



## **BRIEFING FOR STANDING COMMITTEE RAPPORTEURS**



Geneva, 17 November 2022

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## 1. General principles

The Chair did or does the following.

- Selected you before standing committee meetings commence.
- Ensured that you have the summary sheet for each agenda item ([example Field agenda](#)) which explains each item in detail.
- Provides you with the [Committee report of the 75<sup>th</sup> Council](#).
- Provides you with the [75<sup>th</sup> Council Index of Decision](#) so that you get an overview of last year's decisions.
- Simplifies your task by clearly and concisely summarising decisions taken on of each agenda item.
- Before closing any agenda item, the Chair will check that you included the following for each decision/recommendation (please also consult Annex II):
  - *a short, clear decision;*
  - *a person/body responsible for taking the decision forward, one from the ExCom and one from the Standing Committee (citing FICSA or the Executive Committee as responsible for implementation is not enough);*
  - *an expected product, outcome, deliverable;*
  - *an approximation of the funds to be allotted;*
  - *an approximate timeline for completion.*
- Briefly reviews the final report before you send it to the Council rapporteur.
- Reviews and clears the report when it comes back from the Council rapporteur and before it goes to Plenary.

## 2. Instructions for preparing Committee reports

Committee reports serve as reference material for members throughout the year, so they should be both brief and clear. Focus is on the essence of the debate and decisions reached by consensus and members who have not participated will understand the issue.

Provide a summary of topics with their high-level decisions and/or recommendations at the opening of the report.

Write decisions on each agenda item in boxes and in bold after each relevant chapter as per the above instructions by the Chair.

Before the report goes to plenary, the participants should read it and the Chair must clear it. At the meeting convened to discuss the draft, anyone wishing to make changes must give their amendments to the rapporteur **in writing**. Every attempt should be made by the Chair to ensure that all members of the committee accept the draft report, as discussion of issues are not usually re-opened in plenary. Delegates can, however, request clarifications, in plenary if required.

### Reporting style

Use the active voice: e.g. "The Standing Committee addressed x issues using y approach for z reasons."

Write committee reports in **reported or indirect speech**. This means describing the events and statements made in the past tense and usually in the third person. The report needs to tell the story of the discussion for people who:

- will read it after the committee concludes its work; and
- did not attend the Standing Committee’s meeting(s).

See the following examples for guidance.

Pronouns and possessive adjectives normally change from the first or second person to the third person. Convert first-person pronouns (“I, we, me, us”) to the third person (“he/she, they, him/her, them”). Do the same with possessive adjectives: “my, our, mine, ours” become “his/her, their, his/hers, theirs”, respectively. The table shows how to convert direct speech into reported speech in various verb tenses.

Direct speech		Reported/indirect speech	
Verb tense	Sample	Verb tense	Sample
Simple present	“I never go out”	Simple past	He/she never went out
Present continuous	“I am waiting”	Past continuous	He/she was waiting
Present perfect	“I have lost my way”	Past perfect	He/she had lost his way
Present perfect continuous	“I have been waiting”	Past perfect continuous	He/she had been waiting
Simple past	“I took the bus”	Past perfect	He/she had taken the bus
Future	“I will be in Turin”	Conditional	He/she would be in Turin
Future continuous	“I’ll be coming”	Conditional continuous	He/she would be coming

The next example converts a statement into reported speech.

**Direct speech**

The newly-elected General Secretary said, “I thank Council for the trust you place in me. I am conscious of the responsibility I have taken on and the expectations placed in me. I assure all Member associations/unions that I will do everything in my power to serve you well.”

**Reported/indirect speech**

The newly elected General Secretary thanked Council for its trust in her. She understood the responsibility she had taken on and the expectations placed in her and would do everything in her power to serve them well.

**Adverbs and adverbial phrases**

Adverbs and adverbial phrases of time also change. Convert:

today *into* that day

yesterday *into* the day before  
next year *into* the following year  
last year *into* the previous year.

In addition, change:

this *into* that

here *into* there.

Number each paragraph of the report sequentially.

Finally, when mentioning names for the first time, cite the full name and title and then use the title and surname.

