



**INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL  
TIMBER COUNCIL**

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FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION  
7-11 November 2022  
Yokohama, Japan (Hybrid Session)

**REPORT OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY GROUP (IAG)  
AT ITS THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING**

**2 November 2022  
Virtual meeting**



**Thirty-sixth Meeting of the Informal Advisory Group (IAG)  
Virtual Meeting, 2 November 2022**

**Report of the Chairperson**

1. The Thirty-sixth Meeting of the IAG was convened virtually on Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 19:00 (JST), chaired by Mr. Jesse Mahoney (Australia), Chairperson of the Council. The meeting was attended by Dr. Mohammed Nurudeen Iddrisu (Ghana), Vice-chairperson of the Council; Ms. Anna Tyler (New Zealand), Chairperson of the Committee on Economics, Statistics and Markets (CEM) and the Committee on Forest Industry (CFI) and also Consumer Spokesperson; Mr. Björn Merckell (Sweden), Chairperson of the Committee on Finance and Administration (CFA); Ms. Siti Syaliza Mustapha (Malaysia), Chairperson of the Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management (CRF); Mr. Jorge Malleux (Peru), Producer Spokesperson; Mr. Yasuyuki Kobayashi (Japan), Representative of the Host Government of the Headquarters, and observer colleague Ms. Marie Tsunoda (Japan); and Ms. Sheam Satkuru, Executive Director (ED), and other senior members of the Secretariat.
2. The Chairperson agreed that the ED would introduce the meeting agenda on his behalf. The ED welcomed the members of the IAG to the meeting.
3. The IAG considered and adopted the following agenda for discussion:
  - A. Brief background of the IAG:
    - Decision 2(LI);
    - Report of the IAG at its Thirty-fifth Meeting (1 July, 26 August and 24 November 2021);
    - General observations by the IAG Members;
  - B. Update on Japan entry requirements and changes to border controls
  - C. Update on the COVID-19 situation in Japan
  - D. Modalities of the 58th ITTC
  - E. Update on preparations for ITTC 58
  - F. Status of Parties to the Agreement
  - G. Status of contributions to the Administrative Account
  - H. Update on CFA policies
  - I. Filling positions of Council officers/bodies
  - J. Consideration of draft decisions/elements of decisions submitted pursuant to ITTC Decision 7(XXXIII):
    - Projects, Pre-Projects and Activities [Decision 1(LVIII)];
    - Extension of the BWP 2021-2022 [Decision 2(LVIII)]
    - Management of the Administrative Budget [Decision 3(LVIII)]
    - Extension of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006 (ITTA) [Decision 4(LVIII)]
  - K. Other matters

**A. Brief background of the IAG**

4. In its deliberations, the IAG noted and made reference to Decision 2(LI) and the Report of the Informal Advisory Group (IAG) at its Thirty-fifth Meeting held virtually on 1 July, 26 August and 24 November 2021, as contained in document ITTC(LVII)/2 dated 26 November 2021.

**B. Update on Japan entry requirements and changes to border controls**

5. The ED reported that Japan very recently minimized the border controls for entry into Japan following the COVID-19 pandemic. Those delegates who would normally require a visa to enter Japan will still need to obtain such a visa, and the Secretariat has been assisting members on this. This session will be held in a hybrid manner, involving both physical and virtual attendance. To date, 183 participants have registered to attend the session, of whom 89 have registered to attend virtually. A total of 20 producer members and 17 consumer members are registered to attend.

**C. Update on COVID-19 situation in Japan**

6. The ED said that cases of COVID-19 have recently started increasing again in Japan. Delegates travelling to Japan to attend the session will need to use a new app introduced by the Government of Japan on November 1 to facilitate their entry into the country. Information on this requirement will be circulated to all participants registered to attend the session in person. The app is only available in English and Japanese, which might pose difficulties for non-English-speaking participants; however, it is expected that assistance will be available at airport immigration areas upon arrival. Vaccination certificates need to be in English; those delegates whose certificates are in another language are advised to carry a translated version and post this to the app as well as the original. An alternative to be able to avoid quarantine would be to have a negative PCR test done within 72 hours of departure.
7. The ED stated that, at the Council session itself, the Secretariat will take precautionary measures where face masks will be provided to all participants and rapid antigen test kits will also be available for those participants wishing to test themselves for the COVID-19 virus. It is not a legal requirement to wear masks in public spaces in Japan, but the chairs and vice-chairs of the Council and Committees should encourage participants to wear face masks out of consideration of others.

