

Special procedures

Report by the Director-General

1. Responding to organizational difficulties caused by the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Executive Board at its 147th session decided that “in the event that limitations to physical meetings preclude the holding of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, the 148th session of the Executive Board and the thirty-third and thirty-fourth meetings of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board in 2021 as envisaged, adjustments to the arrangements for these governing bodies meetings should be made by the Executive Board or, exceptionally, by the Officers of the Board, in consultation with the Director-General.”¹
2. The Executive Board further decided through a written silence procedure that the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly would be held virtually, using video conference technology.
3. As a consequence of the Board’s decision, special procedures need to be put in place so that the Health Assembly can pursue its work in such a virtual meeting. 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 meetings of the Health Assembly are set out in the Annex to the draft decision below.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

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

The Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, having considered the report on special procedures² decided to adopt the special procedures set out in the Annex to this decision in order to regulate the conduct of virtual meetings of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly opening on 24 May 2021 and closing no later than 1 June 2021.

¹ Decision EB147(8) (2020).

² Document A74/45.

ANNEX

SPECIAL PROCEDURES TO REGULATE THE CONDUCT OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

RULES OF PROCEDURE

1. The Rules of Procedure of the 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 Health Assembly.¹

ATTENDANCE

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

QUORUM

3. It is understood that virtual attendance of Member States shall be taken into account when calculating the presence of a quorum.

ADDRESSING THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

4. Member States, Associate Members, Observers, invited representatives of the United Nations and of other participating intergovernmental organizations as well as, at the invitation of the presiding officer, non-State actors in official relations with the Organization, shall be provided with the opportunity to take the floor.

5. Member States and Associate Members shall also have the opportunity, if they so wish, to submit individual pre-recorded video statements of no more than three minutes, and regional and group statements of no more than four minutes. Pre-recorded video statements should be submitted in advance of the opening of the session. The video statements so submitted shall be broadcast in lieu of a live intervention.

6. Any Member State wishing to raise a point of order or exercise a right of reply in relation to either an oral or a pre-recorded video statement made at the Health Assembly should signal their intention to do so. It is understood that, in accordance with well-established practice, any right of reply to either an oral or a pre-recorded video statement shall be exercised at the end of the relevant meeting.

¹ 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:

- Rules 73, 78-79 and 81 through 86 (voting by show of hands and secret ballot); and
- 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.

DECISION-MAKING

7. All decisions of the Health Assembly should as far as possible be taken by consensus. In any event, no decision shall be taken by show of hands or secret ballot.
8. In the event that a vote is required, voting shall take place by roll call conducted through the virtual system.
9. During a roll-call vote, 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 call, the delegation concerned shall be recorded as absent.
10. The procedures set out above are adopted for the purpose of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly only as exceptional measures to enable the work of the Organization to continue during the extraordinary situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and they should not be considered as setting a precedent for future Health Assemblies.

= = =