### **Template**

Headings in Candara (graduated sizes); text in Bookman Old Style (11 points). Use Styles to format the report if possible.

All headings in **bold**, flush left, except for the centred heading of the report.

Paragraphs numbered sequentially

### 3. Report template example

## REPORT OF THE STANDING/AD HOC/PERMANENT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON (topic)

### Introduction

1. The Standing Committee (see Annex I for participants) met x times to address its agenda, and held a joint session with the Standing Committee on xxx to discuss x topic. It adopted an agenda and elected its rapporteur. Annex III provides details on what the recommendation(s) should contain.

### Name of agenda item 1

2. As much explanatory text under each subheading as readers will need to understand what the issue was, the approach the committee took to tackling it and why it made the recommendations that it did. Do not repeat ad verbatim who said what.

### Conclusion(s)

3. State any conclusions reached by the committee: that is, statements about the situation or available approaches.

### Recommendation(s) if applicable (Please fill in Annex 2 for each recommendation)

4. The Standing Committee recommended that x specific group take y specific action by z deadline.

### 4. Name of agenda item 2

5. As much explanatory text under each subheading as readers will need to understand what the issue was, the approach the committee took to tackling it and why it made the recommendations that it did. Do not repeat ad verbatim who said what.

### Conclusion(s)

6. State any conclusions reached by the committee: that is, statements about the situation or available approaches.

### Recommendation(s) if applicable (Please fill in Annex 2 for each recommendation)

6. "The Standing Committee recommended that x specific group take y specific action by z deadline."

### 5. Other business (if any)

7. The Standing Committee did have any other business to be discussed.

### 6. Nomination of Standing Committee officers and core group members

8. The following delegates were nominated as Standing Committee officers:

- Name (Organization) as Chair

- Name (Organization) as Vice-Chair
- Name (Organization) as Vice-Chair

9. The following participants in the SC were nominated as members of the core group:

Name (Organization)

Name (Organization)

Name (Organization)

## 7. Participants

(The FICSA Secretariat will provide the list of participants in the following format)

Chair/Coordinator	xx (organization)
Vice-Chair/Vice-Coordinator	xx (organization)
Rapporteur	xx (organization)
President, FICSA	xx (organization)
Member, FICSA Executive Committee	xx (organization)
Regional Representative(s)	xx (organization)
Staff association/union [in alphabetical order]	Name of delegate(s)
<b>Association(s) with consultative status<sup>1</sup></b>	
Staff association/union [in alphabetical order]	Name of delegate(s)
<b>Federation(s) with observer status</b>	
Staff association/union [in alphabetical order]	Name of delegate(s)
<b>Guest(s)</b>	
If applicable	xx (organization)

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<sup>1</sup> First word initial cap, lower case thereafter for all headings and subheadings, except official titles such as Officers or Core Group.

## Annex I: Participants

(The FICSA Secretariat will provide the list of participants in the following format)

Chair/Coordinator	xx (organization)
Vice-Chair/Vice-Coordinator	xx (organization)
Rapporteur	xx (organization)
President, FICSA	xx (organization)
Member, FICSA Executive Committee	xx (organization)
Regional Representative(s)	xx (organization)
Staff association/union [in alphabetical order]	Name of delegate(s)
<b>Association(s) with consultative status<sup>2</sup></b>	
Staff association/union [in alphabetical order]	Name of delegate(s)
<b>Federation(s) with observer status</b>	
Staff association/union [in alphabetical order]	Name of delegate(s)
<b>Guest(s)</b>	
If applicable	xx (organization)

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<sup>2</sup> First word initial cap, lower case thereafter for all headings and subheadings, except official titles such as Officers or Core Group.



