

## **Special procedures**

### **Report by the Director-General**

1. Following a series of consultations with Member States on the holding of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly, the Executive Board agreed through a written silence procedure that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly would open on Monday, 18 May 2020 and be suspended no later than Tuesday, 19 May 2020, and that it would take place virtually, using video conference technology.
2. Special procedures need to be put in place so that the Health Assembly can pursue its work in such virtual *de minimis* meetings. This report is intended to enable the Health Assembly to take a decision in that regard. The special procedures to regulate the conduct of virtual *de minimis* meetings of the Health Assembly are set out in the Annex to the draft decision below.

### **ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

3. In view of the foregoing, the Health Assembly may wish to consider the following draft decision.

The Seventy-third World Health Assembly, having considered the report on special procedures<sup>1</sup> decided:

- (1) to adopt the special procedures to regulate the conduct of virtual *de minimis* meetings of the World Health Assembly set out in the Annex to this decision; and
- (2) that the said special procedures shall apply to the meetings of the Health Assembly opening on 18 and closing no later than 19 May 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> Document A73/33.

## ANNEX

### **SPECIAL PROCEDURES TO REGULATE THE CONDUCT OF VIRTUAL *DE MINIMIS* MEETINGS OF THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

#### **RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

1. The Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly shall continue to apply in full, except to the extent that they are inconsistent with these special procedures, in which case the Health Assembly's decision to adopt these special procedures shall operate as a decision to suspend the relevant Rules of Procedure to the extent necessary in accordance with Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

#### **ATTENDANCE AND QUORUM**

2. Attendance by Member States, Associate Members, Observers, invited representatives of the United Nations and of other participating intergovernmental organizations shall be through a secured access to videoconference or other electronic means allowing representatives to hear other participants and to address the meeting remotely.

3. Attendance by non-State actors in official relations with WHO shall be through electronic means allowing representatives to hear other participants.

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

#### **ADDRESSING THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

5. Member States and Associate Members, as well as Observers, invited representatives of United Nations and other participating intergovernmental organizations, and non-State actors in official relations with WHO are invited to post written statements of no more than 600 words in one of the official languages of the Organization on the website under the item on COVID-19 in advance of the opening of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> This will affect notably the relevant provisions of the following Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly as they appear in the 49th edition of the Basic documents:

- Rule 24, Rules 30–42 and Rule 51 (Committee on Credentials, General Committee, main committees and subcommittees), as well as the relevant provisions of Rule 13 and Rules 44–48 insofar as they refer to these committees;
- Rule 49 (formal proposals for items on the agenda);
- Rules 73, 78–79 and 81–86 (voting by show of hands and secret ballot);
- Rules 101–105 (process for nominating and electing Members entitled to designate a person to serve on the Board by secret ballot);
- Rule 121 (amendments and additions to the Rules of Procedure) insofar as these special procedures may be regarded as additions to the Rules of Procedure and to the extent that Rule 121 requires receipt and consideration of a report thereon by an appropriate committee.

6. The Heads of Member State and Associate Member delegations shall also have the opportunity, if they so wish to submit pre-recorded video statements of no more than two minutes in duration in advance of the opening of the session, if possible, by Friday, 15 May 2020 at 18:00 (CET). Those video statements will be broadcast at the virtual meeting in lieu of a live intervention under the item on COVID-19.

7. Written statements, in the language of submission, and video statements so submitted shall form part of the official records of the session.

8. During the virtual session, only Member States, Associate Members, Observers, and invited representatives of the United Nations and of other participating intergovernmental organizations shall be provided with the opportunity to take the floor. Individual statements will be limited to two minutes and regional and group statements will be limited to four minutes.