**D. Modalities of the 58th ITTC**

8. The ED said that the Decision 9(XXXI) Ad Hoc Advisory Group, convened in early July 2022, recommended that the Secretariat prepare for a hybrid session. The arrangements for this are discussed under agenda item E.

**E. Update on preparations for ITTC 58**

9. The ED said that the schedule for the session has been prepared to accommodate a hybrid session, based on the model used previously for physical meetings, with a plenary hall, committee rooms, and a room for the Chairperson's Bureau. Simultaneous interpretation will be available for the caucuses; only informal meeting rooms and the Chairperson's Bureau will not have interpretation. The main rooms will all be set up with full hybrid arrangements, including those used by the producer and consumer caucuses. Most documentation for the session is available on the ITTO website and the remaining documents will be posted over the next few days.
10. The ED briefed the meeting on each agenda item for the 58th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC), as follows.
11. *1: Opening of the session.* This will involve five speakers—the Council Chair, Mr. Jesse Mahoney; the Honourable Mr. Shinsuke Takei, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan; the Honourable Mr. Yamanaka Takeharu, the Mayor of Yokohama; His Excellency the Ambassador of Peru to Japan; and Ms. Sheam Satkuru, ITTO ED.
12. *2: Quorum.* The Secretariat will report on the presence or absence of quorum, as required.
13. *3: Adoption of agenda and organization of work.* This item is usually a formality.
14. *4: Report on membership of the Council.* Angola acceded to the International Tropical Timber Agreement in July 2022 but has not responded to an invitation to attend the session.
15. *5: Distribution of votes for the 2022–2023 biennium.* This was previously approved by the Council and will be unchanged except for the inclusion of Angola, which will have a minor effect on the voting, mainly for Africa but also for a few other producer members.
16. *6: Admission of observers.* There have been no new applications from observers this year.
17. *7: Statement of the Executive Director.* This will be about 15 minutes in length.
18. *8: Report of the Informal Advisory Group.* This will be tabled at the first session of Council, as per usual practice. A draft should be ready for review by the Council Chair and ED by Friday 4 November.