## Annex II: Detailed information on recommendations

<b>Recommendation for agenda item x (title)</b>	
<b>Summary of issue</b>	
<b>Responsible person(s)</b>	Who
<b>Next step(s)/ specific action(s)</b>	should do what
<b>Deadline</b>	by when (provide an approximation)
<b>Resources required (indicate estimated cost if applicable)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist/Consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Adviser <input type="checkbox"/> SC Chair/Vice-Chair <input type="checkbox"/> Core group member(s) <input type="checkbox"/> FICSA Secretariat <input type="checkbox"/> FICSA ExCom (Compensation, Field, Treasurer, Other) <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer/Intern <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)
<b>Deliverable</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature review <input type="checkbox"/> Paper/Article <input type="checkbox"/> Background paper with options <input type="checkbox"/> Legal article/review/opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Talking points for high-level fora/forum – Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Comparative study <input type="checkbox"/> Good practices <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations/ guideline for SAs/unions
<b>Issue for high-level fora</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) <input type="checkbox"/> High-Level Committee for Management (HLCM) <input type="checkbox"/> HR Network <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Pension Board <input type="checkbox"/> UN General Assembly <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-Agency Security and Management Network (IASMN) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)

# How to write FICSA standing committee (SC) reports

Mary Stewart Burgher

## Your job: create a product that meets the intended readers' needs

Your readers are **people who were not present at your meetings**:

1. the Council plenary, who will be voting on your recommendations (and so need to understand what you recommend and why);
2. The FICSA Executive Committee (ExCom), or others tasked with carrying out the recommendations; and
3. the larger FICSA community, who will be affected by the recommendations.

The report will tell the readers: **what** issues the SC addressed, **what** it thought about them and **what** action that it wanted ExCom or FICSA members to take – so that the readers can take action themselves.

# You are NOT writing minutes

Minutes are intended:

1. for the people who attended a meeting (SC);
2. to give a blow-by-blow account of an event as a record; and
3. to list action points and the people responsible and deadlines for each (to ensure accountability).



# You are writing a report

Reports are intended:

1. for people who did **not** attend the meeting (e.g. Council); and
2. to summarize the discussion and present the results of the meeting, with only enough discussion/explanation so that readers understand why SC reached the conclusions and made the recommendations that it did.



# Minutes vs reports: contrast

Reports:

1. have a different audience than minutes;
2. are much shorter than minutes and more interesting to read;
3. **summarize** the discussion: i.e. do **not** mention speakers by name or describe exactly what they said.



## Structure of a report (1st-level headings)

1. Participants: list of SC members
2. Discussion: using agenda topics as subheadings
3. Conclusions: statements of fact agreed by SC
4. Recommendations: relatively brief sentences saying **who** (e.g. ExCom) **should** take **what action** (e.g. statement, study) by **what deadline** as a result of SC discussions



## Language of a report

1. Use the active voice: e.g. “The Committee reviewed X document and noted Y important factors.”, “The Standing Committee recommends that X **should** take Y action by Z date.”
2. Use the reported past: “The Committee **discussed** the following issues, which **needed** resolution.”
3. Use positive language (e.g. say what people wanted, not what they didn’t want).
4. Get the names right: use exact, correct names of bodies such as FICSA, ExCom, ICSC, etc. (tip: I keep a list of abbreviations and check the names for correctness).



## Some suggestions on methods: what I do

- Create an outline by copying the agenda into a document and marking all the topics as headings (adding returns after each to give space for your notes).
- Take the most complete notes possible on the ensuing discussion, carefully noting down any conclusions reached or recommendations made.
- Raise any questions with the participants concerned and/or the chair during the SC meeting, if possible.
- Create a new document with the same headings, and convert your notes into text that explains the SC’s actions **as briefly as clarity permits**. Aim your text at readers who were not present at the SC meeting.



## Minutes vs report: example 1

### **Minutes: staff return to offices**

Speaker A said that the strategy in office 1 was ...

Speaker B said that the strategy in office 2 was ...

Speaker C said that the strategy in office 3 was ...

Speaker D said that the strategy in office 4 was ...

### **Report: staff return to offices**

Speakers described the strategies for returning staff to premises that offices 1–4 pursued. Although policies and compliance varied considerably, some common factors emerged. These included a, b, c and d.



## Minutes vs report: example 2

### **Minutes: contract modalities**

Speaker A said that the best action to take was X.

Speaker B agreed with Speaker A.

Speaker C said that the best action to take was Y.

Speaker D said everyone else was wrong and Z was the thing to do.

### **Report: contract modalities**

The SC discussed contract modalities, with some members advocating X. Others suggested Y and Z.

