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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединённых Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأمم المتحدة
للزراعة

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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Thirty-first Session¹

26-28 October 2020

INFORMATION NOTE

Conference Arrangements

1. The 31st Session of the Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will be held in virtual modality from 26 to 28 October 2020.
2. This decision follows consultations by the Director-General with the Host Country, and the Africa Regional Group, including on special procedures to be applied for the virtual modality of the Regional Conference.
3. Special procedures for virtual mode outlined in this Information Note will be confirmed by the ARC during Item 2 *Adoption of Agenda (ARC/20/1 Rev.1) and Timetable (ARC/20/INF/2 Rev.1)*, and said confirmation will be recorded in the Report of the 31st Session of the ARC.
4. All session times indicated are those of the Greenwich Mean Time/Coordinated Universal Time (GMT/UTC).
5. The inaugural ceremony of the Ministerial Session will take place online at 09.00 GMT/UTC hours on Tuesday, 27 October 2020. Heads of Delegations are requested to be present at this time.
6. All ARC meetings will be conducted through the Zoom videoconferencing platform. The link to register for the Zoom meeting will be distributed in a separate message. Two dry-runs of the virtual mode will be held on 19 October 2020 (English) and 20 October 2020 (French) at 14:00 GMT/UTC hours and will last about an hour. We strongly encourage delegations to attend this session in order to ensure that any issues or challenges are addressed and resolved prior to the actual virtual session of the Regional Conference. More details will follow in due course.
7. An "Order of the Day" will be issued daily by email giving detailed information of the Regional Conference business, timetable of meetings, items to be discussed and other general information.
8. The Provisional Annotated Agenda (ARC/20/1 Rev.1), Provisional Timetable (ARC/20/INF/2 Rev.1) and Provisional List of Documents (ARC/20/INF/3 Rev.1) were circulated to delegates with the invitation letter and are also available on the ARC website at: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/arc31>.

¹ Rescheduled from 23-27 March 2020, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

Working Languages

9. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

Press Liaison and Information

10. For the duration of the Regional Conference, an ARC Conference Information Officer (Zoie Jones, who can be reached at zoie.jones@fao.org), assisted by a press officer of the Government of Zimbabwe, will maintain contacts with the press and be responsible for matters concerning information to the public.

Documentation

11. The Regional Conference webpage is available at <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/arc31>.
12. Members and participating organizations will have access to all documents before the Regional Conference commences, and will be able to find the documents at the following address: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/arc31/documents/en/>.

Draft Recommendations and Amendments

13. Delegates who wish to submit draft recommendations, or other documents requiring decision by the Regional Conference, are requested to provide an electronic version of their text in English to the Regional Conference Secretary at: ARC-Secretariat@fao.org by 21 October 2020.

Advance Communications of Text of Speeches and Statements

14. Delegations are encouraged to limit their written statements to a maximum of 600 words. In order to ensure accuracy in interpretation, delegates are requested to submit digital copies of their statements, in English, to the Secretariat of the Regional Conference at ARC-Secretariat@fao.org by Thursday, 22 October 2020. FAO will post these statements on the Regional Conference webpage at <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/arc31/documents/en/>
15. Interventions at the Regional Conference by Heads of Delegations will be scheduled in alphabetical order of country name. Interventions may be either live or pre-recorded. In either case, the duration should not exceed 4 minutes. In order to minimize the risk of connectivity problems, pre-recorded interventions are encouraged. If the intervention is pre-recorded, it will be played during the conference at the appropriate time during the Ministerial Session and will later be posted on the webpage at <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/arc31>.
16. Participants who choose pre-recorded statements are requested to submit the written text of the statement along with the video, to assist in the interpretation of the recorded statements.
17. If pre-recorded, the final video statement in MP4 format must reach the ARC Secretariat no later than Friday, 23 October 2020. Videos should be sent to ARC31-Dialogue@fao.org with a link to any commercial large file transfer service.
18. The technical specifications for pre-recording interventions are as follows:
 - a. the recording/filming should be produced in full HD 1080 x 1920;
 - b. the file, in MP4 format, should be compressed into a lighter version for playback via Zoom;
 - c. a 3-4 minute video should be compressed to 80 MB in size at a compression rate of 3.5 mbps (megabyte per seconds). Files exceeding this size may create technical problems to play and view; the compression should be done prior to sending to ARC Secretariat;
 - d. videos in .MOV format should be avoided; and

- e. the deadline of 23 October 2020 is required to give the Secretariat time to test the recordings on Zoom.

