

(Tentative) Summary of the meeting of the core group on working methods

4th March & 25th March 2019

I. Structure of the written account and discussion

The Coordinator pointed out that the core group will need to produce a written account to the 2019 Joint Meeting of the Boards (JMB), containing introduction and findings/recommendations sections. The introduction section will consist of factual description of the composition of the core group, meeting history, reference material for the discussion (joint-response of Secretariats, 2018 JMB President's summary, Presidents' non-paper), and the process of incorporating regional group comments and feedback in the discussion of the core group. The finding section will be composed of areas of convergence, and areas of non-convergence that may require further discussion under the guidance of the four Executive Boards. Mindful that the Core Group will have to further deliberate, the recommendation section will request that the areas of convergence identified be adopted at each respective Executive Board in the form of a decision, and also suggest the format of future discussion on the improvement of the working methods. In line with the suggestion of core group members, the Coordinator proposed the structure (attached template) of the discussion on the working methods of the core group. For coherence and efficiency, the structure of the discussion will be aligned to the structure of the written account, and the summary will construct the findings/recommendations section of the written account.

II. Working methods of the Joint Meeting of the Boards (JMB)

1) Decision-making capacity and alternatives

Areas of convergence

- The Core Group agreed that the working methods of the JMB should be improved with the view of: improving the participation and level of participation at the JMB; discussing joint and actionable issues for possible consideration within respective Executive Boards that have an actual impact on the ground; not infringing on the oversight function of respective Executive Boards; without overlapping with the function of respective Executive Boards and the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment.

Areas of non-convergence

- Some Member States saw value in the JMB evolving into a decision-making body, given an increasing number of joint activities, e.g., pooled funding, joint programming and reporting, and increasing number of common issues like UNDS reform, working methods etc. Others were not in agreement due to concerns of duplication/overlap of the functions of the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment, and decisions of each Executive Board, as well as the various mandates of Funds, Programmes and Entities. Member States would like clarification on the conditions and implications of giving legislative mandate to the JMB, especially regarding the intended scope of its potential mandate (see request to the Secretariat below).
- As a compromise, many Member States showed their interest in the idea of a jointly agreed zero draft decision prepared reflecting discussions at joint briefings/informals and at the JMB, which will be used as the basis for negotiation and adoption of decisions on the

subjects at each respective Executive Board session taking place immediately after the JMB.

- Some Member States mentioned the possibility of having joint reports presented at the JMB with decisions remaining within the purview of each Executive Board.

2) Topics/Themes

Area of convergence

- JMB topics should be those of common interest to all Executive Boards.
- JMB topics on joint/common agenda items at Executive Board sessions, such as working methods, cost-recovery, sexual exploitation and abuse, and newly emerging issues of common interest such as UN Development System reform were suggested.

Areas of non-convergence

- Some Member States supported the topic on the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plans, to which the Secretariats reminded Member States that the Strategic Plans of UNOPS and WFP do not contain the Common Chapter. Some Member States indicated that since ‘audit’ is an agency-specific topic, it should not be included at the JMB.

3) Timing/Duration/Frequency

- A proposal was made to convene the JMB prior to the first regular session.
- Another proposal was to extend the one day JMB to a two-day meeting.
- A third proposal was suggested to convene a JMB ahead of each formal session.

4) Joint informal briefings

Area of convergence

- Member States agreed that joint informal briefings/consultations on the JMB topics should be jointly organized by the agencies.

5) Institutionalization of the Presidents’ Meeting

Areas of convergence

- The Core Group generally converged on the value of institutionalizing the Presidents’ Meeting for enhanced harmonization of common issues and increased coordination among agencies. There was also general consensus of holding the Meeting on a regular basis and of keeping formal minutes of the Meeting.

Areas of non-convergence

- There were varying views on the frequency and timing of the Presidents’ Meetings. It was proposed to convene the Meeting before each formal session of the Executive Board, while other proposals included the idea of convening it ahead of the Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards. There was an additional proposal to add a year-end meeting to discuss lessons learned for handing over to the newly-elected Presidents the following year. Some Member States suggested convening the Presidents’ meetings twice per year.

- It was also suggested that the meetings be organized/coordinated on a rotational basis by the Secretariats.

III. Working methods of the respective governing bodies

1) Bureau

Areas of convergence

- The Core Group agreed on the need to elect the bureaux early on to minimize leadership gap and enhance the role and efficient functioning of the Presidency and Board at large.
- The Group noted that it is the prerogative of the regional groups to nominate respective Bureau members. However, at the same time, stressing the importance of continuity and smooth transition between outgoing and incoming bureaux, the Core Group converged on strongly recommending that the Vice President for the regional group which is expected to assume the Presidency in the following year be selected as President of the Executive Board. The Core Group recognized that this is already an established practice that works well in some agencies whereby one of the Vice-Chairs/Vice-Presidents of the bureau, transitions into the Chair or President in the following year.
- The Core Group also agreed that the term of bureau members was also the prerogative of regional groups. Depending on the regional group, some would prioritize continuity while others would prioritize ensuring appropriate regional representation in the bureau.

2) Sessions

Areas of convergence

- In regards to the number of sessions and the duration of sessions, the Core Group agreed that this was the prerogative of respective Executive Boards.
- There was general consensus on moving the second regular session due to the workload, especially for smaller Missions, ahead of the General Assembly high level week. Thus, it was suggested to look at the different alternatives of adjusting the dates of the second regular session mindful that it does not overlap with other schedules.
- The Group found the proposal of convening consecutive formal sessions of the Executive Boards worth exploring. Avoiding gaps between the formal sessions of the Executive Boards could allow delegates, including those coming from capitals, to participate in the Executive Boards Sessions consecutively and to consolidate the outcomes. Once this proposal is endorsed, the Committee of Conferences will be requested to schedule formal sessions of the Executive Boards consecutively.

Areas of non-convergence

- On the issue of reducing the number of sessions, some Member States proposed removing the second regular session, by perhaps redistributing the respective agenda items to the first regular and annual sessions. Joint topics could be discussed at the JMB.
- Others noted that this proposed change may have implications on the work of respective entities/secretariats, as the potential gap between the Annual and First regular sessions may affect the operational activities of the Funds and Programmes as well as the oversight function of the governing bodies.