respects, some of the lessons learned might prove useful in the preparation and improvement of the working arrangements of non-standard-setting committees. For instance, the argument has been put forward that the

preparation and availability of draft text for general or recurrent discussions, elaborated before the Conference in consultation with the tripartite constituents, would facilitate discussions in the committees. Thus, instead of the traditional format and sequence of non-standard-setting committees (a general debate in committee plenary, elaboration by the Office of tentative conclusions, consideration of those tentative conclusions in a drafting group of limited membership, and the consideration again in committee plenary of amendments submitted to the conclusions issued by the drafting group), committees could have shorter general discussions and deal with draft conclusions directly in plenary in a more inclusive and transparent discussion. Drafting groups could therefore be reserved as a tool for the negotiation of specific parts of the draft outcome document. In this connection, reference has also been made to the difficulty of justifying the presence of delegates in Geneva to serve on a technical committee of an overall duration of nine days, three of which are, however, only open to a limited number of drafting group members.

Drafting committee

63. The drafting committee of the standard-setting committee met three times for four hours each time after the closure of the evening sitting of the committee. Reviewing the negotiated text at regular intervals as discussions progress proves the only manner to complete the work of the drafting committee in time. The introduction of the final clauses of the draft Convention by the Committee drafting committee (practically merging the role and functions of the Committee drafting committee and the Conference drafting committee) considerably simplified and expedited the process. The timely nomination of members, especially those of the government group, continues to be a challenge. As per his/her institutional function, the Rapporteur of the standard-setting committee attended and actively participated in all the drafting committee meetings. A special arrangement was successfully trialled for ensuring the linguistic consistency of the Spanish version of the draft Convention and Recommendation with the authentic English and French texts. The catering and transport arrangements (members were provided with taxi vouchers upon request) did not represent particular difficulties.

Committee secretariats

64. Additional staff was seconded to committee secretariats, in particular linguistic staff, to reduce night work to the extent possible and increase productivity.

Draft decision

65. *The Governing Body requested the Director-General to prepare for its consideration at its 338th Session (March 2020) a detailed programme of work for the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference (2020) based on a two-week format and taking into account its discussion of document GB.337/INS/3/3.*