

INFORMATION NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Meetings arrangements

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and within the parameters of the various health and safety measures, including travel restrictions, the virtual / hybrid format model was approved by the extended Bureau of the Conference via silence procedure on 19 June 2020 for the following meetings:

- The eleventh session of the Working Group on International Cooperation (7-8 July);
- The twelfth session of the Working Group of Governmental Experts on Technical Assistance (9-10 July);
- The second meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental Expert Group established in accordance with resolution 9/1 (13-15 July); and
- The seventh session of the Working Group on Firearms (16-17 July).

The management department of the United Nations Office in Vienna advised that meetings without the physical presence of delegates at the VIC are still the format that is strongly recommended for all meetings, to prevent and reduce health and safety risks stemming from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this guidance, the following will apply.

All the above-mentioned meetings will be held, as approved, with only the Chair (if feasible), Secretary and Secretariat staff physically present in the conference room. **All other participants will be connected remotely.**

2. Meeting times

The duration of each morning and afternoon meeting is reduced to 2 hours each.

The morning sessions will be held from **12 noon to 2 p.m.** and the afternoon sessions from **4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Central European Summer Time (CEST)**. Upon consultation with the Chairs of all working groups, this harmonized schedule was identified for all meetings and seeks to accommodate the time zones of the Chairs of the working groups.

Based on these meeting times, an updated organization of work is published on the webpage of each Working Group. The revised organizational arrangements and schedule of work of the meetings will be outlined by the Chair under agenda item 1 of each meeting and reflected in the final reports accordingly.

3. Documentation

Pre-session documents of the meetings will be issued electronically. In-session documentation (i.e. the parts of the report for adoption) will also be made available electronically.

4. Interpretation

The United Nations Secretariat will use the interpretation platform, *Interprefy*, to facilitate the interpretation into all six official United Nations languages. The *Interprefy* platform allows 300 participants to be assigned a “speaking&listening role”, all other participants will only have “listening role”. Delegations are requested to notify the Secretariat about the distribution of roles (speaking role / listening role) in each delegation when requesting the registration of their delegates through a Note Verbale.

Please consult the relevant *Interprefy* Participant Guide for participants with speaking and listening function or only listening function.

5. Statements

Participants to the above-mentioned meetings are encouraged to send their general statements prior to the session and in written format to the Conference Management Service (unov.conference@un.org, untoc.cop@un.org) so that the general statements can be made available on the public website of the meeting. No general statements should be made during the meeting due to the time constraints.

Statements will have a maximum duration of 3 minutes. Panellist presentations will have a maximum duration that will be communicated by the respective Secretariats directly to the panellists.

Furthermore, the secretariat wishes to bring to the attention of delegations the below guide for the *Interprefy* platform for participants with speaking and listening roles.

6. Preventive Measures within the VIC, if applicable:

Delegates are reminded to adhere to and practice the following measures, subject at all times to the advice and guidance by VMS, to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Frequent and correct handwashing with soap and water or hand disinfection as an alternative;
- Maintain physical distancing of one meter as much as possible (see Section G);
- Wear face masks in public areas (see section i);
- Practice good coughing etiquette (such as coughing in the elbow);
- Avoid shaking hands and touching your face;
- Inform VMS of symptoms and seek appropriate guidance before coming to the office;
- Stay home when sick with fever and/or respiratory symptoms; and
- Delegates are responsible for following COVID-19 related requirements.
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a) Physical Distancing in the VIC

Physical distancing measures should be followed in the VIC. Individuals should avoid close contact and keep a distance of a minimum of one meter from other individuals and should not be in close contact of less than one meter for longer than 15 minutes.

b) Entering and Exiting the VIC

All persons entering/exiting the VIC should adhere to physical distancing measures and are required to wear face masks when accessing/exiting security checkpoints (pedestrian and vehicular). These occupational safety measures also apply during any interaction with security staff inside the VIC.

c) Doors

Delegates are advised to limit the touching of doorknobs, e.g. keeping all office doors open, using elbows, etc.

d) Elevators

Use of elevators will be subject to physical distancing guidelines and will be limited to a maximum of 4 passengers at any one time. Queues are anticipated, and staff and other personnel are encouraged to consider staggering arrival and departure times. Staff are reminded of One Up – Two Down use of stairs, and are encouraged to consider using the stairs more frequently.

e) Hallways

Most hallways in the VIC are wide enough to maintain a distance of one meter for two directional flow. Narrower hallways, for example around elevator bays, will be marked for flow in one direction only

f) Stairwells

Stairwells in the VIC are wide enough to maintain a distance of one meter while passing another individual. In the case of narrower stairwells, staff must make the necessary room to pass without touching and must pass as quickly as possible.

g) Services

Physical distancing and wearing of face masks must be followed when queuing for and availing of service such as the Cafeteria, pharmacy, Commissary and other VIC commercial services

h) Distance Markings and Signage

Distance markings of floors in all common areas (i.e. all ground floors in buildings A, B, C, D, E, F, G, M, as well as 2nd and 4th floors of building C) have been prepared.

Delegates should pay attention to markings to maintain physical distancing. Markings throughout the VIC may be displayed on the floor, walls, or signage pillars according to the location and surface materials (e.g. floor markings cannot be easily placed on carpeting).

i) Face Masks

In keeping with the most recent regulations and advice from the Austrian authorities, face masks will be required at the VIC in the following settings:

- When entering and exiting all perimeter gates as well as any contact with UNDSS Security Officers;
- At the Pharmacy and VIC Medical Service premises
- Where one-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- While no longer a requirement in most settings, anyone may continue to wear a face mask in the VIC, if they wish to do so;
- Delegates are advised to have their own masks and are reminded that homemade cloth masks are adequate. In addition, masks may be procured in the pharmacy.

8. Useful References:

- [COVID-19 website for all UN system personnel](#);
- [Latest information from WHO](#);
- [General Guidelines for VIC return](#)