

The Working Group on the Future of the Agreement met for the first time from 22 to 24 January 2007, chaired by Mr. Saint-Cyr Djikalou of Côte d'Ivoire. The Group, which was established by the Council in September 2006, has the mandate of examining the current Agreement which expires on 30 September 2007 and proposals submitted by Members or other invited parties, with the aim of submitting its recommendations to the Council at its next Session from 21 – 25 May.

The Group reviewed documents containing proposals from Members on five thematic areas: Objectives; Membership and votes; Efficiency of deliberations and decision making; Structural and administrative matters; New and expanded areas of work.

In the area of objectives, Members considered proposals to introduce an overarching objective and to amend existing objectives including sustainability, quality and promotion. They reaffirmed the role of the ICO in collecting and disseminating information and considered a new proposal for an objective to facilitate information on financial tools. There was consensus on a number of elements and this area will be further reviewed at the next meeting.

In the case of membership, the Group reviewed proposals to reflect the status of the European Community (EC) as a Contracting Party with sole competence for its Members, and to amend the voting system. There was a good measure of consensus on these proposals, and it is expected that the matter should be finalised at the next meeting.

The Group reviewed the governance of the Organization and proposals to introduce innovations such as a Consultative Forum on Finance. There was some debate on the number of Council sessions to be held each year and whether or not the Executive Board should be maintained. The Group also considered procedures related to decision-making.

The Group considered the role of the PSCB, and whether or not its remit should be extended. It was generally agreed that the PSCB should continue to be composed of private sector associations and should not be expanded to include institutions that were not coffee related.

In the case of the duration of the Agreement, there was a general consensus about extending this for a longer period than the current term of six years. It also had preliminary discussions on proposals for new articles or chapters including a coffee observatory, and chapters on projects and a consultative forum on finance. These matters will be further reviewed at the next meeting.

The Group will meet again on 19 and 20 March and will consider a draft text incorporating proposals where there is general consensus and proposals which still need to be agreed, with the aim of preparing a draft text of a new Agreement for consideration by the Council in May 2007.