

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

112th meeting  
Geneva (hybrid), 14 December 2020

Item 12

Informal Document 2020/58

**UNECE meeting servicing arrangements:  
Proposal to increase meeting servicing quota during the  
COVID 19 period and the liquidity crisis**

### Note by the Secretariat

1. On 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee adopted Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period. Inter alia, it requested “the Secretariat to continue exploring possible solutions to the issue of interpretation in remote meetings in accordance with Rules of procedure 18 and 19, with a view of proposing solutions to the membership as soon as possible.” This note is presented to EXCOM further to this request. It complements earlier updates on the issue, most recently provided in informal document 2020/49 of 5 October 2020.

2. In late October 2020, UNOG informed the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) that the reduced meeting servicing quota established for the fourth quarter of 2020 will remain in effect for the first quarter 2021. (As UNOG received only 49% allotment under non post items, expenditures and temporary capacity had to be curtailed. Covid-19 response measures have further reduced the availability of fully operational meeting rooms in the Palais des Nations.)

3. Instead of 3 meetings (am/pm), UNECE will receive interpretation in its working languages E/R/F only for 1 meeting (am/pm) per day. Additionally, the length of hybrid meetings (in room with remote participation option) will continue to be reduced to 2 hours (instead of the customary 3 hours) if remote interventions exceed a total of 30 minutes. **De facto, these constraints reduce UNECE meeting servicing capacity from the original 18 hours to 4-6 hours a day, a loss of capacity between 67 – 78%.**

4. Following the practice applied in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2020, UNECE is, once again, in the process of revising its official calendar of meetings to align to this capacity reductions for the calendar of official meetings. Great flexibility is being applied across the ECE governance architecture to facilitate a maximum of meetings and prioritize business-critical sessions and agenda items. To this end, meetings are being shortened in duration, agendas are being consolidated, and meeting formats are being modified to entirely virtual informal formats, a mixture of informal and formal segments, often with interpretation available only for the decision-making segments.

5. As reported to the 111<sup>th</sup> EXCOM, this situation has significant adverse effects on UNECE’s ability to deliver on its mandate. The Executive Secretary has thus consulted with the Director General of UNOG to explore ad hoc remedial action and ways to increase meeting servicing support beyond the envisaged reduced quota.

6. One option currently under review is to equip an additional meeting room, dedicated exclusively to UNECE activities, with the IT infrastructure required to hold hybrid meetings and supported by a full complement of support staff, ranging from interpreters, meeting servicing assistants, sound operators, and technical moderators.

7. An indicative costing is provided below to illustrate the resource implications for such an arrangement. If approved and fully funded, this could alleviate the capacity shortfall for UNECE meeting servicing to approximately half or one third of the originally approved scope.

8. Once an increased meeting servicing quota of 2 meetings a day (am/pm) is confirmed and UNOG has advised of the lead time required to onboard the personnel and install the technical

equipment, UNECE will elaborate a proposal on a further adjusted meeting calendar that will constitute the foundation for a more detailed costing of the proposal.

### Indicative costing

9. Below is an estimated cost to provide a dedicated meeting room to ECE for hybrid, multilingual meetings. The recurrent operating cost is an estimate for a one full-day meeting (am/pm). The final cost is subject to the actual utilization of the variable resources. Cost related to extrabudgetary meetings would be slightly higher.

			USD
<b>One-time cost to set up a dedicated UNECE room</b>			\$ 10,000
<b>Regular Budget funded meetings</b>			
<b>Variable cost for operating a meeting</b>	Rate	Number	Cost
Daily rate for interpreter for 3 ECE official languages (RB) with 9 booths	\$ 800	9	\$ 7,200
Daily rate for additional meeting services assistant and conference officer (RB)	\$ 240	2	\$ 480
Daily rate for 2 sound operators (sound & recording) (RB)	\$ 350	2	\$ 700
Daily rate for additional GS staff for technical moderation (RB)	\$ 350	2	\$ 700
Additional cost for technical support for two-hour meeting with up to 150 remote participants		1	\$ 1,500
<b>Total estimated cost for ECE hybrid/virtual multilingual events (RB)</b>			<b>\$ 10,580</b>

### Next steps:

EXCOM is invited to consider the below draft decision:

**EXCOM welcomes the initiative taken by the Executive Secretary to address the capacity shortfalls in the servicing for UNECE's official calendar of meetings triggered by the COVID-19 response and the liquidity crisis and supports the approach to outfit an additional meeting room in the Palais des Nations with the equipment required to hold hybrid meetings.**

**EXCOM encourages its membership to urgently make available additional extrabudgetary resources to fund the cost for operating meetings in this room with full interpretation in English, Russian and French.**