

EB/APC/02/2

December 24, 2002

To: Members of the Executive Board

From: The Acting Secretary

Subject: **Committee on Agenda and Board Procedures—Summary Record of Meeting 02/7**

Attached for the information of Executive Directors is a summary record of the December 12, 2002 meeting of the Committee on Agenda and Board Procedures.

Att: (1)

Other Distribution:
Department Heads

**Summary Record
Committee on Agenda and Board Procedures
Meeting 02/7
December 12, 2002—2:30 p.m.**

Members present: Mr. Mozhin (Chairman), Mr. Brooke, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Reddy, Mr. Yagi, Mr. Anjaria (Secretary)

Also present: Mr. Alazzaz, Mr. Andersen, Mr. Callaghan, Mr. Costa, Mr. Daïri, Mr. Gitton, Ms. Indrawati, Mr. Kanu, Ms. Lundsager, Mr. O'Murchú, Mr. Oyarzábal, Mr. Portugal, Mr. Shaalan, Mr. von Kleist, Mr. Yakusha

1. Update on the Board Calendar

The Secretary reported on key policy items that had been rescheduled in the latest calendar of Executive Board meetings and noted that, as the recently circulated paper on the analysis of the Hawala System raised issues being seen by the Board for the first time, it was to be discussed in a seminar, rather than a Board meeting. Some speakers felt that bunching of calendar items appeared to have worsened lately, which might reflect underlying institutional constraints that should be identified and addressed.

2. Information Procedure for Missed Minimum Circulation Periods for Policy Papers

The committee members considered a discussion note on *Information Procedure for Missed Minimum Circulation Periods for Policy Papers* (EB/APC/02/1, 12/3/02) [attached].

The Chairman recalled that, at recent committee meetings, it was agreed that the Secretary should propose a procedure that would give advance warning and an explanation when a key policy paper was going to miss the minimum circulation period of three weeks. It was to be hoped that the proposed procedure and series of standard explanations would enable the Board to better understand the reasons behind delays in the circulation and discussion of policy papers, and encourage authoring departments to adhere more strictly to the three-week minimum circulation period, thereby helping to reduce changes in scheduled items and bunching of discussions.

Committee members stressed the importance they attached to close adherence to the three-week circulation guideline—including in periods leading up to the ministerial meetings—and to reducing the instances of rescheduling of key policy items. While they welcomed the effort to define a new procedure, they wondered whether the proposal would meet the concerns that Directors had identified. One committee member thought that it would be more useful to provide, in advance, an estimate on the length of the expected delay in the circulation and discussion of a paper, rather than state the reason for the delay when the

paper was subsequently circulated. Another commented that it would be helpful to distinguish between minor breaches of the three-week guideline and longer breaches.

Other speakers expressed skepticism that the proposed procedure would achieve the overarching objective, namely, to give Directors at least three weeks to examine papers and consult their authorities—a key factor in facilitating high-quality interventions and Board discussions. They considered that the possible explanations alone would not suffice and, in any event, were not convincing. For example, a delay owing to competing staff priorities naturally raised the question of the appropriateness of the choice of priorities. In addition, one speaker emphasized that key policy papers should always be discussed well in advance of—and not too close to—ministerial meetings. Indeed, a few speakers suggested, the minimum circulation period for key policy papers could usefully be extended to four weeks. One speaker proposed adopting a more flexible approach: for a short breach of the minimum circulation period of one to two days, a simple explanation of the reason for the delay would be provided and the discussion would take place as scheduled; for a longer breach, it would be presumed that the discussion would be postponed. Another speaker further suggested that, in the event of longer breaches, a fuller explanation of the reasons should be provided.

A few other speakers returned to an earlier proposal to require Management to formally request a waiver of the minimum circulation period for key policy papers. An important advantage of that approach was that it would require an explanation of not only why the circulation was delayed, but also why Management and staff believed that it was necessary to hold a discussion as scheduled, with less than three weeks of circulation. Under that system, any Director would have the right to object to the waiver and ask for the discussion to be postponed. The Secretary noted that there was a risk of asymmetrical waiver procedures for country and policy items, in the sense that, in practice, requests for a country item waiver were virtually never refused by the Board, but the same might not be true for policy paper waivers. Setting the Board agenda was the prerogative of the Chairman—although any Director could request that an item be put on the agenda—and once the agenda had been set, an item could be removed formally only by a simple majority of Board votes cast. As a result, instituting a waiver procedure for policy papers would risk frequent and possibly lengthy Board discussions, as well as possibly voting, on a procedural and non-substantive issue.

The Chairman suggested that, in light of this discussion, the Committee consider other options at its next meeting, building on the suggestions at the present meeting. He could envisage new procedures along three main lines: (i) if a key policy paper would miss the three-week minimum circulation period by just a day or two, the reason for the late circulation could be briefly explained and the Board discussion could proceed as planned; (ii) if a paper would miss the three-week minimum circulation period by more than two days, and, nevertheless, the intention was to proceed with the Board discussion as planned, an explanation of the reason for that intention could be provided; and (iii) if the circulation of the paper was substantially delayed, the Board discussion date could be rescheduled and the paper, when circulated, could be accompanied by a more substantive explanation of the circumstances.

3. Possible Discussion Item for Future APC Meeting

One speaker suggested that, on a future occasion, it would be useful for the Committee to consider whether the duplication of information between the Chairman's Statement and the Summing Up on country items could be reduced. The Summing Up could perhaps highlight the more sensitive issues that were raised in the discussion, rather than duplicate the information already contained in the externally published Chairman's Statement.

The meeting concluded at 4:00 p.m.

Att: (1)

**Possible Explanations for Missing the Three-Week Minimum
Circulation Period for Key Policy Papers**

1. *The circulation of the staff paper was delayed because additional time was needed for its preparation.*

This explanation will be used when preparation of the paper takes longer than expected because of the complexity of the topic or the policy proposals, and/or the unexpected time required to collect information/data.

2. *The circulation of the staff paper was delayed owing to competing priorities.*

This explanation will be used in cases in which the staff/management resources had to be pulled away for a time on higher priority/urgent country or policy work.

3. *The circulation period is not being respected owing to the need to complete the Board discussion ahead of upcoming ministerial meetings.*

This will apply to cases in which a paper to be discussed just before the spring or fall ministerial meetings is not completed in time.