

Comparative study on governing bodies of other United Nations Specialized Agencies

1. Through Resolution 38 C/101, the General Conference established an open-ended working group on the governance, procedures and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO. The creation of the working group had been recommended by the Executive Board which, through 197 EX/Decision 28-44, requested the Director-General to submit to the first meeting of the working group information on the structure of the governing bodies of other agencies of the United Nations system, including aspects relating to their composition, functioning and frequency of meetings in order to establish a comparison within the system.

2. Pursuant to these decisions, an overview of the governing bodies of five main specialized agencies (UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO, UNIDO) is presented herewith.

I. Composition

- (a) Role and members of the main governing bodies**
- (b) Geographic representation of the Board**
- (c) Duration of terms**
- (d) Type of representation**

II. Frequency

- (a) Periodicity and duration of sessions of General Conferences or Assemblies**
- (b) Periodicity and duration of sessions of the Executive Boards or Councils**

III. Functioning

- (a) Working languages**
- (b) Travel expenses**
- (c) Subsidiary Bodies**

IV. Executive Board meetings during intersessions

- (a) Frequency**
- (b) Working languages**
- (c) Travel expenses**

Annex 1: Subsidiary Bodies

Annex 2: Summary table

I. Structure

(a) Role and members of the main governing bodies

3. Most United Nations agencies have two main governing bodies. The first is a policy-making organ with universal membership, which meets relatively infrequently to adopt programme and budget, appoint the executive head of the Secretariat, admit new members to the organization, and adopt policies, conventions and agreements.

4. The second governing body is an executive organ with reduced membership, comprising between a fourth and a third of the full membership, that meets more frequently, to ensure the decisions and policies of the universal governing body are implemented, and generally to facilitate its work.

5. United Nations Programmes and Funds, which only have an executive organ, were not considered here as they operate differently than United Nations Specialized Agencies (e.g. no Constitution, Head of Programmes or Funds not elected but appointed by the Secretary-General).

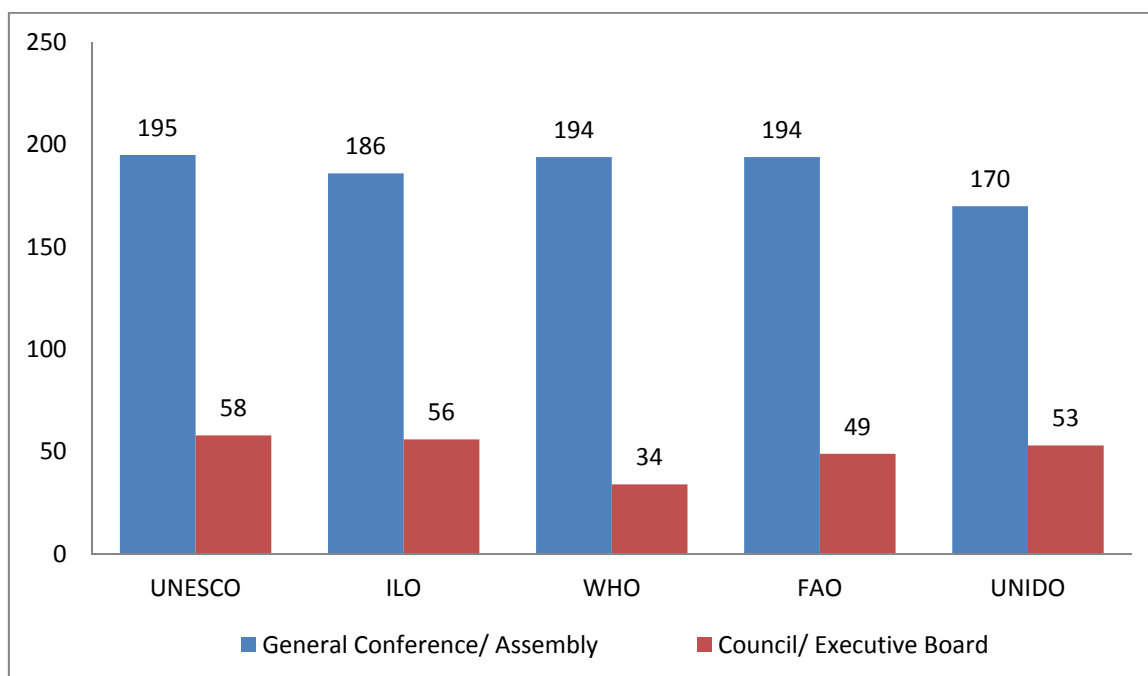


Table 1 – Specialized Agencies – Membership size of governing bodies

6. As can be seen from table 1, UNESCO has the largest executive body among the agencies. ILO has 56 members, but given its particular representational arrangements (28 seats are reserved for governments, 14 for employers and 14 for workers) it cannot be compared in the same way.

