



**Standing Committee**  
**CONF/SC(2020)SYN8**

**Standing Committee meeting**  
**Report**  
**14 December 2020**  
**10.00 am – 12.30 pm**  
**Online meeting (Kudo)**

Members present: Anna Rurka, Karl Donert, Gerhard Ermischer, Anne Kraus, Thierry Mathieu, Simon Matthijssen, Anne Nègre, Richard Pirolt, Katarzyna Sokolowska, Christoph Spreng, Iamvi Totsi, Claude Vivier LeGot

Proxies: Miguel Cabral (Christoph Spreng), Rares Craiut (Anne Kraus), Robert Bergougnan (Simon Matthijssen), Karl Donert (Claude Vivier LeGot, in case of absence or connection issues),

Also present in a non-voting consultative capacity: Salomon Levy, Jeremy McBride, Annelise Oeschger

Secretariat: Ellsworth Camilleri, Jane Crozier, Mary-Ann Hennessey,

**1. Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs**

During this meeting the Standing Committee would vote with Kudo to test the system that would be used for the vote during the plenary meetings.

**2. Appointment of the rapporteur of the meeting – Richard Pirolt**

**3. Draft agenda - adopted**

**4. Report of the meeting of 14 October 2020 (CONF/SC(2020)SYN6)**

Discussion: The report of the October meeting was not adopted at the November meeting as certain members of the Standing Committee disagreed with the content and asked for certain parts to be redrafted. The members of Standing Committee concerned were invited to send in their modification proposals, with a view to adopting the report in December.

The report of the meeting of 14 October was adopted: 10 for, 5 against.

**5. Report of the meeting of 16 November 2020 (CONF/SC(2020)SYN7)**

Discussion:

- Explanation of results of the vote (the total number of persons present with proxy)
- One member questioned the quality of the translation into French and felt it needed to be improved
- It was recalled that a report reflects the substance of the debate and that arguments needed to be anonymous to have a neutral effect

The report of the meeting of 16 November was adopted: 10 for, 5 against.

*One member of the Standing Committee said that he had not been able to vote and that his voting button was inactive. However, after checking with the technician, the Secretariat confirmed that the said member had voted, and his vote had been registered.*

## **6. Preparation of the plenary meetings of the second part of the Autumn Session (15-16 December 2020)**

Regarding the presentation of the amendment proposals, the speakers were informed about the speaking time allocated to each of them. According to the decision taken by the Standing Committee in November, the speaking time was 2 minutes for the INGO proposing the amendment proposal and 2 minutes for the presentation of the SC opinion. The latter would be presented by 3 VPs of the Conference of INGOs. The vote on the amendment proposals would take place on Tuesday 15 December and would open at item 5 of [the agenda](#) and would remain open until item 7 of the same agenda. The result of the vote on the amendment proposals would be presented during the same day.

The vote on the modified draft Rules of procedure would take place on Wednesday 16 December 2020. The result would be presented directly after the vote.

Five members of the Standing Committee had addressed a letter to the President on 13 December and the same letter to the Standing Committee members on 14 December before the meeting. They formulated their concerns and requested an official answer during the meeting regarding the following points:

- The agenda of the plenary meeting of the Conference of INGOs on 15 and 16 December 2020 should be drawn up by the Bureau of the Conference of INGOs, what can the President say about that?
- The invitation to the Session sent out to the INGOs - the letter stated that the necessary deadline had not been observed by the Secretariat
- The conditions for exercising voting powers were not specified
- The authors of the letter claimed an irregularity by the Secretariat in the registration of the voters and requested a copy of the registration form for several INGOs and proof of their digital registration in order to verify the validity of the registration date
- Data protection measures during the vote were questioned
- The authors of the letter also claimed that the Verification and Dispute Committee could no longer exercise impartial control over the elections
- The authors of the letter asked the President "you have expressed yourself publicly on the limits of meetings in videoconference and not in face-to-face, yet, you do not postpone this plenary meeting on the total overhaul of the rules whatever name you give it, to a plenary meeting in Strasbourg".

To these points the following answers were provided:

- The meeting of the Bureau was held on 8 December from 9.30 to 13.00. The draft agendas of the plenary were voted on and adopted by the Bureau. One of the authors of the letter was present at that meeting and took part in the vote by abstaining.
- The invitation to the Autumn Session was sent by the Head of the Democratic Innovation Division on 30 September 2020. After verifying that voting on a viable digital tool would not be possible in October, the decision was taken to add two more days to the session in December, so that the Conference could vote on the draft Rules of Procedure under good conditions. The date was chosen according to the availability of the Kudo room. The announcement of these 2 additional days was made by the President in September and in October. The vote on the draft Rules of procedure during Autumn Session was decided already in May by the Standing Committee (unanimously).

- The conditions for exercising voting powers were specified in the communication made by the Secretariat. There were no specific proxy forms during the plenary session. Each voter had a personal access and could hand this over to someone else of his/her choice under his/her own responsibility.
- The first call for voter registration was sent by the Secretariat on 19 November with transparent instructions regarding the whole procedure. Since the start it was made clear in these instructions that a verification process was planned until 9 December.
- The Secretariat confirmed that the data protection policy of the Council of Europe was fully respected and in addition the Secretariat followed the PACE rules regarding Kudo voting practices.
- The authors of the letter have no right to state on the capacities of the VDC; it is only the plenary assembly of the Conference that has this right. Allegations made in the letter about this Verification and Dispute Committee should be revoked by the authors.
- The President assumed that the authors of the letter were referring to her recent public conversation in the webinar organised by the Community of Democracies. She clarified that the conversation concerned the context of civil participation in decision-making processes in Estonia following the visit of the Conference of INGOs. She expressed her disappointment that her proposal had been taken out of context. This conversation had nothing to do with the video conference.

Further preparations:

- The Chat would remain open and would be recorded. The meeting would also be recorded. The President would remind all participants to respect the Code of Conduct and the Communication Charter in the chat and in the online discussion.

## **7. Dates for 2021 Sessions of the Conference of INGOs**

As the pandemic situation remained unclear, the Conference had to be prepared for both a physical, or a virtual meeting. The proposed dates were: 26 to 30 April for the Spring Session (elections) and 29 September to 1 October for the Autumn Session.

Vote: unanimously adopted

## **8. Transversal analysis of the Conference of INGOs' contribution to the Steering committees, committees of the parties, drafting groups**

The questionnaire that was presented had been developed with 12 questions by Christoph Spreng and Richard Pirolt. The aim was to try and improve cooperation with the steering committees and to improve the flow of information to the Conference.

## **9. Date of the next meeting – 11 January 2021 – 9.30-13.00**

The President would consult the Secretariat to see if Kudo was available.

## **10. Any other business**

Anne Nègre proposed a webinar on “Women and disabilities” as an additional event in January or February - Vote: unanimously in favour

Anne Kraus: with regard to INGOs applying for participatory status, Resolution (2016)3 requires an INGO to have working relations with CoE - what is meant by “working relations”? Mary Ann Hennessey said that participatory status is the recognition of a relationship that already exists between an INGO and the CoE. At the moment INGOs have to find their own way to have working relations. However, following the Helsinki decisions, the CoE wants to improve this – a user friendly web portal access for NGOs will be established in 2021 together with a handbook for NGOs.

End of meeting 12:26