Advance Written Correspondence on Agenda Items

19. The items for deliberation, both for the Senior Officers Meeting and Ministerial Conference, are indicated in the Annotated Agenda and Timetable.
20. Given the decision to hold the 31st Session of the Conference in virtual mode and constraints related to the 3-hour time zone differences in the Africa region, written correspondence will be the mode to address the following agenda items:
 - a. Item 21 - Multi-year Programme of Work 2020-2023 for the Regional Conference for Africa
 - b. Item 22 - Decentralized Offices Network

These items to be addressed through written consultation shall not be discussed live at the virtual session of the ARC

21. Under the written correspondence procedure, Members are requested to submit any questions and comments by email to ARC31-Dialogue@fao.org by 22 October 2020 if possible. These inputs will then be posted on the Regional Dialogue Area as they are received. Please indicate clearly in the email subject line and in its body to which agenda item the comments or input relate.
22. The Regional Dialogue Area will be available by password at: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/arc31/raf-dialogue/en/>. Registered participants will receive the username and password by separate email after registration.
23. Where applicable, the Secretariat will provide written responses to inputs received. A consolidated response to comments received by Thursday, 22 October 2020 will be prepared by the ARC Secretariat and will be posted in the Regional Dialogue Area by 23 October 2020.
24. To facilitate the proceedings, an introduction to agenda items (ARC papers to be presented) will be circulated to participants through the Regional Dialogue Area.
25. Items considered under the written correspondence procedure will form an integral part of the deliberations and report of the 31st Session of the ARC.
26. The Report of the 31st Session of the ARC will record Members' consensus on the amended modalities for the Session outlined in this Information Note, including with regard to the written consultation on selected Agenda items.

General Enquiries

27. All general correspondence concerning the ARC should be addressed to both:

Conference Secretary at the FAO Regional Office for Africa	Government of Zimbabwe Liaison Officer
<p>Ms Jocelyn Brown Hall FAO Regional Office for Africa P. O. Box. 1628, Accra, Ghana Tel: +1 202 431 2362 Mob: +233553862455 Email: ARC-Secretariat@fao.org and always copy: Jocelyn.BrownHall@fao.org KwamiDzifanu.NyarkoBadohu@fao.org Francisca.Penuku@fao.org</p>	<p>Dr Jon Basera Permanent Secretary Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement Tel: + 263 427 90 358 Email: jonbasera@gmail.com and always copy: manyarad@gmail.com Gamumusa360@gmail.com ctbwenje@gmail.com. protocldirectorate@gmail.com</p>

Webcasting

28. All Plenary sessions will be webcast live and uploaded to the Regional Conference website at: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/arc31> and at <http://www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/>.

Online Registration

29. Participants are informed that they should register online at the following address <https://event-services.fao.org/31stARC>.
30. After the registration for the ARC is approved through Cvent, participants will **automatically be registered for the Zoom** virtual meeting by the Secretariat.
31. A **confirmation email with the link** to access the virtual meeting room will be sent to the email address provided during the registration.
32. All delegates and observers are requested to register by Thursday, 22 October 2020 at <https://event-services.fao.org/31stARC>. Please note that all participants are requested to register for the virtual meeting even if a previous registration had been submitted for the originally scheduled in-person meeting. For those participants who registered for the Regional Conference in March 2020, please re-register, using the “Already Registered” function in the registration site.