Resolution 20/21: Organization and themes for future sessions of the Governing Council

The Governing Council,

Recalling its resolution 5/15 of 7 May 1982, in which it decided to designate the subjects of the special themes of its sessions two years in advance,

Also recalling its resolution 16/12 of 7 May 1997, in which it decided to provide, at future sessions of the Council, opportunities for partners to engage in a dialogue among themselves and with Governments,

Further recalling its resolution 19/5 of 9 May 2003, in which it decided that a continuing focus of its twentieth and future sessions should be the implementation and monitoring of the goal of the United Nations Millennium Declaration 1 on improving the lives of slum-dwellers,

Noting that the World Urban Forum now provides an opportunity for extensive dialogue among Governments, local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners,

Recognizing the importance during sessions of the Governing Council of a focused, interactive high-level segment on priority policy issues,

1. Endorses the recommendations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on improving preparations for the Governing Council, which are contained in the appendix to the present resolution,

2. Decides that the special themes referred to in resolution 5/15 shall no longer be chosen two years in advance, but shall instead be selected by the Bureau of the Governing Council at least six months before the start of each session of the Governing Council, on the basis of advice from the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, taking into account the outcome of the sessions of the World Urban Forum and the requirement for a continuing focus on the implementation and monitoring of the goal of the Millennium Declaration on improving the lives of slum dwellers;

3. Also decides that the high-level segment and the dialogues referred to in its resolution 16/12 should normally focus on those special themes and should constitute the substantive debate on the special themes;

4. Requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to recommend to the Governing Council at its twenty-first session, through the Bureau of the Governing Council, further proposals for improving the structure and organizational arrangements of the twenty-first and future sessions of the Governing Council including, in particular, the high-level segment;

5. Also requests the Executive Director to prepare a background paper for use by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in complying with the request set forth in the preceding paragraph.

---

1 General Assembly resolution 55/2.
Appendix

Recommendations for improving the preparations for future sessions of the Governing Council

I. Preparatory phase of the Governing Council

A. Organization of the work of Committee of Permanent Representatives working groups

1. The organization of the meetings of Committee of Permanent Representatives working groups should be improved by preparing a schedule of meetings in advance, distributing clear agendas which identify the documents to be discussed under each item and ensuring that all relevant documentation is circulated two weeks in advance in both hard-copy and electronic form.

2. The agendas of the meetings of the working groups should be short and streamlined.

1. Preparation of draft resolutions and decisions

3. The proposal for the provisional agenda, date and, where appropriate, venue for future special and regular sessions of the Governing Council should be prepared and finalized as far in advance as possible and in close consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives. If supplementary items are proposed for inclusion in the agenda, they should be submitted and considered as early as possible before the session of the Governing Council in question.

4. A comprehensive list of all possible draft resolutions and decisions to be submitted by the secretariat should be circulated to the Committee of Permanent Representatives at least four months in advance of the Governing Council session, with an explanation of why each is needed. As a rule, draft resolutions and decisions should not be submitted unless there is an identified need.

5. States wishing to submit draft resolutions and decisions should be encouraged to do so well in advance of each session of the Governing Council.

6. Draft resolutions and decisions should be clustered by subject and content.

2. Documentation

7. Documentation should be prepared early and a quality check should be carried out before documents are submitted to the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

8. The number and size of working, information and background documents should be limited. All documentation on a particular topic should be grouped together.

9. Final documentation should be circulated as early as possible.

B. Preparation of the work programme and budget

10. Provision should be made for the Committee of Permanent Representatives to give the proposed work programme and budget timely and detailed consideration.

11. At least six weeks in advance of the first discussions of the proposed work programme and budget, the secretariat should distribute it to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The Working Group on Finance, Budget and Administrative Matters should hold comprehensive discussions on the proposed work
programme and budget, in cooperation with the secretariat, and make
recommendations to the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

12. The proposed work programme and budget and each subprogramme thereof
should be prioritized and annotated to show clearly how each element flows from
existing mandates. The draft work programme and budget should clearly identify
items which depend on the adoption of decisions by the Governing Council.

13. The broad outlines of the proposed work programme and budget and its
underlying mandates should be presented for discussion to the relevant working group
of the Committee of Permanent Representatives before the full proposed work
programme and budget are drafted.

II. Conduct of sessions of the Governing Council

A. Structure of sessions of the Governing Council

14. Consultations should be started as early as possible on the structure of each
session of the Governing Council.

15. The dialogues should focus on the two special themes for the Governing
Council and should constitute the main substantive debate on those special themes.

16. Priority items should be placed on the Governing Council agenda for
consideration early in the session.

17. The selection of themes for each session should take into account relevant
emerging issues and the outcomes of intergovernmental meetings relevant to the work
of UN-Habitat. In that connection, General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June
2003 on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes
of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social
fields, should be taken into account.

18. Multi-year mandates should be considered so that certain items need not be on
the agenda of each session of the Governing Council. Items with multi-year mandates
should be kept under review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

19. A working group to consider the work programme and the budget should be
established at the beginning of the Governing Council session to give the working
group sufficient time to consider the work programme and budget carefully.

B. Conduct of sessions of the Governing Council

20. The number of parallel and social events should be kept to a manageable level.

21. In accordance with the established practice, an alphabetical seating pattern
should be followed at all sessions of the Governing Council.

22. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent
Representatives, should establish a structure for the theme-related dialogues well in
advance of the Governing Council for submission to the Bureau of the Governing
Council.

23. Ministers should be encouraged to participate in the theme-related dialogues.
The discussions during and the outcome of those dialogues should be taken into
consideration in the negotiations on related draft resolutions.
24. Participants in the theme-related dialogues should be encouraged to engage in interactive dialogue. Written statements, although acceptable, should not replace open dialogue.

25. Each theme-related dialogue should have a moderator or facilitator and one resource person to encourage interactive debate.

26. If the Governing Council, after careful consideration of the recommendations of the Bureau and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, establishes subsidiary organs, subcommittees or working groups, meetings of the Committee of the Whole and those of the plenary should not be held simultaneously, to the extent possible.

27. To enhance accessibility, the possibility should be considered of showing the proceedings on a television monitor outside the meeting room.

28. The establishment of working and contact groups and their schedules and venues, and of regional group meetings, should be clearly announced in both plenary meetings and meetings of the Committee of the Whole. The information should also be posted on a prominent announcement board.