



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ECA EXCOM IN RELATION TO ECA AND ERC

(prepared by the ECA Secretariat)

I. Background

At the 38/5 meeting in December 2020, the ExCom discussed Secretariat's replies to comments made by ExCom members on elements relating to its working modalities. Due to limited time, the ExCom had no possibility to discuss some of the Secretariat's replies. For time-efficiency and in order to avoid the deferral of the discussions to the next meeting, the ExCom agreed that the Secretariat would share their comments with its members by e-mail, and they would be reviewed in a written procedure.

II. Outcomes of the written procedure

The Secretariat shared their replies to ExCom's comments with the Members, and invited them to provide comments. The submitted comments related to answers to questions 13, 14, 16, 33 and 34, and were the following.

Question 13: Explain in detail the process by which the Chairperson engages with the DG to agree the agenda

Secretariat's answer: In the answer to this question, the Secretariat proposed an entirely new procedure, which is an open call for proposals for the main technical theme for an ECA Session. The call would be open for submissions from the Members of the region and from REU. There were no comments to this idea so far. As its implementation would require clear support from both REU and ExCom, the Secretariat suggested that this issue be considered at the next ExCom meeting.

ExCom comments: ExCom Members supported the idea to solicit proposals for the main technical theme of an upcoming ECA Session through an open call, where Members of the region and the REU technical officers would be invited to submit proposals.

Secretariat's feedback: If the idea of the call is accepted, the opening date and the deadline for submissions will need to be established. A proposal was made to open the call on 1 October, and to determine the number of proposals to be submitted. With this starting date, the stages of the process could be the following:

1 October	The call for proposals opened
31 October	The call for proposals closed
5 November	The list of submissions made available to Members
20 November	Submissions reviewed and shortlisted by REU technical team
30 November	Shortlisted proposals reviewed and endorsed by REU management
15 December	Proposals reviewed by the ExCom and the recommendation for the main technical theme of the ECA Session agreed
31 December	The ExCom's recommendation reviewed and confirmed by REU.

As the process is relatively lengthy and may finish in late December, the Secretariat suggests that the starting date be earlier than 1 October (e.g. 1 September) aiming at the review of the proposals by the ExCom at their meeting in November.

Question 14: Specifically, does the Executive Committee create the list of potential agenda items, and if so how, shortlist the agenda items prior to engaging the DG, engage ERG and Central Asia Members on the ECA agenda, and if so how and at what stages?

Secretariat's answer: The recommendation of the Secretariat is not to conduct this consultation, as the draft agenda of the ECA Session will be subject to the Informal Consultation organized by REU in April/May before the ECA Session. Within this consultation, REU will share the draft agenda with all Members of the region for review and comments.

ExCom comments: ExCom Members suggested that initiating a consultation of the draft agenda for the ECA Session by the ECA Chairperson was not necessary, taking into account that the draft agenda would be submitted for the Informal Consultation organized regularly in April in the year of the ECA Session by REU. Within this consultation, REU will share the draft ECA Session agenda with all Members of the region for review and comments.

Secretariat's feedback: In practice, the draft agenda may or may not be discussed at the Informal Consultation, especially that it takes place in late April or in May, which may be late for substantive revisions of the agenda. Furthermore, the ECA agenda items other than those relating to the main technical theme are standing items, so there is no point consulting them. If an open call for the proposals for the main technical theme is organized, they will come from the Members and will be selected by the ExCom, which seems to provide sufficient guarantees of openness, inclusiveness and transparency of the process. The main technical theme sub-items should normally be presented to the ExCom with the draft agenda of the Session during the first meeting in the year.

Question 16: Rule V, Agenda, point 3; Clarify how 'any Member of the Commission may request the Director-General, at least three months before the opening of the session, to include specific items in the provisional agenda', specifically the role and responsibilities of the Executive Committee as the Governing Body of ECA and the Committee with responsibility for engaging with the DG, including who has final say on the specific item / final agenda?

Secretariat's answer: The idea of the Secretariat has been that the meeting minutes may not be the appropriate form of communication between the ECA Chairperson and the DG. Thus, a dedicated message has been proposed, facilitated by the ECA Secretariat. At the 38/5 ExCom meeting, there was, however, some reluctance of the ExCom towards this solution. ExCom was invited to confirm their position on the issue, taking into account that the meeting minutes will reflect all positions agreed and decision taken by the ExCom, and that each draft minutes are submitted to the ADG-RR for approval.

ExCom comments: ExCom Members presented different views on means of communication between the ExCom and the ADG-RR. Such communication usually relates to seeking agreement on main technical themes and agendas for ECA Sessions.

One Member suggested a formal process involving a dedicated note prepared by the Chairperson and sent to the ADG on her/his behalf by the ECA Secretariat, as the formal minutes, while official, were insufficient for such an important issue.

Another Member thought that as the meeting minutes included all positions presented by the participants and the decisions taken by the ExCom, they would be an appropriate form of communication between the ECA Chairperson and the DG. As a more formal alternative, this Member felt that the ECA Secretariat

could send an e-mail to the ADG-RR highlighting the main items discussed by the ExCom and, most importantly, the decisions that need his/her approval. The ADG-RR would then be invited to inform the ECA Secretariat or the ECA Chairperson about the decision.

Secretariat's feedback: The discussions so far did not touch upon the first part of the question, which was on decision-making process for the inclusion in the ECA Session agenda of specific items, submitted three months prior to the Session, with the emphasis on the role of the ExCom.

According to Rule V.1 of the RoP of ECA "The Director-General, in agreement with the Chairperson of the Commission, after having examined all proposals of the Executive Committee, shall prepare a provisional agenda for each session.". Thus, the preparation of the agenda is a joint task of the ExCom and the ADG-RR.

The Secretariat would like to note that "three months before the Session" means late June or early July, where an ExCom meeting may not be planned. If there is an ExCom meeting, the proposal for an agenda item can be discussed under the "any other business" item. Should there be no meeting planned, the written procedure can be used. If quorum can be achieved, the ExCom members may still be able to express their opinions on the proposal, which should then be subject to confirmation by the ADG-RR. For the efficiency of the process, it is important that any proposal for an agenda item that is submitted in response to the call, is accompanied by sufficient and clear justification.

Question 33: State the role and responsibilities of the Executive Committee, if any, in engaging with FAO technical committees (COAG, CCP, COFU and COFO) and Council Committees (Programme and Finance) and CFS

Question 34: State the role and responsibilities of the Executive Committee, if any, in engaging with other Regional Groups

ExCom comments: One ExCom Member suggested that questions 33 and 34 be deleted. Another Member supported the proposal, providing that, in the opinion of the Secretariat, there was no role for ExCom. The Secretariat is not aware of such roles of the ExCom.

The ExCom is invited to:

- note the outcome of the written procedure for the review of Secretariat's replies to the ExCom's comments;
- discuss and agree whether for future ECA Sessions the ideas for the main technical theme for an ECA Session should be collected through a call opened by the ECA Secretariat, where all Members of the region, as well as REU could submit proposals;
- should the call for the main technical theme of ECA Session be agreed upon, the ExCom would be invited to agree on the opening date for the call, its duration and the number of proposals to be submitted;
- confirm that initiating by the ECA Chairperson a consultation on a draft ECA Session agenda is not necessary;
- discuss and agree on the means of communication between the ExCom and the ADG-RR on such issues as the main technical theme or draft agenda of an ECA Session;
- agree that questions 33 and 34 be deleted;
- agree that the ECA Secretariat revise the draft "ExCom Information Document", based on decisions taken by the ExCom, and present the revised version at the next ExCom meeting.