19. *9: Report of the Credentials Committee.* The Credentials Committee may sit more than once during the session and report daily during the session, beginning on Monday. Friday is likely to be the most important day for achieving quorum to enable decisions to be adopted; however, there may be no need for voting during the session so the issue of quorum will not be as prominent as it has been at sessions in the previous few years. It was clarified that the report on the quorum to be presented on the first day of the session will be made by the Secretariat based on registrations for the session, pending confirmation of credentials by the Credentials Committee. It was further explained that the work of the Credentials Committee will be ongoing during the session, with members able to communicate by email, in addition to the officially convened meetings.
20. *10: Procedures and modalities.* This item will involve a brief outline of the hybrid nature of the session.
21. *11: Matters related to Article 19 of the ITTA, 2006.* This item will be opened on Monday because the Working Group could not conclude on a couple of issues. It recommended that those items be deferred to the CFA, so discussions will continue in that forum if Council agrees.
22. *12: Extension of the ITTA, 2006:* The Working Group had been unable to make solid recommendations on this item to the Council. The Working Group co-chairs will present a report, with the recommendation that discussions on this matter continue in plenary, with the potential that the Council will decide to extend the Working Group for another year. The Secretariat has drafted a simple decision to accompany the Working Group report, based on discussions in the Working Group. However, one member of the Working Group proposed substantive changes to the draft decision that had not been discussed, and the Secretariat considered that it would be unfair to other Working Group members to forward this draft to the IAG. Therefore, the draft decision currently comprises only a possible title of a decision, for discussion during the Council session.
23. *13: ITTO Strategic Action Plan 2022–2026.* The decision at ITTC 57 to adopt the Strategic Action Plan directed the Secretariat to develop a resource mobilization strategy (RMS), and the ED will present a report on this strategy to the Council. The proposed RMS was developed in close collaboration with the Advisory Board. If it is agreed, the Council could formalize it in a decision or in a note in the report of the session. The proposed RMS incorporates recommendations made by the Advisory Board on the new financial architecture to enable the Council to consider all elements of the strategy in deciding on the best way forward.
24. The main point of debate on the RMS could be the projected amounts needed to implement the Strategic Action Plan. If consensus is reached on this, the RMS could be adopted as stated above. If there is no consensus, the Council could request further consultations and development of the RMS prior to its next session. About half the RMS relates to the core functions of the Secretariat and so can be carried out without formal agreement on the RMS, but a lack of consensus on the overall strategy would delay implementation of other parts of the Strategic Action Plan. The Consumer Spokesperson suggested that the producer and consumer spokespersons could play a role in encouraging members to come to consensus on the projected amounts, through negotiations if necessary. The Producer Spokesperson indicated that the producers have no problem with the projected amounts but want the tentative budget to contain a consideration of funding for already-approved projects. The ED said that this could be the crux of the debate because inclusion of already-approved projects would increase the overall tentative annual target budget for voluntary funds from USD 7 million to almost USD 17 million, which is a significant difference.
25. *14: ITTO Biennial Work Programme.* The Secretariat (Mr Gerhard Breulmann) said that a general overview will be provided on the Biennial Work Programme (BWP), and additional presentations will be made to the Council and Committees on selected activities under other agenda items, such as on cooperation with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Fellowship Programme.
26. *15: Matters related to Article 15 of the ITTA, 2006 on cooperation and coordination with other organizations.* A presentation will be made to the Council by the ED on this item similar to that made to the Advisory Board at its most recent meeting.
27. *16: Special Account and Bali Partnership Fund.* The Bali Partnership Fund currently has only about USD 4000, and there will be no need to convene the Panel during the session.

28. *17: Implementation of ITTO's new financing architecture.* The ED will present to the Council on what has changed in the implementation of the new financial architecture and the funding raised to date under it. The presentation will be based on that made to the Advisory Board at its most recent meeting.
29. *18: Biennial Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation 2021–2022.* The Secretariat (Mr. Steven Johnson) said that the team compiling this report will make a presentation on the data collected to date and a draft analysis of these data. Many members are yet to submit the requested data, and the presentation will be a means for encouraging members to provide data and to correct potential errors. The final report of the *Biennial Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation 2021–2022* will be published in 2023.
30. *19: Update on the cooperation between ITTO and CITES.* The Secretariat (Mr. Johnson) said the Council will be provided with an update on this ongoing activity under the BWP. ITTO has been assisting members for many years to implement CITES with respect to tree species, most recently under contract with the CITES Secretariat. The ITTO Secretariat will be attending the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to CITES, being held the week following ITTC 58. There will be proposals for new listings, including tropical tree species such as khaya, azelia, ayous, ipe and *Dipteryx*. A standing Council decision requests members to discuss any proposals to list tropical tree species before they go to CITES, but no notifications were received by ITTO on this occasion. CITES has a resolution that it must consult with ITTO on timber listing proposals, and the Secretariat received notification of the proposed listings in July and provided comments by the due date in mid-September; it also received responses to a request for input from a small number of ITTO members, as well as requests from members for help on developing positions on the proposals. In its comments to CITES, the Secretariat expressed concern about a lack of consultation about the proposals with some of the major traders of the species involved. This agenda item will mainly be one of information-sharing with Council members prior to the CITES CoP commencing the week after the ITTC.
31. *20: Reports of the committees.* These reports will be presented by the respective chairs on the final day of the session (Friday).
32. *21: Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Council for 2023.* The Vice-Chairperson for ITTC 58, Mr. Nurudeen, will be nominated as the incoming Chair. The consumers will propose a new Vice-Chair, who, by convention, will be nominated by the Producer Spokesperson.
33. *22: Dates and venues of the Fifty-ninth and Sixtieth Sessions of the Council and the Associated Sessions of the Committees.* To avoid potential overlaps with other international meetings, especially the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Secretariat will propose the convening of ITTC 59 in early December 2023. Viet Nam had previously expressed interest in hosting the session but has informed the Secretariat that it will now be unable to do so. The Secretariat is in discussion with another member in Asia as a potential host. ITTC 60, in 2024, will be hosted in Yokohama. IAG members expressed disappointment that Viet Nam has withdrawn its offer to host ITTC 59, given the importance of that country as a major player in tropical timber trade. The ED expressed hope that another potential host will be announced during ITTC 58, and a fallback position might be to convene the session in Yokohama, pending the availability of an appropriate venue and the budget required.
34. *23: Decisions and report of the session.* The draft decisions are discussed below (under agenda item J).
35. *24: Closing of the session.* This agenda item is usually brief. The expectation is that the session will formally close by 2 p.m. on Friday.
36. The Secretariat outlined the proposed schedule for the session. Registration will start on Sunday afternoon, from 2:30 pm - 5 pm, and will also be open on Monday from 9 am. The opening session will be held from 10:30 am - 11 am. This would normally be followed by a plenary session but, due to the session being a hybrid, a coffee break has been scheduled to allow the room to be rearranged, and the caucuses will meet from 11 am - 12:30 pm. The first plenary session of Council will convene from 4:30 pm - 7 pm, which is later than usual to enable as many virtual participants as possible to attend. The close of the plenary session will be followed by the Chairperson's Bureau and a reception hosted by the Chairperson at the Intercontinental Hotel.

