



International Oil Pollution  
Compensation Funds

<b>Agenda Item 1</b>	IOPC/NOV24/1/3	
<b>Date</b>	8 October 2024	
<b>Original</b>	English	
<b>1992 Fund Assembly</b>	92A29	●
<b>1992 Fund Executive Committee</b>	92EC83	
<b>Supplementary Fund Assembly</b>	SA21	●

## INFORMATION ON THE FORMAT OF MEETINGS

### Note by the Secretariat

#### Summary:

A refurbishment of the audio-visual facilities took place at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in early 2022, which included the installation of a 'hybrid infrastructure' in the Main Hall. From September 2022, IMO meetings were held in a hybrid format for a trial period.

At its 132nd session held in July 2024, the IMO Council agreed to permanently establish the utilisation of hybrid capabilities to support in-person meetings and invited the other IMO organs to do the same. The Council agreed in principle to the revision of its Rules of Procedure to include hybrid meeting capabilities and invited the IMO Secretariat to submit a draft incorporating the amendments to the Rules of Procedures of the Council for consideration and approval at its next session.

Following a period of holding remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic and the refurbishment of the IMO meeting facilities, the IOPC Funds' meetings returned to being held in person in 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, the service was well received and there was general agreement that it should continue to be provided.

In May and November 2023 the governing bodies discussed introducing hybrid meetings for their sessions but decided not to proceed with any decision in that respect before the outcome of the trial period by IMO. It was agreed that the issue would be revisited at that time, taking into account the human and financial resources required to deliver such meetings. The IOPC Funds has therefore continued to deliver in-person meetings complemented by a passive streaming service in 2024.

In light of the decision of the IMO Council to permanently use hybrid capabilities to host meetings, the IOPC Funds' governing bodies may wish to reconsider the format of their sessions from now on. This document reports on the latest developments in this matter from IMO and on the IOPC Funds' experience using streaming services, puts forward possible options for the future format of IOPC Funds' meetings, identifies the relevant Rules of Procedure that may have to be revised and sets out the Director's considerations in respect of this matter.

**Action to be taken:** 1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

Decide whether to:

- (a) continue to hold meetings in-person, complemented by a passive streaming service; or
- (b) hold meetings in person, complemented by remote-active participation (hybrid meetings). In this case, also decide when the first hybrid meeting should be held, taking into account the Director's considerations in Section 4.

## **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 1992 Fund 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.** The introduction of a passive streaming service was well received and that there was general agreement that it should continue to be provided at the next sessions. It was noted, however, that the governing bodies considered that any remote participation in the future should be complementary to, and not instead of, in-person participation. A majority of delegations expressed their support for not proceeding with any decision in respect of hybrid meetings before the outcome of the trial period by IMO. The Chair of the 1992 Fund Administrative Council, acting on behalf of the 1992 Fund Assembly, 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).

- 1.7 At the November 2023 sessions of the governing bodies, it was noted that at the July 2023 session of the IMO Council, the Council had agreed to extend its trial period until its 132nd session (C 132) scheduled for mid-2024. It was also noted that interim guidance to facilitate the hybrid meeting capabilities of the Council, with particular regard to the Council Rules of Procedures, would be developed for submission and consideration at C 132.
- 1.8 In light of the decision of the IMO Council to extend the trial period for holding meetings in hybrid format, IOPC Funds' meetings have continued to be held in person during 2024, complemented by a passive streaming service, pending the outcome of the trial.

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

- 2.1 Throughout IMO's trial period, the Director has continued to liaise with the IMO Secretariat and has noted with particular interest the documents presented to the July 2024 sessions of the IMO Council relating to the Organization's experience of holding hybrid meetings and the review of its Rules of Procedure (documents C 132/17, C 132/17/1, C 132/17/2 and C 132 D).
- 2.2 The Director has noted in particular the information provided on the attendance of Member States; the analysis on feedback from committees and sub-committees; the update on the implementation enhancements undertaken to improve the provision of hybrid capabilities; and the costs associated with the hybrid meeting capabilities. In that respect, it is noted that the AV Unit of IMO, consists of three AV technicians and one external hybrid consultant.
- 2.3 At its 132nd session, the IMO Council agreed to permanently establish the utilisation of hybrid capabilities to support in-person meetings and invited the other IMO organs to do the same. The Council agreed in principle to the revision of its Rules of Procedure to include hybrid meeting capabilities and invited the IMO Secretariat to submit a draft incorporating the amendments to the Rules of Procedures of the Council for consideration and approval at its next session.
- 2.4 From the documents presented and the discussions during the 132nd session of the Council, it is clear that the trial was considered a success and that a number of the areas of concern that had been raised within the forum of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies in respect of hybrid meetings, such as voting, quorum and the management of technical issues, have also been raised and considered by IMO delegations during the trial period, with solutions or proposals presented and in some cases implemented. Some issues remain to be considered in detail during the discussion on the amendments to the Rules of Procedure which is due to take place at the 133rd session of the Council in November 2024.