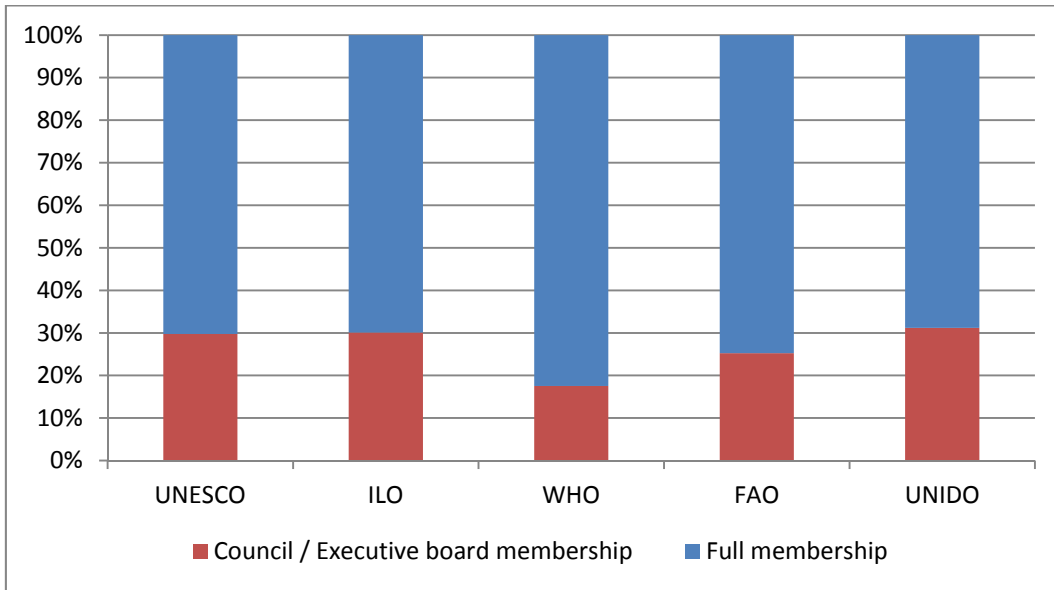
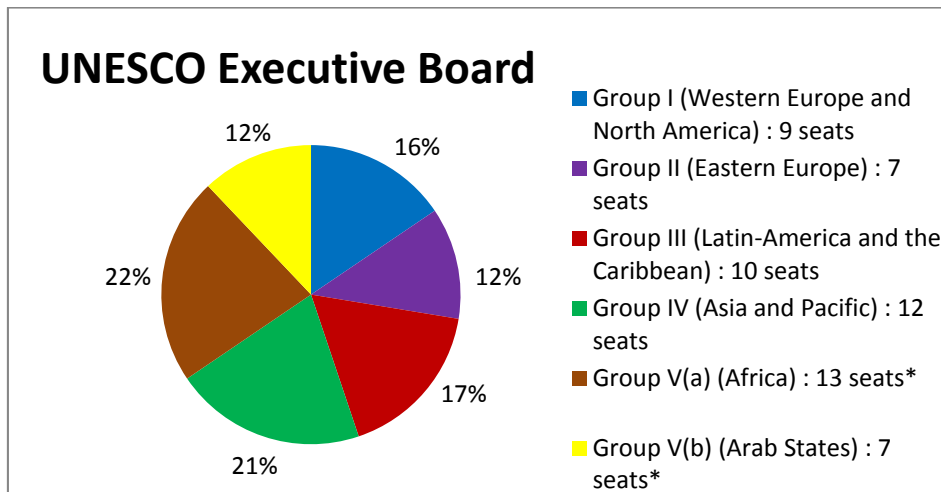


Table 2 – Specialized Agencies – Membership size of the Executive Board as percentage of full membership

7. As shown in table 2, in terms of Executive Board representation as percentage of an agency’s full membership, most agencies have between 20 and 30% of their members represented on the Board.

