Course Syllabus

Learning objectives

As COVID-19 restrictions made in-person meetings impossible, many United Nations and Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) meetings have moved to a virtual format.

While virtual meetings remain fairly new within the United Nations, MEAs and regional environmental conventions had already developed a significant practice in this area, especially with their subsidiary and intersessional bodies. Many MEAs relied on this practice in moving an increasing number of meetings online, in some cases including meetings of their Conferences of the Parties (COPs).

The best practices UN bodies and MEAs have adopted over the last year indicate that virtual meetings are here to stay. This course takes a closer look at how these negotiation processes are dealt with in a virtual context.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain existing practice MEAs used prior to COVID-19.
2. Describe how operating procedures can be adapted for virtual meetings in compliance with Rules of Procedure.
3. Give examples of some of the best practices UN bodies and MEAs have adopted to hold virtual meetings.

Content and duration

The online course is comprised of 3 lessons, organized in interactive modules that combine the course theory with exercises and interactions that will facilitate the learning process. The core content of the lessons is complemented with additional materials, such as videos, publications, and external websites.

It will take you approximately 1 hour to complete the course, excluding additional materials. This is a self-paced course that allows you to manage your time as you wish. You can navigate the lessons at your convenience and retake them whenever you wish.

Completion certificate

Take the quiz at the end of the course to assess your learning progress. You are required to answer at least 80% of the assessment questions correctly in order to obtain a course certificate.

Before obtaining the certificate you also need to submit the course survey (your feedback). This survey helps us to improve the course, develop new courses and assess if you are achieving your learning objectives.

Course outline and content

Lesson 1: Introduction
1. Backdrop against which meetings moved online
2. Existing practice prior to COVID-19

Lesson 2: Operating Procedures for Virtual Meetings
1. General Guidance
2. Internet Connection: The Digital Divide
3. Quorum and Decision-Making, including Voting
4. Report Writing
5. Interpretation
6. Participation of Observers
7. Revisions to ROPs and the Development of Operating Procedures

Lesson 3: Best Practices for Virtual Meetings
1. Survey of Best Practices for Virtual Meetings among UN bodies and MEAs