Items 3.2.3 and 11.1 of the Provisional Agenda

REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON GOVERNANCE, WORKING METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE COMMISSION

Summary

In accordance with the decision EC-L/Dec.5, this document provides a brief summary of the discussions in the open-ended Working Group on the Recommendations on Governance, Working Methods and Procedures of the Commission, which took place in the afternoon of 20 June 2017.

Decision: The Assembly takes note of document IOC-XXIX/2 Annex 4, subject to the further examination by the Financial Committee with a view of formulating a proposal in draft resolution XXIX-(11.1) for discussion and adoption in plenary.

1 The IOC Executive Council at its 50th session on 20 June 2017 examined this issue under item 5 of its agenda. The full report of the session is available as IOC/EC-L/3s.

2 In pursuance to EC-L/Dec.5, the meeting of the IOC open-ended working group on governance and working methods was convened under the chairship of the IOC Vice-Chair Ariel H. Troisi.

3 The open-ended working group met from 15:00 to 16:30 on 20 June 2017 in Room IV and was very well attended.

4 The Chair opened the meeting by inviting Member States to spend 10-15 minutes examining the document and preliminary draft recommendations of the Sub-group 2
Structure, composition and methods of work of UNESCO’s International and Intergovernmental Bodies (IIBs) of the open-ended working group on governance, procedures and methods of work of the governing bodies of UNESCO, established by 38 C/Resolution 101. He highlighted that such document (Co-Chairs’ Draft REV1 as of 12 June 2017) is a preliminary version dated 12 June 2017 and is yet subject to the final review by Sub-Group 2 at its next meeting on 23 June 2017. It is only intended for restricted distribution for the sake of facilitating the discussion, in agreement with the Sub-Group 2 Co-Chair Mr Jesus Enrique G. Garcia II, Deputy Permanent Delegate of the Philippines, who addressed the plenary of the IOC Executive Council on this issue under item 5 of its agenda.

Vice-Chair Troisi further emphasized that while only made available now, the document is not radically different from the informal summary of the Sub-Group 2 meeting of 28 February that was shared with all IOC Member States through IOC Circular Letter 2670 dated 8 May 2017.

He then provided a detailed summary of the document by highlighting the main points and emerging recommendations, both general and IOC-specific, that the working group had the mandate to discuss in preparation for the consideration of this item by the IOC Assembly at its 29th session under item 3.2.3.

In the ensuing discussion, 11 Member States took the floor (Argentina, Brazil, Cote d’Ivoire, Ecuador, India, Kenya, Russian Federation, South Africa, Togo, UK and USA).

Most speakers were very supportive of the process of reform and the review of governance. The importance of the functional autonomy of the IOC within UNESCO was highlighted in several interventions and satisfaction expressed with the fact that many of the IOC’s practices were recognized as best practices and recommended for implementation by other International and Intergovernmental Bodies. At the same time, it was pointed out that every strong and healthy organization needs to keep an open mind and be ready to study other entities’ best practices and bring them into its own work. Given the scope and potentially far-reaching implications of some of the recommendations, there was general agreement that they need to be approached with an open mind for improvement, but mindful of IOC’s history, practices and specificity, and eventual side effects.

All speakers acknowledged that the preliminary draft recommendations provide thought-provoking information and deserve serious consideration. Many of the general recommendations were considered as already implemented by the IOC, inter alia the alignment with the overarching priorities of UNESCO, coherence with the C/5 and responsiveness to global developments, such as the 2030 Development Agenda and other international frameworks, the composition and the renewal of the Executive Council membership every two years, as per Rule of Procedure no. 18, etc. In this context, many Member States expressed the opinion that the current process of re-election ensures active participation and commitment of Member States, while the issue of inclusiveness and diversity may be better addressed through the review of electoral groups, as suggested by Sub-Group 2. In this regard, some Member States expressed concern that the Sub-Group 2 draft preliminary recommendation on the number of the Officers seems to go against the idea of more inclusiveness and diversity.

The working group shared the view that one should not consider harmonizing for the sake of harmonizing, but with a view of further improving the efficiency and effectiveness of IOC’s work. As regards the number of electoral groups, an in-depth discussion needs to take place initially in Group V, though an introspection across all electoral groups might also be desirable. IOC Vice-Chair Ashley Johnson informed the working group that Group V would meet on 21 June 2017 to discuss whether there is a consensus within its members on the best way to move forward. The proposal to split Group V to align it with UNESCO’s Groups
5a and 5b needs in-depth consideration and should not be taken lightly in terms of its impact on the existing synergies and the work already underway.

11 All speakers regretted the very short time span allowed to study the document, which, in addition, is not easily digestible.

12 There was general agreement on the need for a better balance in the use of official and working languages and the requirement to respect the deadlines for the provision of the working documents for the sessions of the IOC Governing Bodies. This session of the Assembly offers an exceptionally negative example in the sense that less than one week prior to session, many working documents were still not on line, or not available in all official languages, thus preventing adequate analysis and consultations in order to have an active participation and make informed decisions.

13 In concluding the discussion, the Chair of the working group thanked all Member States for their active and constructive participation in the discussion. He reminded that the Sub-Group 2 recommendations proposed for the Assembly consideration are still preliminary and are part of a work currently underway and even then, with a view of submitting the proposals to the UNESCO General Conference. It was therefore no need to rush the IOC process unduly, with the additional risk of unseen or unwanted side effects. The message from the Sub-Group 2 Co-Chair in his address to the Executive Council was in a similar sense. The IOC needs to capitalise on its experience, functional autonomy within UNESCO and specificity, and address the issues with the attention and care that they deserve. He reminded that the working group did not have any decision-making mandate. The objective here was to bring this very recent draft document with preliminary recommendations to the attention of the Member States and to encourage inclusive consultations and discussions with a view of being better prepared for the debate in the Assembly plenary.

14 He highlighted that it is very encouraging that Group V is already taking the initiative to organise a side meeting to exchange views. He also expressed the opinion that nothing in the draft preliminary recommendations requires modification to highest legal document of the Commission – which are the IOC Statutes. Only two of the Sub-Group 2 draft recommendations are IOC-specific, while the efficiency issues and applicable best practices from other IIBs can be addressed through modifications to the Rules of Procedure. The Assembly, which brings together all IOC Member States, is the appropriate organ for a full range discussion of such far-reaching proposals and their implications, and for developing, as appropriate, an IOC response to the UNESCO governance review process.