(b) Geographic representation of the Boards

8. Each organization has regional electoral groups that meet for the purposes of discussion, usually in connection with specific questions being addressed within the intergovernmental bodies. In order to ensure equitable representation of Member States on the Board, each Agency has a specific formula for elections to the Executive Board. The number of allocated seats is as follows:



*Group V has 20 seats (1 seat rotating between V (a) and V (b) every four years)

Table 3 – UNESCO Executive Board representation by electoral grouping

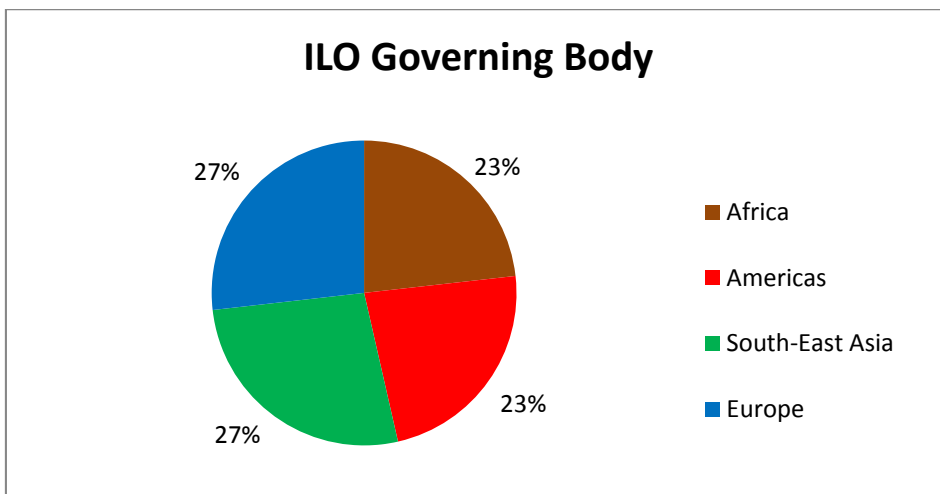


Table 4 – ILO Governing Body representation by electoral grouping (Government seats)

