

## Bureau Procedures

*Executive Secretary*

### Background

During the initial teleconference in March 2012 members emphasized that the Bureau's Terms of Reference were provided by the Commission, and that the Bureau is not a decision making forum. Its purpose is limited to the provision of advice to the Chair of the Commission and Secretariat, and the consideration of financial or administrative tasks only in the context of making recommendations to the Finance and Administration Committee.

Following these discussions, the Bureau requested the Secretary to develop a document on how the Bureau will operate for discussion at the September meeting. This document is provided in response to that request.

### Bureau Procedures

The Bureau replaced the Advisory Committee which operated until 2012. The Advisory Committee had a smaller membership and operated without formalised procedures other than those describing its terms of reference as set out in the Rules of Procedure. When required to provide advice it did so by consensus.

Given the slightly larger membership of the Bureau compared to the Advisory Committee, and the increased requirement for the provision of advice, Bureau members may wish to discuss various procedural aspects.

These include:

- Whether a **quorum** is required for a Bureau meeting. A quorum is required in order to be certain that any advice or guidance provided by the Bureau is formulated on the basis of the opinions of all members.

The Commission's rules state that 'attendance by a majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum'. If applied to the Bureau, this would suggest that participation by four of the seven Commissioners could be considered quorate.

- Although not a decision making forum, the Bureau will still need to come to **agreement** on the provision of advice. It may wish to agree to do this by consensus, as was the former practice at the Advisory Committee
- **Availability and circulation of documents.** Although the Bureau is closed to observers, documents for the current meeting were made available through the public website after consultation with the Chair. This approach is consistent with the approach of Finance and Administration Committee which is also closed to observers. Bureau members may wish to comment on whether to continue this method of distribution of Bureau documents.
- **Notification of Bureau meetings to Contracting Governments.** Rule of Procedure B.4 states that 'the Bureau shall meet in those years in which the Commission does not meet'. In addition, Rule of Procedure P.2 states 'The Chair's Report of the most recent ... Meeting of the Bureau shall be posted on the Commission's public website.

For the current meeting, convened under Procedure B.4, an invitation was provided to Bureau members. However no process exists for notifying other Contracting Governments that a Bureau meeting is about to take place. Such a process may be helpful in order to aid internal communications, and to allow Contracting Governments who are not members of the Bureau to highlight items where advice may be required during the intersessional period.

### Summary

The Bureau is not a decision making forum, although it is mandated to provide advice. The suggestions contained in this paper may assist the Bureau in ensuring any advice is provided both transparently and with adequate representation of the interests of all Contracting Governments.