



International Oil Pollution  
Compensation Funds

<b>Agenda Item 1</b>	IOPC/NOV23/1/3	
<b>Date</b>	17 October 2023	
<b>Original</b>	English	
<b>1992 Fund Assembly</b>	92A28	●
<b>1992 Fund Executive Committee</b>	92EC81	
<b>Supplementary Fund Assembly</b>	SA20	●

## INFORMATION ON THE FORMAT OF MEETINGS

### Note by the Secretariat

#### **Summary:**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the refurbishment of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) meeting facilities, the IOPC Funds' governing bodies held five remote meetings via the e-conferencing platform KUDO during the period December 2020 to March 2022.

Since April 2022, the IMO conference facilities have been back in full use. A refurbishment of the audio-visual facilities took place at IMO in early 2022, which included the installation of a 'hybrid infrastructure' in the Main Hall. Since September 2022, IMO meetings have been held in a hybrid format for a trial period.

The IOPC Funds meetings have been held in person since October 2022 and in May 2023, the Secretariat introduced an additional passive streaming service to complement the in-person meeting and allow additional members of delegations to follow the meeting remotely. This did not require any amendments to the Rules of Procedure and the passive streaming service will also be made available at the November 2023 sessions.

At their May 2023 sessions, the governing bodies noted the Director's intention to continue to liaise with the IMO Secretariat on a regular basis; to take note of the outcome of the next planned review of IMO's experience of holding hybrid meetings which was reported to the IMO Council in July 2023; and to report developments, in particular with regards to the amendments of Rules of Procedure, to the governing bodies at their November 2023 sessions (document IOPC/MAY23/9/1, paragraph 1.4.27).

This document reports on the outcome of the review by IMO and the decision of the IMO Council in respect of the format of upcoming meetings.

#### **Action to be taken:**

1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

Information to be noted.

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the refurbishment of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) meeting facilities, the IOPC Funds' governing bodies held five remote meetings via the e-conferencing platform KUDO during the period December 2020 to March 2022.

- 1.2 Since April 2022, the IMO conference facilities have been back in full use. A refurbishment of the audio-visual facilities took place at IMO in early 2022, which included the installation of a 'hybrid infrastructure' in the Main Hall. Since September 2022, IMO meetings have been held in a hybrid format for a trial period.
- 1.3 At the October 2022 and May 2023 sessions of the IOPC Funds governing bodies, information was provided on the developments within IMO in respect of hybrid meetings. During the October 2022 sessions, some delegations suggested that the IOPC Funds should introduce hybrid meetings before the final outcome of the IMO trial in the latter part of 2023. It was pointed out by one delegation that a number of hybrid meetings had already been successfully held and that there was general satisfaction with the experience gained so far, which was already well-documented.
- 1.4 However, other delegations expressed some concerns with the idea of introducing hybrid meetings so quickly and considered that the Director was right to be prudent and await the outcome of the IMO trial, with one delegation noting that the Secretariat would need to have the necessary training and resources in place and that the relevant Rules of Procedure would need to be amended.
- 1.5 During the discussion, the Director pointed out that whilst IMO held many meetings, the IOPC Funds held only two each year and the nature of the sessions were quite different, in that the Executive Committee in particular was required to take decisions and could potentially be required to vote. With this in mind, the Director noted that particular consideration should be given as to how that could take place if the meetings were held in a hybrid format. He also pointed out that there were cost implications to running hybrid meetings, which needed to be taken into account.
- 1.6 On the occasion of the May 2023 sessions of the governing bodies, a streaming service was provided to allow additional members of delegations to follow the meeting remotely. This did not require any amendments to the Rules of Procedure.
- 1.7 Following further discussion at the May 2023 sessions, the Chair of the 1992 Fund Administrative Council, acting on behalf of the 1992 Fund Assembly, noted that the introduction of a passive streaming service had been well received and that there had been general agreement that it should continue to be provided at the next sessions of the governing bodies in November 2023. He also noted that the governing bodies considered that any remote participation in the future should be complementary to, and not instead of, in-person participation. Finally, he concluded that a majority of delegations had expressed their support for not proceeding with any decision in respect of hybrid meetings before the outcome of the trial period by IMO. He noted that the issue should then be revisited, taking into account the human and financial resources required to deliver such meetings (document IOPC/MAY23/9/1, paragraph 1.4.26).
- 1.8 In conclusion, at the May 2023 sessions, the governing bodies noted the Director's intention to continue to liaise with the IMO Secretariat on a regular basis; to take note of the outcome of the next planned review of IMO's experience of holding hybrid meetings which was reported to the IMO Council in July 2023; and to report developments, in particular with regards to the amendments of Rules of Procedure, to the governing bodies at their November 2023 sessions (document IOPC/MAY23/9/1, paragraph 1.4.27).

## **2 Developments within IMO since May 2023**

- 2.1 In July 2022 the IMO Council, at its 127th session, agreed to complement in-person meetings with hybrid capability from September 2022 for a trial period of one year; to apply the Rules of Procedure of the Council and the Interim guidance to facilitate remote sessions of the IMO Council during the COVID-19 pandemic, as appropriate; and that only representatives of the Members attending a meeting in person at IMO Headquarters would be allowed to vote (IMO document C 127/D, paragraph 17.3.1–17.3.2).
- 2.2 Throughout IMO's trial period, the Director has continued to liaise with the IMO Secretariat and noted with particular interest the document presented to the July 2023 session of the IMO Council relating to the Organization's experience of holding hybrid meetings (documents C 129/18 and C 129 D).
- 2.3 At that session, the IMO Council was provided with information on the utilisation of hybrid meeting capabilities, including the attendance of Member States; an analysis on feedback from committees and sub-committees; an update on the implementation enhancements undertaken to improve the provision of hybrid capabilities; the costs associated with the hybrid meeting capabilities; and a budget proposal for 2024-2025.
- 2.4 Following discussion with regard to the trial period of the hybrid capabilities, and considering the experience gained so far, the IMO Council agreed to extend the trial period to enable the assessment of the current planned enhancements introduced by the IMO Secretariat, and deferred a final decision on the matter to 132nd session of the IMO Council (C 132), scheduled for mid-2024. To this end, the Council invited interested parties to work on developing interim guidance to facilitate the hybrid meeting capabilities of the Council, with particular regard to the Council Rules of Procedures, for submission and consideration at C 132.
- 2.5 With regard to the potential future enhancement of hybrid capabilities, including the associated costs and implications for human resources, the Council agreed, at present, not to request any further enhancements until the current planned enhancements had been implemented and assessed, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report with the assessment of the enhancements for consideration at C 132.

## **3 Director's considerations**

- 3.1 In light of the decision of the IMO Council to extend the trial period for holding meetings in hybrid format, and taking into account that, at the May 2023 sessions of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies, a majority of delegations had expressed their support for not proceeding with any decision in respect of hybrid meetings before the outcome of that trial period, the Director is of the view that the IOPC Funds meetings should for now continue to be held in-person, complemented by a passive streaming service.
- 3.2 The Director intends to continue to liaise with the IMO Secretariat on a regular basis and looks forward to the final outcome of IMO's trial period, which is expected to be decided upon by the IMO Council at its 132nd session in mid-2024.
- 3.3 The Director will report any developments, in particular with regards to the IMO's discussions in respect of amendments of relevant Rules of Procedure, to the governing bodies at their next sessions.

## **4 Action to be taken**

### 1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

The governing bodies are invited to take note of the information contained in this document.

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