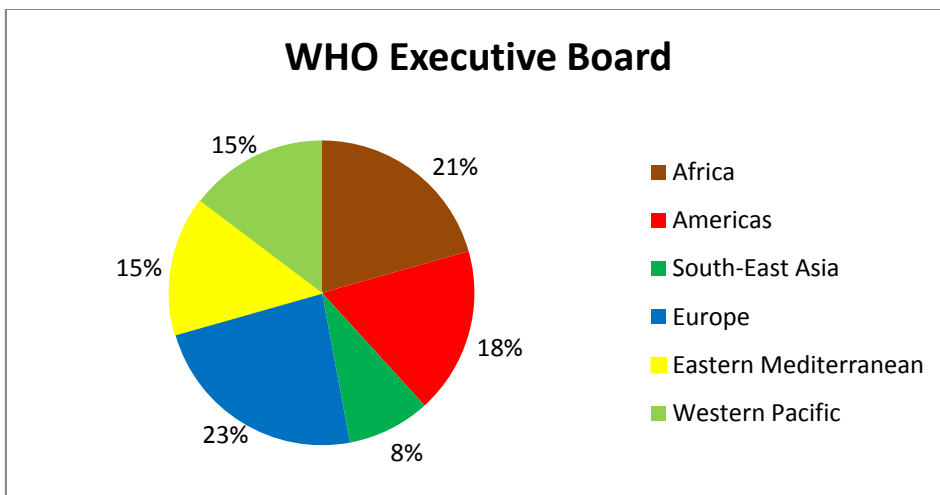


Table 5 – WHO Executive Board representation by electoral grouping

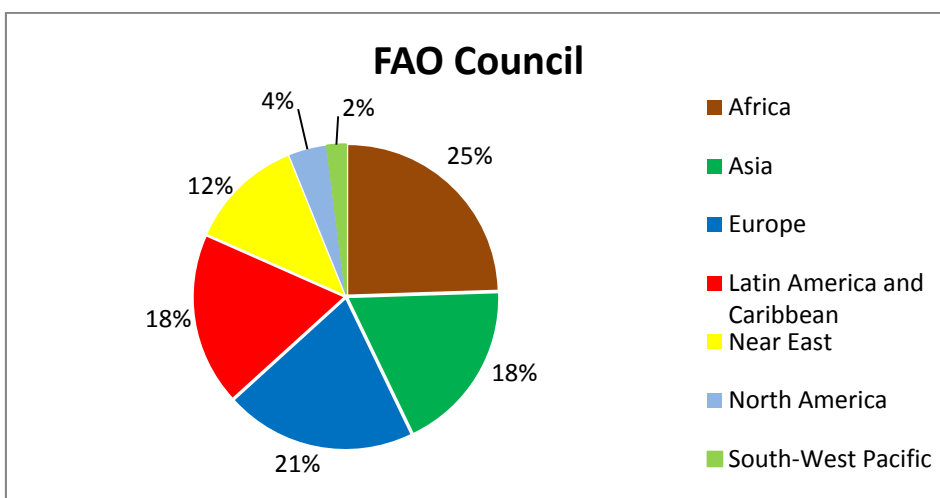


Table 6 – FAO Council representation by electoral grouping

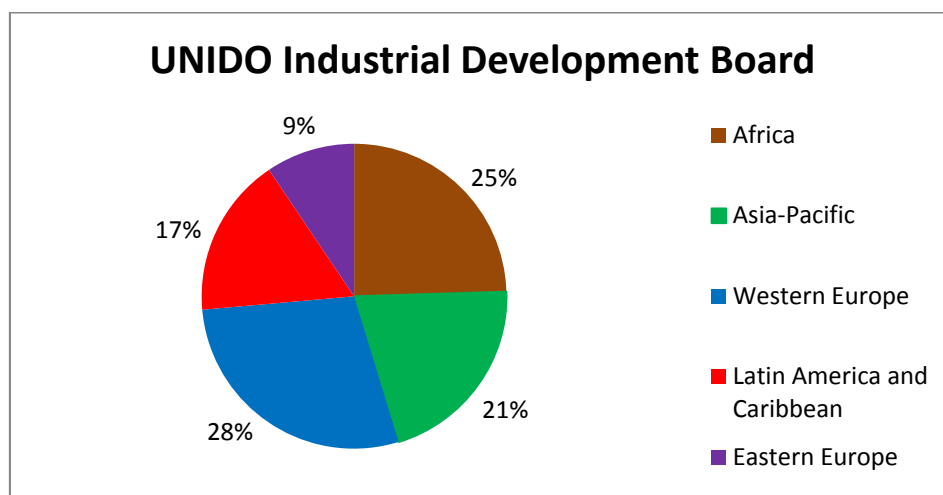


Table 7 – UNIDO – Industrial Development Board representation by electoral grouping

(c) Duration of terms

9. Duration of terms in most agencies varies between three and four years. Generally, the agencies that have annual meetings of the main governing body (such as ILO or WHO) have three-year board membership terms. However, there are some cases, such as FAO, which have biennial meetings of the General Conference, just like UNESCO, and yet elect their board members for a three-year term.