## **3 The IOPC Funds' experience of remote meetings and streaming**

- 3.1 The five remote meetings held by the IOPC Funds during the period December 2020 to March 2022 were delivered via the e-conferencing platform KUDO. A number of Rules of Procedure were suspended or temporarily amended at each of those meetings to enable the sessions to take place remotely.
- 3.2 In May and November 2023 the Secretariat complemented the in-person meeting with a streaming service which was delivered via YouTube. The IOPC Funds' Secretariat worked together with the IMO Secretariat to transmit the three language channels and the live video feed from the main conference hall. There were some issues with the video footage on the French and Spanish channels and the displaying of presentations during the May sessions, but these issues were resolved for the November meeting. It was not necessary to suspend or amend any Rules of Procedure to deliver this service and no additional expenses were incurred. Registration to follow the meeting remotely and the sending of links to the service was straightforward.

- 3.3 In April 2024 the IOPC Funds used the IMO hybrid capabilities in the Main Hall to provide the passive streaming service. There were no issues regarding the delivery of the video footage to remote-passive participants. However, since registration for IOPC Funds' meeting is directly through the IOPC Funds' website and not through the IMO online registration system (IMO Docs), some issues were encountered with the sending of links, the displaying of names and flags and the general management of the remote-passive participation for the meeting. The IOPC Funds were required to engage the services of one external hybrid consultant and a further external technician to assist IMO with the delivery of the hybrid element of the meeting. The Secretariat was also required to have one member of staff to work with the IMO's AV Unit staff in the control booth throughout the meeting.
- 3.4 Whilst the hybrid capabilities were only used in a limited passive capacity for that meeting, it provided the IOPC Funds' Secretariat with an insight into the issues it would need to address before any move to deliver hybrid meetings could be considered. The hybrid capabilities installed at IMO have been implemented for the delivery of IMO meetings and cannot currently fully accommodate meetings organised by external parties, such as the IOPC Funds. This is primarily due to the fact that the remote service has been established on the basis that delegates are registered users of IMO Docs and that their registration for meetings is submitted via that system. The delegate's account and registration determines the type of participation access (in-person, remote-active or remote-passive) they receive to the meeting, the flag, name and country name displayed on screen for remote participants, and the type of auto-generated communications they receive relating to their participation.
- 3.5 In light of the issues experienced and the additional cost incurred in using the hybrid capabilities for the remote-passive participation, the IOPC Funds' Secretariat will return to using YouTube to deliver the streaming service for the November 2024 meeting.

#### **4 Director's considerations**

- 4.1 The Director firmly remains of the view that it is very important that Member States participate in sessions of the governing bodies and that they are able to actively contribute to discussions and take decisions to ensure the proper and fair functioning of the organisation.
- 4.2 He considers that the introduction of a remote-passive streaming service to complement the in-person meetings of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies has successfully enabled delegations to reduce the number of representatives it needs to send to London, whilst allowing more representatives to follow the meeting remotely and share comments with colleagues attending in person as the discussions take place. However, he recognises that this service does not allow for active participation and has therefore not increased the number of States represented at the meeting.
- 4.3 The Director expresses his appreciation to the Conference Division and IT section of the IMO Secretariat for the support they have provided in delivering the IOPC Funds' meetings over the past year and also congratulates them on the successful transition to delivering hybrid meetings for its numerous bodies and committees. He notes the positive experience of IMO in delivering hybrid meetings as well as the encouraging statistics provided in document C 132 17/2 relating to the increased participation of delegations from developing countries in particular.
- 4.4 He also notes the IMO Council's decision to permanently use hybrid capabilities to host meetings and recalls the agreement at the November 2023 sessions of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies that they should revisit the discussion related to the format of IOPC Funds' meetings following the outcome of the IMO trial. With this in mind, and in order to assist the discussions on this matter, the Director makes the following observations:
- (i) The current practice of providing a streaming service to complement the in-person meetings has been well received and allows additional members of a delegation to follow the discussions

