

**Council on General Affairs and Policy – March 2020**

<b>Document</b>	Preliminary Document <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Document <input type="checkbox"/>	Prel. Doc. 27 of January 2020
<b>Title</b>	Production of Circular letters and Minutes of HCCH meetings	
<b>Author</b>	Permanent Bureau	
<b>Agenda item</b>	Item VI-5	
<b>Mandate(s)</b>	C&R No 42 of the 2016 CGAP C&R No 56 of the 2019 CGAP	
<b>Objective</b>	To provide an update on developments relating to Circular letters sent by the Permanent Bureau and Minutes of HCCH meetings.	
<b>Action to be taken</b>	For Approval <input type="checkbox"/> For Decision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For Information <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Annexes</b>		
<b>Related documents</b>	"Production of Minutes for meetings" Prel. Doc. 23 of December 2018	

## I. Minutes of meetings

1. In 2019, the Council on General Affairs and Policy (CGAP) discussed the issue of minutes of meetings of the HCCH, concluding:

“Council trialed the provision of shorter Minutes accompanied by a full transcript of proceedings and associated audio file for its 2019 meeting and will make a decision, based on the reactions received in response to the trial, on future approaches at its 2020 meeting. The Permanent Bureau will make preparations to ensure it can comply with Council’s decision in this regard (2019 CGAP C&R No 56).

2. As indicated in Prel. Doc. 23 of December 2018, the Permanent Bureau (PB) had planned to produce shorter summary minutes for the CGAP meeting with a view to saving costs on the engagement of Recording Secretaries. However, some Members attending the 2019 meeting of CGAP found the initial summary reports produced to be too succinct. When producing the minutes for the 2019 CGAP meeting, the PB thus revisited its approach and slightly expanded the minutes to include somewhat longer written summaries, as well as time indications for interventions made under each agenda item.

3. In parallel, technical improvements made at the Hague Academy Building allow for the audio recording of statements made in their original language as well as the interpretation channels. Since March 2019, the PB has made these three sets of audio files (bilingual (original statements), French only and English only) available on the Secure Portal of the HCCH website within a few hours of the end of each session.

4. The response received to the minutes produced for the 2019 GCAP meeting, with three sets of audio files, was very positive. The PB thus plans to use the same system for the 2020 meeting of CGAP. The PB proposes to take the same approach for Special Commission (SC) meetings going forward (for both normative and non-normative SC meetings), keeping in mind that the Conclusions & Recommendations that result from SC meetings are the primary documents to be considered by CGAP. For these types of meetings, the PB will engage Recording Secretaries to prepare the Minutes. The summary reports will then be made available in both English and French as soon as possible following the meeting.

5. For the meeting of the Council of Diplomatic Representatives (CDR), the PB proposes to continue with the system successfully in place since 2017, namely minutes in the form of a table reflecting (i) the agenda item, (ii) the main outcomes, and (iii) links to the audio clips of all interventions on the specific agenda item. The PB will also make the three sets of audio files available and produce the CDR Minutes in both English and French.

6. As regards Diplomatic Sessions, the PB proposes to continue to produce verbatim minutes in both official languages of the HCCH following the language in which an intervention is made (as was the case for the Twenty-Second Diplomatic Session held in June / July 2019). As with CGAP, CDR and SC meetings, the PB will continue to make the audio files available to Members and participants via the Secure Portal of the HCCH website as soon as possible after receiving them from the audio technicians.

7. For meetings of Working Groups and Experts’ Groups, the PB proposes to continue to be flexible in its approach, again keeping in mind that the Conclusions & Recommendations that result from these meetings are the primary documents to be considered by CGAP. Depending on the nature and composition of the Group in question, summary minutes may be in the same style as those produced for CGAP and SC. Other reports such as *aide memoires* or Chair’s summaries may also be used to keep track of ongoing work. Audio recordings of Working Group and Experts’ Group meetings are not made available on the Secure Portal.

8. The PB will continue to make every effort to provide Minutes of meetings in a timely fashion, in both official languages of the organisation, in the manner best suited to the meeting in question and in keeping with the PB overall efforts to organise its work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

## II. Circular letters

9. In September 2019, the PB put in place a new system for the sending of Circulars to Members and others. Circulars have been divided into three categories:

- a. **General Circulars**, which are sent to National and Contact Organs of Members and Embassies of Member States and contain information for the attention of all Members;
- b. **Focused Circulars**, which are sent to National and Contact Organs, Embassies, and other HCCH stakeholders (Central and Competent Authorities, participants in past meetings, the International Network of Hague Judges, etc.) and contain information related to a specific Convention, publication, or upcoming event; and
- c. **Financial Circulars**, which are sent to National Organs and Embassies of Member States, with a copy to the Contact Organ and contain information related to financial and budgetary matters.

10. The PB has established a schedule wherein General Circulars and Focused Circulars are sent fortnightly on alternating Tuesdays, with certain exceptions in the case of documents and / or information that must be shared with the Members as soon as possible. Financial Circulars are sent following the requirements of the HCCH 2016 Regulations on Financial Matters and Budgetary Practices, as well as existing practice in the case of the Draft Zero Budget and quarterly Overviews of Expenses.

11. The PB hopes that this new system for Circulars presents a clearer and more consistent channel of communication between the Members and the Secretariat and allows Members and other stakeholders to more easily filter the information that is relevant to them and their work.

## III. Conclusion

12. With regards to Minutes of meetings, Members are invited to decide to follow the approach proposed in paragraphs 4-7 above

13. Members are invited to take note of the new system for Circular letters described in paragraphs 9-11.