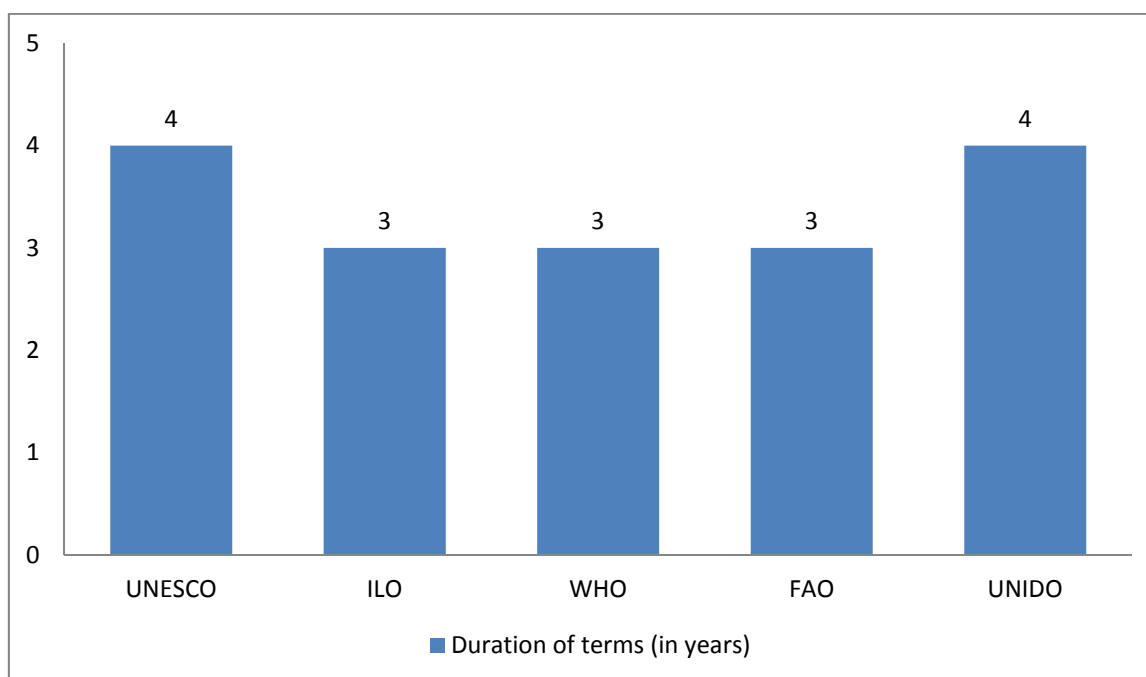


Table 8 – Specialized Agencies – Duration of terms of Executive Board members

(d) Type of representation

10. Some agencies have technical experts appointed by the government, others have government representatives. The World Health Organization stands out from the rest as its Constitution provides that the delegates “should be chosen from among persons most qualified by their technical competence in the field of health”.

Agency	Board representation
UNESCO	Government representatives
ILO	Government (28) ¹ + Employers (14) + Workers representatives (14)
WHO	Technical experts ²
FAO	Government representatives
UNIDO	Government representatives

Table 9 – Specialized Agencies - Types of Board representation

II. Frequency

(a) Periodicity and duration of formal sessions of General Conferences or Assemblies

11. As can be seen in table 10, the number of meeting sessions of General Conferences or Assemblies varies between one and two in a biennium. UNESCO General Conference only had one session in the last biennium but it lasted 13 working days and a half.

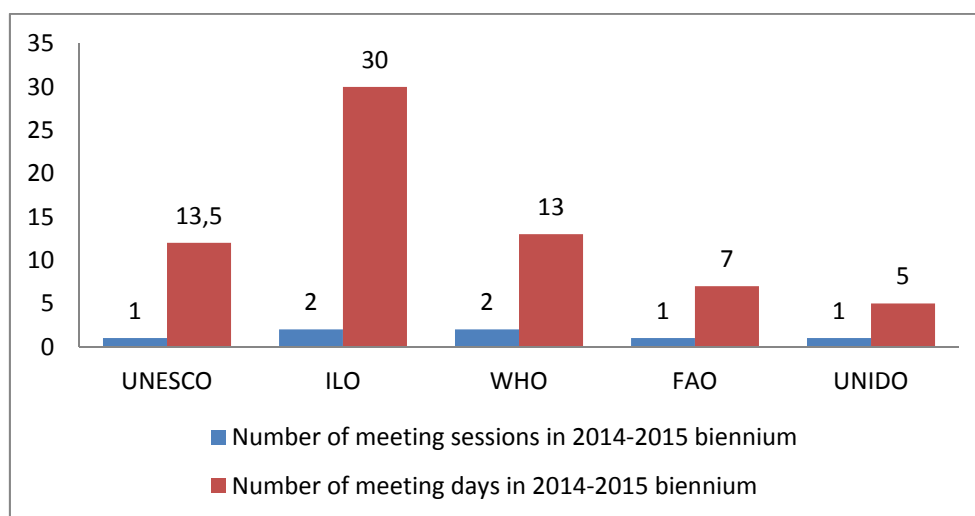


Table 10 – Specialized Agencies – Frequency of formal sessions of General Conferences and Assemblies (2014-2015)

(b) Periodicity and duration of formal sessions of the Executive Boards or Councils

12. As can be seen in table 11, ILO has the longest Governing Body sessions (56 working days in the last biennium), and UNESCO has the second longest sessions (46 working days in the last biennium).

