

GUIDELINES FOR REMOTE PARTICIPATION TO THE APT MEETINGS

Guideline 18 (MC-44, Bangkok, 2020)

These Guidelines set out general procedures on the organization and handling of meeting under APT Work Programme with remote participation.

1. Scope

APT meetings include, but not limited to, Forums, Groups, Symposiums, Correspondence Groups, Working Groups, and Ad-Hoc Groups.

APT meetings may be conducted in the following formats:

- physical meetings (face-to-face)
- physical meetings with remote observation (i.e., webcast)
- physical meetings with (active) remote participation
- e-meetings, also called virtual/online meetings.

The same format may not apply to all sessions of a given meeting. These Guidelines provide overarching procedures for physical meetings with active remote participation and e-meetings of APT Work Programme, and in case individual Work Programme requires specific guidelines for remote participation, the relevant Work Programme should submit a revised working methods which contains the specific guidelines to the subsequent Session of the Management Committee of the APT to get its approval. The meeting format (see clause 3.4) to be used for any given meeting or meeting session is beyond the scope of these Guidelines.

2. Definitions

2.1 Meeting

Meetings include, but not limited to, Forums, Groups, Symposiums, correspondence groups, working groups, ad hoc groups or any other group created under APT Work Programme.

NOTE – A workshop or a seminar is not considered a meeting in the context of these Guidelines.

2.2 Remote Participation

Participation in a meeting from a separate geographical location, using communication technologies.

NOTE – Depending on the meeting, remote participation may be active or in an observing capacity (in case of webcast), but only active remote participation is considered in these Guidelines.

2.3 Remote Participation Moderator

A person in charge of monitoring the remote participation tool, ensuring that remote participants know what is taking place in the meeting and allowing remote participants chances to contribute (in case of a meeting with active remote participation).

NOTE – A remote participation moderator is not systematically available for each meeting with remote participation.

3. Organization of a Meeting with Remote Participation

This clause gives guidelines for the meeting chairman and APT Secretariat who are organizing a meeting with remote participation.

3.1 When scheduling the time for meetings with remote participation or for e-meetings, consideration should be given to the different time zones of the expected remote participants. Consideration should also be given to, when practical, scheduling relevant agenda items identified by a remote participant to better accommodate the remote participant's time zone.

3.2 If remote participation is to be arranged for participation in a meeting, APT Secretariat should be informed at least twelve calendar days before the meeting, to allow for enough time for logistics arrangements.

3.3 If the meeting chairman is expected to participate remotely, the meeting should identify an acting chairman in case the chairman is unable to connect.

3.4 The meeting agenda indicates the format in which the meeting will be conducted:

- physical meetings (face-to-face)
- physical meetings with remote observation (i.e., webcast)
- physical meetings with (active) remote participation (see also clause 4.1)
- e-meetings, also called virtual/online meetings (see also clause 4.1).

NOTE – The first two formats are not covered by these Guidelines. The meeting format could be based on a variety of criteria, including, but not limited to, the nature of the meeting, whether the meeting is held inside or outside Bangkok and technical capabilities available for the meeting.

3.5 It is recommended that the technologies used for remote participation are those available from the APT, even for meetings held outside Bangkok.

3.6 For meetings held outside Bangkok with (active) remote participation, it is recommended that hosts be supplied with guidelines in order to minimize possible technical issues related to remote participation. Those guidelines (e.g., in the form of a checklist) should be accessible for the host well in advance before the event, and should include all the technical and logistics requirements for providing the remote participation facility.

4. Guidelines for the Meeting Chairman

This clause gives guidelines for the meeting chairman to help chairing a meeting with remote participation.

4.1 Based on the remote participation tool used, the office bearers of the meeting decide the operation mode for the meeting. The modes described in clauses 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 are suggested. The decision of the office bearers is announced at the beginning of the meeting and the meeting is chaired accordingly.

4.1.1 All remote participants are muted by default and can intervene at any time. To prevent interference of background noise, the chair reminds remote participants to mute their microphones until when they wish to contribute (see also clause 4.5).

NOTE – This may be practical for the meeting of a small sized meeting, such as a correspondence group, but probably not during the larger size meeting (if at least to avoid echo and other background noise).

4.1.2 All remote participants are muted by default and will be unmuted by the remote participation moderator on a case-by-case basis, if they so request through the remote participation tool.

NOTE – The remote participation moderator would then inform the meeting that a remote participant can intervene and the chairman would include the remote participant in the queue of meeting participants who want to intervene.

4.2 In the case of physical meetings with remote participation, chairman and the remote participation moderator are encouraged to meet in the room ten minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting to check that the system is working and that chairman can display and share documents.

4.3 At the beginning of each meeting with remote participation, chairman announces that there is a remote facility and requests that all remote participants introduce themselves by mentioning their name and affiliation.

NOTE – Remote participants who join a meeting after the initial introduction of participants are expected to announce their arrival by mentioning their name and affiliation. If the remote participation tool announces participants' arrival with a specific sound, chairman may ask new participants to introduce themselves unless it does not intervene discussion.

4.4 Chairman encourages remote participants to announce their name and affiliation clearly before speaking (see also clause 5.3).

4.5 Where supported by the remote participation tool, the chairman or the remote participation moderator is permitted to mute remote participants with bad connections or whose connections introduce too much noise, or may ask them to leave the meeting if the situation cannot be remedied.

5. Technical guidelines for remote participants

This clause gives guidelines for remote participants.

5.1 Remote participants are encouraged to use the remote facility through a landline (when available), or to use a headset (and not the microphone and speaker of their machine). Remote participants should make sure that the loudspeaker on their machine is muted when they call from a landline.

5.2 It is recommended that remote participants connect at least five minutes before the start of a meeting to avoid disturbance. This will also allow for chairman and/or the remote participation moderator to check sound levels.

5.3 Remote participants are encouraged to announce their name and affiliation clearly before making any intervention (see also clause 4.4).

5.4 Remote participants should speak from a quiet place without background noise. They should speak slowly and clearly to allow the other participants to compensate for any audio problem. They are encouraged to end their remarks with the phrase "This concludes my intervention."

5.5 If the connection is poor, and if requested by chairman, remote participants should be prepared to type their question or comment in the chat window of the remote participation tool.

5.6 During a physical meeting with remote participation, remote participants accept that, in case of technical problems (e.g., lost connection), their participation may be interrupted (see also clause 5.8) while the physical meeting will continue, whereas in case of onsite technical issues (e.g., headphone failure), chairman may decide to suspend the meeting until the problem is solved.

NOTE – Remote participants recognize that an important part of any meeting are the informal discussions during breaks and lunch where delegates can informally explain, understand, and forge the compromises needed for the consensus processes to work. Remote participants recognize that they will not have this type of interaction with the other participants.

5.7 Remote participants accept that in case of technical problems (e.g., lost connection) during an e-meeting, chairman will assess whether enough participants are still connected and will decide whether to continue the meeting (see also clause 5.8) or to suspend the meeting until the problem is solved.

5.8 Remote participants may report problems to the remote participation moderator (when available) who should determine where the cause lies and should either take direct remedial action or offer advice as appropriate. A remote participant who experiences problems in joining the meeting should preferably discuss with the remote participation moderator in a private chat window (or tab) so that the main chat window is reserved for discussions of interest to all participants.

6. Technical Guidelines for in-person Participants

This clause gives guidelines for participants physically present in a meeting with remote participation.

6.1 In order to increase voice quality, only one microphone should be on (open) at a given time in the meeting room, and physically present participants shall speak close to (and in front of) the microphone.