9. Any Member wishing to take the floor should signal their wish to speak. Any Member wishing to raise a point of order or exercise a right of reply in relation to an oral or pre-recorded statement made at the virtual Health Assembly should signal their intention to do so. It is understood that, in accordance with well-established practice, any right of reply to an oral or pre-recorded statement made at the virtual meeting shall be exercised at the end of the virtual meeting. Any Member wishing to exercise a right of reply in relation to a written statement should do it in writing as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than 10 working days after the suspension and/or closure of the relevant virtual session. Statements so submitted shall form part of the official records of the meeting in the language of submission.

## **COMMITTEES**

10. All business shall be conducted in plenary. Accordingly, the General Committee, Main Committees and Committee on Credentials shall not be established. Matters normally determined by the General Committee under Rule 32 shall be determined by the plenary. Credentials shall be considered as set out below.

## **REGISTRATION AND CREDENTIALS**

11. Online registration will follow normal practice. Additional information is provided in the related Circular Letter.

12. In accordance with Rule 23, the names of representatives, which in the case of Members and Associate Members shall take the form of credentials, shall be communicated electronically to the Director-General if possible no later than 14 May. Given the need to facilitate virtual access to the meeting, all credentials and lists of representatives should be submitted electronically.

13. The President and Vice-Presidents of the Seventy-second World Health Assembly having assessed, before the opening of the Seventy-third session, whether credentials of Members and Associate Members are in conformity with the requirements of the Rules of Procedure, shall report to the Health Assembly accordingly during the opening with a view to the Health Assembly making a decision thereon.

14. The President and Vice-Presidents of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly shall be invited, before the opening of a resumed session, to assess whether new or revised credentials of Members and Associate Members are in conformity with the requirements of the Rules of Procedure and shall report to the Health Assembly accordingly during the opening of a resumed session with a view to the Health Assembly making a decision thereon.

## **MEETINGS**

15. All meetings of the Health Assembly shall be held in public. The virtual Health Assembly shall be broadcast on the WHO website, in line with usual practice.

## **SUBMISSION OF FORMAL PROPOSALS FOR THE RESUMED SESSION**

16. The first day of the resumed session of the Health Assembly shall be regarded as the first day of the session for the purposes of Rule 49, by which date formal proposals relating to items of the agenda may be introduced.

## **DECISION-MAKING**

17. All decisions of the Health Assembly taken in virtual meetings should as far as possible be taken by consensus. In any event, given the virtual nature of the meeting, no decision shall be taken by show of hands vote or by secret ballot. In the event of a roll-call vote, and in line with normal practice, should any delegate fail to cast a vote for any reason during the roll-call, that delegate shall be called upon a second time after the conclusion of the initial roll-call. Should the delegate fail to cast a vote on the second roll-call, the delegation shall be recorded as absent.

18. Brief statements consisting in explanation of votes may, if not made orally, be submitted in writing no later than three working days following the suspension and/or closure of the relevant virtual session. Statements so submitted shall form part of the official records of the meeting in the language of submission.

## **ELECTION OF MEMBERS ENTITLED TO DESIGNATE A PERSON TO SERVE ON THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

19. In accordance with the well-established practice of the Health Assembly by which Members entitled to designate a person to serve on the Executive Board are elected by acclamation under Rule 80 following nominations made by the six regions, the President shall propose to the Health Assembly to proceed without taking a ballot on an agreed list of candidates reflecting the nominations made by the six regions, provided that:

- (a) the list of nominations shall have been made available to all delegations at least three days in advance of the opening of the Health Assembly; and
- (b) no Member State shall have informed the Director-General of an objection to the list of nominations within two days of the list of nominations having been made available unless such objection was subsequently withdrawn by the Member State concerned.

20. In the event that the virtual meeting of the Health Assembly is suspended with a view to being resumed at a later date, the date of suspension of the virtual meeting shall be regarded as the closing of the session solely for the purposes of ascertaining the beginning and end of the terms of office of each Member entitled to designate a person to serve on the Executive Board under Rule 105.

## **LANGUAGES**

21. For the avoidance of doubt, Rule 88 shall continue to apply, whereby speeches made in an official language shall be interpreted into the other official languages.

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