¹ Ten of the titular government seats are permanently held by States of chief industrial importance (Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States). The other Government members are elected by the Conference every three years. The Employer and Worker members are elected in their individual capacity.

² Each expert is designated by a Member State elected to do so by the World Health Assembly.

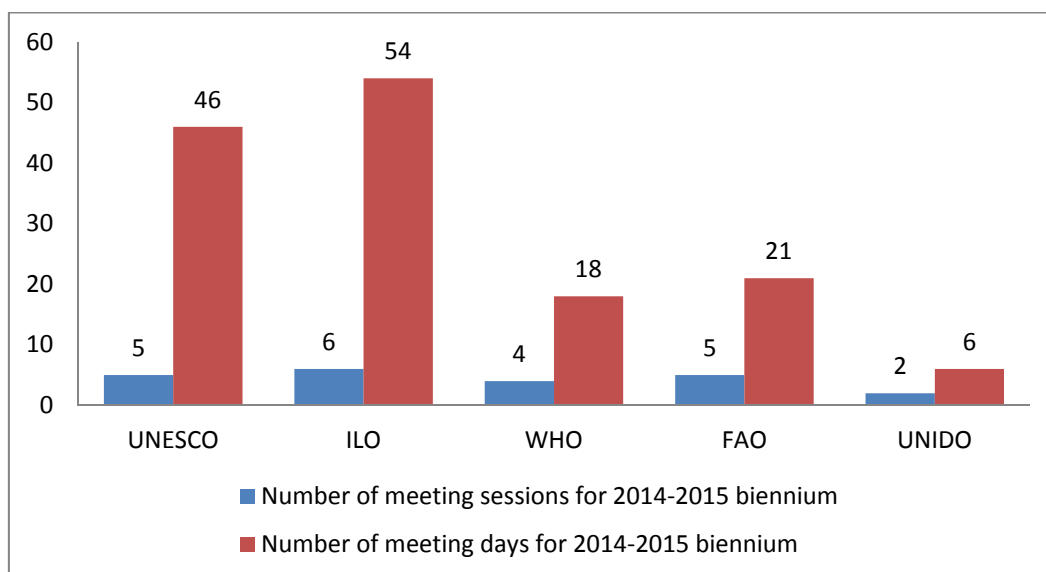


Table 11 – Specialized agencies – Frequency of formal sessions of the Executive Boards or Councils (2014-2015)

III. Functioning

(a) Working languages

Agency	Working language
UNESCO	6 languages
ILO	3 languages (English, French and Spanish)
WHO	6 languages
FAO	6 languages
UNIDO	6 languages

Table 12 – Specialized Agencies - Types of Board representation

13. The six working languages of the governing bodies are: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

(b) Travel expenses for regular Board sessions

Agency	Travel reimbursement	Subsistence allowance
UNESCO	Yes, but – only for LDCs and SIDS	Yes, but – only for LDCs and SIDS
ILO	Yes, but – only for 28 of the 56 Board members: employers and workers representatives, not the government representatives	Yes, but: – only for 28 of the 56 Board members: employers and workers representatives, not the government representatives
WHO	Yes	Yes
FAO	Yes	Yes
UNIDO	No	No

Table 13 – Specialized Agencies – Executive Board sessions: payment of travel expenses

(c) Subsidiary Bodies

14. Each governing body of the United Nations Specialized Agencies is composed of different subsidiary organs, and there are no identical patterns (see Annex 1).

IV. Executive Board meetings during intersessions**(a) Frequency**

15. In UNESCO, the Executive Board requested its Chair, in consultation with the Director-General, to make the necessary practical arrangements and organize on a trial basis, during the 2016-2017 biennium, and without amending the Rules of Procedure, meetings of the Executive Board Members, in principle six times per year.

16. WHO has four intersessions every year, which last three days each. In 2016, six additional sessions are planned, lasting one day each. Two of these intersessional meetings have been mandated by the Health Assembly and have a formal status. The first one deals with a governance reform and the second one with collaboration with non-state Members. For these two sessions, Board Members are entitled to ask the Secretariat for reimbursement of travel expenses and for a subsistence allowance. The Organization also provides full interpretation. However, for all other intersessional meetings, travel expenses and interpretation costs are the delegation's responsibility, and the meetings generally take place in English.

