

219th session of the Executive Board

Closing remarks by

Vera El Khoury Lacoeuilhe
Chairperson of the Executive Board

27 March 2024

Madam President of the General Conference
Mr DDG, Representative of the Director-General
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking you all for your strong engagement and full participation in the deliberations of the 219th session of the Executive Board.

As expected, our debates were sometimes intense and yet constructive whilst reflecting our global context. This level of engagement is a clear manifestation of your belief that your decisions would push this organization forward to achieve its goals.

And as we are reaching the end of this session, it is imperative to stop and reflect on the principles that must be highlighted to maintain what we have achieved and pave the way for our future success: the importance of freedom of speech while maintaining mutual respect, the necessity of proper agenda setting and provision of documents in a timely manner, the value of informal discussions among Member States.

Dear Colleagues,

Freedom of speech is sacred in this house, and every Member State has the fundamental right to express its position. I would like to underscore that mutual respect is also sacred in this house in all circumstances, and most particularly in the Executive Board.

As for the agenda-setting, and in order to complete the examination of our agenda on time, I had to request several members of the Executive Board and non-members to accept that their items, despite their importance, be examined without debate.

I would like to thank Brazil, France, Nigeria and South Africa for their understanding.

However, I have to say that examining items of such importance without debate should not become the norm.

And once more, the Board had to work in extended night sessions almost every day, and this is no longer sustainable.

At this session we received 14 items from Member States, two of which were subsequently withdrawn. This is the equivalent of a full day's work. It is not possible to continue to squeeze so many items into the same number of working days and still expect to avoid extended night sessions that are very expensive, and that the quality of our debates and decisions will not be impacted.

Dear Member States,

When new items are inscribed on the agenda of a session, and in order to enable Board members to make well-informed decisions, it is imperative that all relevant documentation is submitted in full within the deadline, namely the explanatory note and the draft decision. These texts should be provided at the time of the request for inscription of the item, no later.

I would therefore like to inform you that as rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure allows, when I will have visibility on the provisional agenda of the next session, I may decide to add a day to the dates foreseen. So please take this possibility into consideration while planning your agendas for the autumn. If we deem it necessary, we will do so.

Regarding the deadline for the publication of some important documents, I have heard you loud and clear. I totally understand that Board members want to be fully prepared for the Board meetings, and this is not possible when they do not have all relevant documents at their disposal prior to the session. All documents should respect the statutory deadline as per rule 22.2.

Information documents also fall under this rule, but the practice is to be more flexible with this category. However, this flexibility should not be abused. INF documents related to the implementation of the C/5 should respect the statutory deadlines because they are essential for the comprehension of the main documents. The other INF documents must be published within a reasonable deadline and always before to the start of the session.

Dear Colleagues,

As promised, we will be organizing an orientation session on the preparation of the C/5, explaining the different steps and the constitutional role of the Executive Board in this regard.

Moreover, and to keep another promise about creating space for the members of the Board to exchange among themselves, and hopefully with some eminent guests, you will be invited to an informal exchange meeting of Board members which will be organised without any financial implication to the budget of the Executive Board.

Reiterating my introductory remarks from last Monday, it is to be recalled that the Executive Board is an independent decision-making body. If the Secretariat sticks to its role and we stick to ours, I am confident that we will be able to work in a healthy atmosphere with a constructive cooperation.

Dear colleagues,

At the end of this session of the Executive Board, I would like to thank the Director-General, Deputy Director-General, the Director-General's team and the members of the Secretariat, the interpreters, the translators, the technical staff, and the room clerks. Special thanks go to the team of the Executive Board Secretariat and its Director Mr Sachin Bhatt.

I also wish to thank Mr Luis Salamanques, Deputy Secretary of the General Conference who will be leaving the Governing Bodies Secretariat soon, after 23 years of loyal services. His vast experience and knowledge will be sorely missed.

And lastly, and most importantly, I want to reiterate my sincere gratitude for each and every one of you for your active participation and your flexibility. You have maneuvered through challenging discussions and managed, very skillfully, to emerge united.

We can all be proud for having adopted important, practical, and meaningful decisions at this session. And, hopefully, the implementation of our decisions will result in a sustainable impact on people's lives.

Thank you.

I hereby declare the 219th session closed.