remotely

- (ii) Whilst IMO's trial of hybrid meetings is complete, there are still a number of important matters to be discussed and decided upon during the review of the Rules of Procedure at the next session of the IMO Council in November 2024. These will include decisions regarding voting procedures, credentials and agreement over the interpretation of key phrases in the Rules such as 'present' for the purpose of quorum and voting.
- (iii) Whilst the IOPC Funds should carefully note the decisions and procedures of IMO, it is important to note that the IOPC Funds is different to IMO. The organisation tends to hold only two meetings each year, the topic of discussion, membership and the nature of the sessions are quite different to IMO. The Executive Committee in particular is required to take decisions and members could potentially be required to vote.
- (iv) Whilst there are some overlaps, not all delegates attending IOPC Funds' meetings are also attending IMO meetings. Therefore, many IOPC Funds' delegates do not have accounts with IMO Docs, which is a crucial element in the management of participation in the hybrid meeting system in the IMO building.
- (v) As a separate organisation, whilst the IOPC Funds use the conference services of IMO as part of a formal service agreement, the IOPC Funds' Secretariat manages its own registration system and has its own document services website and user accounts for meeting delegates. This is fundamental to the management of IOPC Funds' meetings.
- (vi) With the support of the IMO Secretariat, the IOPC Funds' Secretariat was able to use the IMO hybrid capabilities to deliver a passive service in April 2024, however it was not without difficulties.

#### *Director's proposal*

- 4.5 The Director recalls that during previous discussions on the possible format of future IOPC Funds' meetings, delegations have shared mixed views on the most suitable way forward for the organisation. However, there was firm agreement that any remote participation in the future should be complementary to, and not instead of, in-person participation. Taking this into account and noting the points outlined in paragraph 4.4, the Director proposes that Member States may wish to choose to either:
- (i) continue to hold meetings in person, complemented by a passive streaming service; or
  - (ii) hold meetings in person, complemented by remote-active participation (hybrid meetings).
- 4.6 Should Member States decide to opt for option (ii), the governing bodies will be invited to decide from which meeting they would like the hybrid capabilities to be implemented.
- 4.7 Noting the issues encountered when using the IMO hybrid capabilities to provide the remote-passive participation at the April 2024 sessions, the Secretariat would need to explore with IMO ways in which representatives to IOPC Funds' meetings could receive the same customised communications, referring to the IOPC Funds' meetings and their corresponding links and have the delegates' names and flags displayed in the correct format, etc. whilst the registration continues to be managed by the IOPC Funds' Secretariat. It would need to be established whether such adjustments could be made as part of a long-term solution or whether this would be a task that would need to be carried out for each meeting. The costs of such work would also need to be confirmed.

- 4.8 The Secretariat would also need to confirm the resources required to deliver the meetings in hybrid format and whether they would need to be provided by IMO or IOPC Funds' staff.
- 4.9 Finally, since the IMO Council will be carrying out a review of its Rules of Procedure relating to meetings and will be taking decisions on important matters such as voting and the interpretation of word 'present' at its November 2024 session, the Director considers that the IOPC Funds would benefit from learning the outcome of those discussions before implementing its own amendments and making its own interpretations.
- 4.10 The Director therefore recommends that, should the governing bodies decide to hold meetings in person, complemented by remote-active participation (hybrid meetings), that they also instruct him to explore the final practical arrangements for delivering such meetings with IMO including, in respect of the registration system, the resources required and the costs to be incurred and that he report his findings to the governing bodies at their April 2025 session.
- 4.11 He also recommends that he be instructed to review the Rules of Procedure of the governing bodies in respect of meetings and put forward a proposal for any required amendments at the April 2025 meeting, taking into account the discussions and decisions of the IMO Council at its upcoming session in November 2024.
- 4.12 The Director considers that, should the governing bodies agree with his recommendations in paragraphs 4.10 and 4.11 above, and subject to the outcome of the April 2025 meeting, he anticipates that the Secretariat would be in a position to deliver the November 2025 meeting using the hybrid capabilities of the IMO building.

## **5 Action to be taken**

### 1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

The governing bodies are invited to:

- (a) take note of the information contained in this document; and
  - (b) decide whether to:
    - (i) continue to hold meetings in person, complemented by a passive streaming service; or
    - (ii) hold meetings in person, complemented by remote-active participation (hybrid meetings). In this case, also decide when the first hybrid meeting should be held, taking into account the Director's considerations in Section 4.
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