World Sailing

sport / nature / technology

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Review of Plenary Session 3: Decision Making Process

This note summarises the discussions held during Plenary Session 3 on World Sailing's decision-making process.

Summary of Main Issues Raised

1. There was general consensus that the current system is too burdensome, time-consuming and complicated. Some felt that MNAs are put off making submissions for their ideas due to the complicated process.

2. The decision-making cycle needs to have timescales and monitoring of progress of proposals included in it. A quarterly approach was suggested to be appropriate and there should be breaks in the year when proposals cannot be made to allow time to get on with the existing workload. Members making proposals should have the expectation of a final decision being made within a certain period of time. This would help ensure the transparency of the process and ensure proposals do not become unnecessarily delayed in the system.

3. Proposals should still receive a final approval or rejection by the decision-making body i.e. committees cannot stop a proposal.

4. There was support that proposals should be assigned to bodies by the Executive Office under the supervision of the Board. There needs to be objective criteria for allocations. Submissions which promote or develop the approved World Sailing strategy should be prioritised over those which do not.

5. The important role of committee meetings should be reflected in the cycle of decision-making process. Decisions should be able to be made at any time, but committee debate and discussion is a key part of consideration of a proposal.

6. Proposals should be able to be amended by bodies recommending a decision. The amendment rules should be more expansive and permissive than at present. Speakers felt the improved transparency in the process in the lead up to final recommendations should ensure that committees are not pressured into making decisions without full consideration of all arguments.

7. Concern was expressed about the resource load on the Executive Office and Chief Executive Officer as a result of administering this system. There were also concerns that the increase in demand on volunteer time will need an increase in Executive Office resource to support the volunteers, otherwise there may be a loss of goodwill. There should be more dedicated support to Chairs to ensure an effective use of meeting time.

8. One speaker proposed removing decisions about the Olympic Sailing Competition from the Regulations and placing them in a policy document to allow a more flexible approach to Olympic decision-making.

9. Concerns were expressed that changing Conference to a more informal gathering/convention may be counterproductive as delegates may not receive funding to attend. In addition, it was felt the opportunity to meet and develop relationships in person should not be lost and may be fading after two years of virtual work.

10. One speaker proposed that there should be a presumption towards the openness of information in the organisation to better inform proposals and decision-making.

11. Other comments made by various speakers were:

    a. The online portal should have the functionality to issue reminders and notifications to users.

    b. A template proposal should be available to ensure a consistent approach to decision-making. The template should include: 1) how does this address World Sailing strategy 2) what is the problem and how does this solve it? 3) what committees, staff role, other stakeholders do you believe need to be consulted re: next steps? 4) what financial impact would this have on WS and/or other stakeholders?

    c. The composition of committees will be even more important with the increase in their workload and importance. Committees must have diverse membership amongst small, medium and large MNAs. One speaker felt that a delegation of powers to committees meant they should be more representative of the MNAs and their membership approved by Council on a person-by-person basis. One speaker felt that the reason why MNAs needed to endorse committee applications should be examined and another felt the rules of membership should be clearer[1].

    d. Whilst virtual meetings should have a place, in-person meetings promote collegiality and collaboration– particularly with new committee members who have not previously had a role in World Sailing.

    e. There should be a designated contact person for each proposal with whom stakeholders can have a discussion and ask questions about the proposal.

    f. There was a comment about relaxing the urgent submission deadline for the 2022 Mid-Year Meetings.

[1] *Note: The composition and appointment of Committees will be discussed in Plenary Session 4*

Any members who wish to provide additional feedback, or respond to the issues noted above, are welcome to email governance@sailing.org to provide them direct the Governance Sub-committee. The GSC is, of course, available for any further discussion or debate at the convenience of Stakeholders follow up conversations can be organised either individually or in a group.