37. The Annual Market Discussion, to be convened on Tuesday as part of a joint session of the Committees, will be broadcast on YouTube; it will feature speakers from the private sector and other invited guests. Effort has been made to group together on Tuesday afternoon those items most closely related to markets and economies, such as the Annual Market Discussion, cooperation with CITES, the Biennial Review and Assessment, updates on market access/certification, and progress on the EU-funded Independent Market Monitor project. Following these items (and also in the joint session of the Committees), the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) will present on a community-scale, women-led ITTO project in Togo. The joint session will also feature a report from the most recent Expert Panel for the Appraisal of Project and Pre-Project Proposals, and a report on ex-post evaluations. The IAG agreed that Ms. Tyler will chair the joint session of the Committees, with the exception of the CSAG event, which will be chaired by the ED.
38. Meetings of the Fellowship Panel will be chaired by the Vice-Chairperson of the Council during the lunch break on Wednesday; the panel has already been active virtually.
39. Excursions arranged by the City of Yokohama will be conducted for participants between 11:15 am - 15:00 pm on Thursday. One excursion will visit a wooden high-rise building (limited to 20 participants), one will visit Sankeien Garden, and one will be hosted at the observation deck of Landmark Tower, with a briefing there on development in Yokohama City. A light lunch will be provided to all those participating in the excursions.
40. The Chairperson's Open-ended Drafting Group is scheduled to be convened on Wednesday evening, with simultaneous interpretation. It may also meet on Thursday, if required. The deadline for decisions and committee reports is Thursday evening.
41. Throughout the session, one half to one hour each morning has been allocated for the caucuses.
42. The session on Friday will commence with the caucuses, followed by committee sessions to enable them to finalize their reports. The final plenary session will convene at 12 noon to deal with the remaining agenda items. It was noted that senior Secretariat staff will be on hand at all committee meetings to assist the chairs and vice-chairs.

#### **F. Status of Parties to the Agreement**

43. The accession of Angola to the ITTA 2006 as a new African producer member will be brought to the attention of Council.

#### **G. Status of contributions to the Administrative Account**

44. The ED reported on the status of contributions to the Administrative Account to the Advisory Board at its most recent meeting. The CFA will also review the status.

#### **H. Update on CFA policies**

45. The ED said that updated policies for ITTO will be considered by the CFA, such as on corruption and fraud, bullying and sexual harassment, and independent vendors. Some of these had been tabled at ITTC 57 and tentatively agreed to although the Council established an Open-ended Working Group to further consider them. Both Sweden and the USA had been active on this issue, despite a lack of interest from other members. The Secretariat worked with Sweden and the USA to finalize the policies, which have been circulated to all members with a request to provide comments. The policies will be further discussed in the CFA during the session and a recommendation could be made in the CFA report at this session to incorporate the policies into ITTO procedures.

