

March 6, 2002

To: Members of the Executive Board

From: The Secretary

Subject: **Agenda and Procedures Committee—Summary Record of Meeting 02/2**

Attached for the information of Executive Directors is the summary record of the February 28, 2002 meeting of the Agenda and Procedures Committee.

Att: (1)

Other Distribution:
Department Heads

SUMMARY RECORD

AGENDA AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE MEETING 02/2

February 28, 2002, 3:00 p.m.

Members present: Mr. Mozhin (Chairman), Mr. Prader, Mr. Yagi, Mr. Kelkar, Mr. Szczuka, Mr. Anjaria (Secretary).

Also present: Mr. Shaalan, Mr. Kranen, Mr. Ismael, Mr. Cho, Mr. Bauche, Mr. Daïri, Mr. Wei, Ms. Lundsager, Mr. O'Murchú, Mr. Oyarzábal, Mr. Gallardo, Mr. Andersen, Mr. Brooke, Mr. Yakusha, Mr. Alosaimi, Mr. Vittas, Mr. Bhatta, Mr. Mafararikwa.

Minimum Circulation Periods for Board Documents

The Chairman (Mr. Mozhin) said that, as explained in the Secretary's background note, the present guidelines on minimum circulation periods were three weeks, for Article IV consultation papers on countries of "systemic or regional importance" and "key" policy papers, and two weeks for use of Fund resources and all other papers.

The Committee focused on the following four topics:

A. Should the minimum circulation period of two weeks be applied uniformly to all country and policy items?

A few speakers were willing to consider applying a uniform two-week minimum circulation period for all country papers, but stressed that a three-week minimum circulation period should be kept for key policy papers. After some discussion, the Committee agreed that the present guidelines should be maintained, especially as multi-country constituencies might have difficulties in coping with a shortened uniform minimum circulation period of two weeks.

B. Should the minimum two-week circulation period be eliminated for supporting papers and background documentation for country and policy items?

Speakers were not in favor of eliminating the minimum two-week circulation period for supporting and background papers, as they were considered important for the preparation of many Article IV consultation, as well as policy, discussions.

C. Is the present mechanism for requesting a waiver for country papers adequate? Should a short grace period (of one day) for breaches of the circulation period for country papers be introduced?

Many speakers considered that a short grace period of one day would reduce recourse to the bureaucratic procedure of having to request a waiver, and would minimize the need to

rearrange the Board schedule in the event of a short delay in circulating a country paper. However, other speakers were concerned that a grace period might be abused and only encourage the existing deadline to be missed. A few speakers suggested that the day of the circulation of the paper should not be counted toward the minimum circulation period, as many papers tended to be circulated at the end of the day, effectively reducing the length of the circulation period by one day.

The Committee finally agreed that a one-day grace period should be introduced.

The Secretary remarked that he would follow up with the staff on the importance of adhering to the rules regarding the dating of Board papers.

D. Should a formal mechanism for requesting a waiver for policy papers also be introduced?

Speakers commented that, in the interest of accountability and fair treatment, an explanation or advance notification by the Secretary should be provided when a policy paper was likely to miss the minimum circulation period. That requirement would serve as a deterrent to delays in completing policy papers.

A few speakers argued that introducing a formal request by the Managing Director or the Secretary for a waiver of the minimum circulation period for a policy paper would allow Directors to object to the waiver and request that the discussion be postponed.

The Secretary outlined his understanding of the rules. In principle, if a waiver of the minimum circulation period was required for a country paper, the Executive Director for the country concerned was expected to formally request a waiver at a Board meeting and explain the reasons for the request. In practice, requests for a country item waiver had never been refused by the Board. More broadly, the setting of the Board agenda was the prerogative of the Chairman with the assistance of the Secretary. At the same time, any Director could propose to have a matter put on the agenda. Once the agenda had been set, the formal rule was that an item could be removed by a simple majority of Board votes cast. However, in practice, if there was a scheduling or bunching problem, the Secretary—possibly through informal consultations with Board members or as a result of e-mail comments from several Directors—would advise the Chairman to adjust the schedule. The Board agenda could not be formally amended by the objection of just one or two Directors. In this light, the Secretary considered that it would not be desirable to set a rule whereby the Board would be asked to grant waivers on the non-observance of the minimum circulation period for policy papers. Unlike country item cases, such requests might run the serious risk of requiring formal Board discussion and voting. However, advance warning and an explanation would be provided when a policy paper was expected to breach the minimum circulation period. The Committee concurred with the Secretary's proposed approach.

E. Other Comments

One speaker commented that some country and policy papers were issued with an explanation that the date of their Board meeting would be announced in the future, and were then often scheduled for a specific date with little notice. The Secretary agreed to look into ways of avoiding that practice.

Another speaker requested that the Secretary circulate a note explaining the criteria for determining the specific minimum circulation period for policy papers.

Conclusion

The Committee agreed that, henceforth, its meetings would be held every two months, unless there were urgent matters to be discussed.

The meeting concluded at 4:00 p.m.