



United Nations Industrial Development Organization

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Industrial Development Board

Thirty-second session

Vienna, 29 November-1 December 2006

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Number and duration of sessions

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Note by the Secretariat

Provides information concerning sessions of the governing bodies in non-General Conference years.

I. Introduction

1. As noted in the annotated provisional agenda (IDB.32/1/Add.1), the inclusion of this supplementary item is based on recent experience with sessions of the policy-making organs. Specifically, the timeliness of closing the twenty-second session of the Programme and Budget Committee generated informal comments by a number of delegates concerning introducing efficiencies in non-General Conference years by eliminating or shortening sessions. Subsequently, the Secretariat reviewed the background and scope for change, with the results summarized below.

II. Programme and Budget Committee

2. There is no possibility to eliminate the Committee session in non-General Conference years, owing to two mandates:

- Constitution, Article 10.3 (a), requires the Committee to hold at least one session each year;
- Financial regulation 11.10 requires the External Auditor to complete the report covering the previous biennium not later than 1 June for transmission through the Committee to the Board.

3. In its decision IDB.18/Dec.17 (“Number and duration of sessions of the Industrial Development Board and the Programme and Budget Committee”),

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adopted on 19 November 1997, the Board stipulated that regular sessions of the Committee should be for a duration of three working days each year (item 1, para. 2). In actual practice, Committee sessions in non-General Conference years have been for a duration of two days, which has proven sufficient. Thus, the Board may wish to review the relevant provision in decision IDB.18/Dec.17, bearing in mind that three days are normally required for the regular session of the Committee in General Conference years for consideration of the proposed programme and budgets and other issues on which recommendations are required at that time.

III. Industrial Development Board

4. There may also be scope for introducing economies in sessions in non-General Conference years at the level of the Industrial Development Board.

5. Until 1997, there was only one regular Board session each year, held in October or November. At its resumed eighteenth session (November 1997), under special circumstances the Board adopted decision IDB.18/Dec.17, which introduced the requirement to hold two regular Board sessions in non-Conference years. The same decision also stipulated the duration of Committee and Board sessions and contained some text concerning agendas. For example, the second Board session should be held "later in the year to consider the recommendations of the PBC."

6. While UNIDO has always complied with the decision in terms of convening the session, the actual duration of both Board and Committee sessions have in practice been established in consultation with those organs and in line with the perceived actual need. Similarly, the agenda of the second Board session in a year has never been confined to considering Committee recommendations only.

7. Reporting to a Board session held in May/June is fraught with constraints. Many programmes and activities are based on General Conference mandates adopted at the end of the previous year, and documents for a May/June Board session must be prepared by March/April to facilitate translation and processing by the distribution deadline. The time is too short for many activities to develop, whereas the intervening months prior to a session in November/December provide a fuller picture, thereby facilitating better reports. This fact appears to be understood also by Member States and accounts in part for the limited interest in observing the stipulation to hold the second Board session only to consider the Committee recommendations.

8. Since the requirement to hold two regular Board sessions in non-Conference years is neither a mandate of the Constitution nor of the rules of procedure, the Board itself has the authority to review its decision IDB.18/Dec.17 and revise its provisions if so desired. Should the Board decide to hold only one regular session in such years, a number of points may be noted:

(a) To cover all agenda items, the session would have to be held for four days;

(b) The net savings from one day of interpretation plus travel expenses for interpreters and conference services is estimated at approximately \$80,000 per biennium, plus the time of Secretariat staff and management;

(c) There would be economies for delegations, the amount of which cannot be estimated by the Secretariat;

(d) The possibility for side events during Board sessions may be more limited than at present, owing to the need to cover a broader range of agenda items;

(e) Informal briefings to Member States and regional groups could serve as a forum for regular discussion with Permanent Missions during the intersessional period;

(f) Legislative mandates provide the flexibility for special sessions if required (rule 4);

(g) Based on experience, it is advisable to include one day in the overall budgetary provisions to account for contingencies (resumed or special sessions).

IV. Action required of the Board

9. The Board may wish to review its decision IDB.18/Dec.17 in the light of the information provided in the present document.