#### **I. Filling of positions of Council Officers/bodies**

46. The Secretariat (Mr. Gerard Breulmann) said that several nominations are required for the Credentials Committee for ITTC 58. Four nominations are pending from the consumer caucus and two are pending from the producer caucus; two nominations have already been received from the producers.

Nominations are required for the Fellowship Panel for 2023, or the current members could continue in their roles. Nominations are also needed for new vice-chairpersons for the Committees. For the Council, the current Vice-Chair, Mr. Nurudeen, will be nominated as Chairperson, and consumers will need to make a proposal for a new Vice-Chair, who, by convention will be nominated by the Producer Spokesperson. Nominations are needed from consumers for the CFI/CEM and the CFA from consumers and from the producers for the Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management.

**J. Consideration of Draft Decisions/Elements of Decisions Submitted Pursuant to ITTC Decision 7(XXXIII)**

47. The IAG considered the draft decisions/elements of decisions submitted pursuant to ITTC Decision 7(XXXIII) as follows:
- i. Projects, Pre-Projects and Activities [Decision 1(LVIII)];
  - ii. Extension of the BWP 2021-2022 [Decision 2(LVIII)];
  - iii. Management of the Administrative Budget [Decision 3(LVIII)];
  - iv. Extension of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006 (ITTA) [Decision 4(LVIII)].

*Projects, Pre-Projects and Activities [Decision 1(LVIII)]:*

48. The ED said that, as per usual practice, this decision details activities and projects approved and funded by the Council, and will be ready before the end of the session. Donor consultations are ongoing, and some projects will likely be funded at the session.

*Extension of the BWP 2021-2022 [Decision 2(LVIII)]*

49. The ED informed that this draft decision is proposed because all activities in the BWP are still relevant and many are still operational. Also, the proposed decision will bring the BWP in line with submission of Administrative Budget. This was especially important because some activities in the BWP are funded from the core budget, which therefore needs to match proposals in the BWP.

*Management of the Administrative Budget [Decision 3(LVIII)]*

50. This draft decision was prepared by the Secretariat based on discussions under the relevant Working Group as a basis for discussion in the Council. The key proposal in the draft decision is to give the Secretariat more flexibility in its use of the Working Capital Account. The Producer Spokesperson indicated that the producers have some observations on this decision and suggestions for improving it; these may be raised under the relevant agenda item in the Council session.

*Extension of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006 [Decision 4(LVIII)]*

51. This draft decision, which consists of a title page only, is discussed above (paragraph 22). The ED said that the original draft decision prepared by the Secretariat will be shared with IAG members for their information.
52. The IAG recommends the following list of decisions to be considered for adoption by the Council at its Fifty-eighth Session:
- i. Projects, Pre-Projects and Activities [Decision 1(LVIII)]
  - ii. Extension of the BWP 2021-2022 [Decision 2(LVIII)]
  - iii. Management of the Administrative Budget [Decision 3(LVIII)]
  - iv. Extension of the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), 2006 [Decision 4(LVIII)]
53. Draft proposals for these decisions (except the first and last) are included in Annex A to this report.



**Other Matters**

54. The ED informed that the Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) will not be attending the session because of the cramped international schedule this year and a lack of funding. The Secretariat is consulting with a member country to obtain last-minute funding, but even if successful it is unclear whether ENB will be able to attend, given the very short notice. She noted that the ITTO communication team will provide its usual daily coverage of the session. The Council may wish to ensure that sufficient budget is available for future sessions to enable ENB coverage.

**K. Adjournment**

55. The Thirty-sixth meeting of the IAG was adjourned at 8:55 p.m. Japan time with a vote of thanks to the Chairperson and participants of the meeting.

