

INTOSAI Continuity of Operations:

Guidance for Scheduling and Conducting Virtual Meetings

During this period of social distancing, severe travel limitations and profound changes in our lives, the INTOSAI General Secretariat and other INTOSAI bodies are dedicated to helping INTOSAI members and institutions find new ways to collaborate and share information to keep the international audit community connected.

In an effort to ensure INTOSAI continues to advance its mission, the General Secretariat encourages all INTOSAI committees and working bodies to determine the necessity for their annual meetings this year. Due to the number of postponed INTOSAI meetings thus far, it will not be feasible to reschedule them all for the fall. If the meetings are deemed crucial, they will have to be held virtually.

With regard to scheduling, please consult in any case the [INTOSAI calendar](#) before making any final decisions. In general, priority should be given to meetings of the Governing Board, Goal Steering Committees and the Regional Organizations.

These international meetings will require thorough preparation to ensure successful, productive meetings. Below are guidelines for conducting effective virtual meetings.

Determine the appropriate platform for your virtual meeting.

- Decide which technology/software is appropriate for your meeting needs. There are many videoconferencing and collaborative tools available, including Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, Google Hangouts, and Cisco WebEx. The [INTOSAI Community Portal](#) or the [EUROSAI videoconferencing tool](#) may also be of assistance. Confirm that the chosen meeting platform supports multiple participants.
- If there is a need to present documents, consider video chatting platforms. Otherwise, a teleconference line will suffice.
- Be mindful that meeting participants may have limited connectivity and thus, whenever possible, a platform that enables members from different SAIs and countries to participate is recommended. Consider using as backup a teleconference line for those with limited technology.
- Should participants have difficulty connecting to the conference, offer an alternative means for them to submit their input, such as via email.

Prepare a meeting agenda and plan for a short, focused meeting.

- Prepare a short, precise meeting agenda with key issues to be covered in the meeting. The duration of the meeting should be as short as possible. It may be helpful to assign time limits to each agenda item. Allow for breaks in the agenda if sessions are over half an hour.

- Wherever feasible, agenda items that require decisions should be discussed without lengthy presentations.
- Clearly state what is expected from each participant in the meeting, including assigning speaking roles in the agenda.
- Consider the various time zones of the meeting participants when scheduling the meeting.
- Send the meeting agenda well in advance of the meeting.

Designate a moderator to lead the meeting.

- Assign a meeting moderator to move through the agenda and keep the discussion focused on the topic.
- The moderator should begin the meeting with an introduction and share practical ground rules.
- The moderator may also check attendance and call on presenters to speak.
- The moderator may consider ensuring participation from every meeting participant. For example, the moderator could institute a “round robin” discussion, where the moderator calls on each participant to provide their perspectives.
- When a presenter is using slides, the moderator ensures the slides are working properly before having the presenter begin.
- When introducing a new presenter, the moderator could remind the presenter to unmute themselves. This will reduce the times when presenters begin speaking while muted. If the presenter is still muted, the moderator should let them know, and ask them to unmute until everyone can hear them. If problems persist after 30 seconds or so, moderator should move on to the next agenda item and presenter, and then circle back to that presenter later in the meeting.

Prepare meeting materials in advance of the meeting.

- Send out in advance the documents requiring participant review/comment/approval and desired deadline for submitting input.
- Share revised drafts with tracked changes.
- Use remote collaboration tools as much as possible in advance of the meeting. The meeting should be a place to vote upon/approve the documents.
- When hosting jointly with another country, hold a brief meeting beforehand with staff from both countries to go over meeting logistics and obtain a copy of their meeting script.

Test your system/equipment in advance of the meeting.

- Test your telephone/camera/microphone prior to the meeting to ensure they are working properly.
- Send meeting log-in information (access codes, URLs, and call-in numbers) in advance so that participants can test for connectivity issues.

- Provide a means for participants to communicate with the meeting organizer offline should they encounter problems.

Follow meeting etiquette: minimize distractions.

- Conduct the meeting in a quiet environment to limit distractions. The use of headphones may minimize background noise and prevent audio feedback. Participants should also mute their mics when not speaking; a moderator should help remind participants as needed.
- Virtual meetings should move at a slower pace than in-person meetings to accommodate for the delay in systems. Moderators should take sufficient pauses after asking a question. Waiting a second before speaking can clear a lot of confusion.
- Moderator or assigned staff periodically remind participants, especially after a break, to turn off their video and audio if they are not presenting.
- Participants should make sure to enable options like mute by default while joining an audio/video meeting. This will give the participant time to examine their surroundings for unwanted sounds and visuals.
- Meetings require everyone to be focused and alert. Everyone's time should be utilized in such a way providing their best suggestions, ideas, and opinions in the discussions.
- Avoid quick movements. It makes it difficult for webcams to capture sudden and quick movements. Quick movements may appear blurry or choppy to others on the same call. Maintain eye contact with the camera and try to be more engaging in the meeting.

Conclude the meeting with clear action items.

- The moderator should clearly communicate action items, if any, for each agenda item and get acknowledgment from all the participants.

Share a meeting minutes with participants.

- After the meeting, the meeting minutes should be sent to the participants.
- Ask for feedback from participants on technical issues as well as possible improvements to ensure effective discussions.