17. FAO has informal intersessional meetings. Since the Chairperson of the Council is resident in Rome and has a permanent office at FAO headquarters, there are informal meetings of three hours with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the seven regional groups.

18. ILO and UNIDO do not have any intersessional meetings.

(b) Working languages

19. UNESCO's intersessional meetings are organized on a trial basis and since the Board decided not to amend the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, the proceedings will be held in the six working languages of the Organization.

20. In WHO, the six working languages are used during the two formal intersessional meetings. The other intersessions are generally held in English.

21. FAO's informal intersessional meetings are held in English.

(c) Travel expenses

Agency	Travel reimbursement	Subsistence allowance
UNESCO	According to the existing rules	According to the existing rules
ILO	N/A	N/A
WHO	Yes, but <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – only for the 2 formal intersessions – only for LDC countries – upon request of the member 	Yes, but <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – only for the 2 formal intersessions – only for LDC countries – upon request of the member
FAO	No	No
UNIDO	N/A	N/A

Table 14 – Specialized Agencies – Board intersessions: payment of travel expenses

ANNEX I

SUBSIDIARY BODIES

UNESCO

General Conference

•Commissions:

- ED Commission (Education)
- SC Commission (Natural Sciences)
- SHS Commission (Social and Human Sciences)
- CLT Commission (Culture)
- CI Commission (Communication and Information)
- APX Commission (Finance, Administration, Programme Support, External Relations and General Questions Commission)

•Committees:

- Bureau (BUR)
- Credentials Committee (CRE)
- Legal Committee (LEG)
- Nominations Committee (NOM)
- HQ Committee (HQC)

Executive Board

•Commissions:

- Programme and External Relations Commission (PX)
- Finance and Administrative Commission (FA)

•Committees:

- Special Committee (SP)
- Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR)
- Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP)

ILO

- International Labour Conference**
- Selection Committee
 - Credentials Committee
 - Conference Drafting Committee
 - Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
 - Finance Committee of Government Representatives

- Governing Body**
- Policy Development Section
 - Committee on Freedom of Association
 - Programme, Financial and Administrative Section
 - Institutional Section
 - Legal Issues and International Labour Standards Section
 - High-Level Section
 - Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference
 - Committee on the Application of Standards

FAO



WHO

World Health Assembly

- Committee A-Programme and Budget Matters
- Committee B- Administrative, Financial and Legal Matters
- General Committee
- Committee on Credentials

Executive Board

- Administration, Budget and Finance Committee (composed of 14 members, two from each region, selected from among Executive Board Members, as well as the Chairman and a Vice-Chairman of the Board. It can act on behalf of the Executive Board, to examine, provide advice, but also make comments or recommendations on some matters directly to the Health Assembly. Meets before the Plenary.
- Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee. Meets during the Plenary.
- NGO committee

UNIDO

General Conference

- General Committee
- Main Committee
- Drafting Committee
- Credentials Committee

Industrial Development Board

- This is a subsidiary body of the General Conference to assist the Board for the preparation and examination of the work programme, the budget and other financial matters.

ANNEX II
SUMMARY TABLE

Organization	Governing Bodies	Membership	Frequency of formal sessions	Intersessions
UNESCO <i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</i>	General Conference (<i>Conférence générale</i>)	195 (and 10 associate members)	Once every two years	Yes
	Executive Board (<i>Conseil exécutif</i>)	58	At least four times during a biennium	
ILO <i>International Labour Organisation</i>	International Labour Conference (<i>Conférence internationale du travail</i>)	186	Once a year	No
	Governing Body (<i>Conseil d'administration</i>)	56 (and 66 deputy members)	Three times a year	
FAO <i>Food and Agriculture Organization</i>	Conference (<i>Conférence</i>)	194 (and 2 associate members)	Once every two years	Yes
	Council (<i>Conseil</i>)	49	Five sessions in a biennium	
WHO <i>World Health Organization</i>	World Health Assembly (<i>Assemblée mondiale de la santé</i>)	194	Once a year	Yes
	Executive Board (<i>Conseil exécutif</i>)	34	Twice a year (a full session and a half-day session)	
UNIDO <i>United Nations Industrial Development Organization</i>	General Conference (<i>Conférence générale</i>)	170	Once every two years	No
	Industrial Development Board (<i>Conseil du développement industriel</i>)	53	Once a year	