## **ANNEX A**

### **Draft Decisions**

**Only text of draft Decisions are appended to this Report.**



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### Draft DECISION 2 (LVIII)

#### EXTENSION OF THE ITTO BIENNIAL WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022

The International Tropical Timber Council,

Appreciating the work of the Secretariat in implementing the Biennial Work Programme for the years 2021-2022;

Taking note that the progress report on implementation of the BWP 2021-2022 presented to the Fifty-eighth Session of the ITTC [Document ITTC(LVIII)/7] includes descriptions of work that may carry on into 2023 and possibly beyond in the Implementation Status updates provided for relevant approved activities;

Further taking note of the recommendation of the Informal Advisory Group to extend the BWP 2021-2022 so that it is back in-line with the biennial approval cycle of the ITTO Administrative Budget

#### Decides to:

1. Extend the Biennial Work Programme for 2021-2022, as adopted under Decision 2(LVI), for a period of one year;
2. Urge all members to pay their assessed contributions in a timely manner and consider making additional resources available, be it through voluntary contributions or in-kind resources to implement the Biennial Work Programme 2021-2022;
3. Request the Executive Director to seek additional funding sources to finance the continued implementation of the Biennial Work Programme 2021-2022;
4. Request the Executive Director to report on the progress in implementing the Biennial Work Programme 2021-2022 to the Council during its Fifty-ninth Session;
5. Request the Executive Director to present a new Biennial Work Programme for consideration and approval to the Council during its Fifty-ninth Session.

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### Draft DECISION 3 (LVIII)

#### MANAGEMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET

The International Tropical Timber Council,

Appreciating the continuing efforts made by the Executive Director and her staff in exercising cost savings in the expenditures from the Administrative Budget for the year 2022;

Noting with concern the insufficient receipts of contributions to-date from Members to the Administrative Budget for 2022;

Acknowledging that the Working Capital Reserve is made available to meet the shortfall of funds to implement the work programme of the Organization, and that it ensures continuity of basic operations in the event of a temporary shortfall of cash;

Recognizing that late payments can frequently arise from emergencies and global economic downturns and fiscal uncertainties in the future, and also recognizing that in 2021, a deficit of approximately US\$400,000 was incurred between expenditures under the approved Administrative Budget and assessed contributions received from Members, and that the receipts of contributions from Members to the Administrative Budget for the remainder of 2022 might fall short of the estimated total expenditure for 2022;

Recalling Decision 3 (LVII) which authorizes the Executive Director to transfer, if necessary, such as in emergency situations, an amount not exceeding 10% of the budget from the Working Capital Reserve annually to the current account in the Administrative Account to meet the shortfall of funds to implement the work programme of the Organization, and established a virtual intersessional group to make recommendations on the management of the Administrative Budget;

Further noting the recommendations made by the intersessional group established under Decision 3 (LVII) contained in its report (ITTC (LVIII)/4) discussed during the 58<sup>th</sup> Council Session;

Decides to:

1. Authorize the Executive Director to transfer, if necessary, such as in extraordinary and emergency situations, an amount not exceeding 15% of the budget from the Working Capital Reserve, with immediate effect, to meet any shortfall of funds to ensure continuity of operations in the event of a temporary shortfall of cash and implement the work programme of the Organization, as long as expenditures stay within the specified annual budget; and request the Executive Director to provide an annual update on drawdowns from the Working Capital Reserve to the Committee on Finance and Administration (CFA) at the Council Sessions;
2. Request the Executive Director to reflect paragraph 1 in Rule 5.5 of the Financial Rules and Regulations, maintaining the requirements to report to the CFA, through its Chair, on a timely basis with regards to any drawdowns from the Working Capital Reserve; and to restore any drawdowns from the working capital reserve from contributions as soon as possible;

3. Request the Secretariat to add information on the assessed contribution collection rate per year in the annual report to the CFA;
4. Request members to pay as early as possible, and in full, their contributions to the Administrative Budgets, including for 2022 and 2023, as well as all arrears in contributions from previous years, to prevent further depletion of the Organization's savings through the utilization of the Working Capital Reserve to meet the shortfall in contributions;
5. Urge the Secretariat to continue to undertake appropriate cost saving and efficiency measures as necessary under the Administrative Budgets for 2022 and 2023;
6. Extend for one year the mandate of the virtual intersessional group established in accordance with Decision 3(LVII).

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