Guide to Successful Virtual Meetings
– focus web conferencing
Virtual meetings

• Virtual meeting is a collective term for real-time meetings at a distance using web, video, and audio conferencing. This guide focuses mainly on web conferencing.

• Virtual meetings can be a complement to or replace face-to-face (F2F) meetings. For some meetings, F2F is the best option. Both types of meetings are part of a good meeting culture.
This Guide to Successful Virtual Meetings

• Is intended to be used by anyone in the UN and can be distributed through IT, HR and all other departments interested in an efficient and sustainable meeting culture.

• Gives advise and tips to both those managing virtual meetings and those attending.
Many benefits with virtual meetings

- **Reduced environmental and climate impact** – with reduced travelling
- **Improved collaboration** – easier to involve busy and remote participants
- **Better productivity/economy** – reduced travel time/costs, improved project efficiency
- **Better work-life balance** – less time away from family because of travelling
- **Better gender equality** – business travelling is traditionally primarily a male activity
- **Higher accessibility** – less dependent on time and physical location
- **Strengthen regional development** – improving access in remote areas
- **Emergency preparedness** – meetings possible when travelling is not an option
1 Set-up
2 Preparation
3 Meeting
4 Follow-up
The Set-up
Get the infrastructure in place
The Set-up – part A

• Choose a meeting tool: Skype, Zoom, etc.

• Use a headset, preferably with a USB plug for best sound quality. Alternatively use a conference unit (e.g. Jabra).

• Use a camera, built-in or external. Video contributes to the social presence and significantly improves the interaction in the meeting.

• If possible, choose a network cable connection instead of WiFi. This usually results in a more reliable connection.
The Set-up – part B

• Use separate computers and avoid sitting in the same room as other participants in the same meeting.

• Place the camera at eye level in front of you and arrange so that your eyes are on the top half of the screen.

• Have a light source in front of you, and avoid having strong light behind you (e.g. a window or a lamp).
The Preparation
What to do before the meeting starts
The Preparation – part A

• Make sure that:
  – The right people are invited and that they know why they are invited.
  – The meeting purpose is clearly defined.

• Assign someone (maybe yourself) to moderate the meeting – more important than in face-to-face meetings.

• Consider appointing a facilitator/side-kick for larger and more complex meetings. This will help you keep track of chat-discussions, etc.
The Preparation – part B

- When scheduling, keep in mind participants may be in different time zones.
- Send out an invitation with an agenda and meeting details well in advance:
  - Use calendar invitation (e.g. Outlook)
  - Give the participants clear instructions on how to join the meeting.
- Offer first-time users to test in advance, to check the connection and their equipment (at least one day before the meeting).
The Preparation – part C

• Encourage the participants to join 10-15 minutes prior to the meeting.

• Support the participants:
  – Check that they use the right microphone, avoid breathing-noise.
  – Try cameras and adjust placing and light, if needed.
  – Chit-chat and drink coffee. This will make the participants feel at ease.
The Meeting

Let’s be productive
The Meeting – part A

• Start the meeting by summarizing the purpose and going over the agenda. Let the participants introduce themselves.

• Turn camera on (if possible) and look into the camera when you speak.

• If the connection is slow, turn camera off.

• In meetings without video, announce who is talking.

• When using video, encourage participants to physically raise a hand when they want to speak.
The Meeting – part B

• Use the chat function for enhanced interaction: questions, comments, sharing links, etc.

• Use the screen sharing function to show presentations, web pages, your desktop, etc.

• Use poll questions to collect opinions and engage participants.

• Mute the microphone during other participants’ presentations to avoid background noise.

• Keep track of who is in attendance and if someone leaves/falls out of the meeting.
The Meeting – part C

- Take time to encourage participants to actively engage in the meeting, through speaking and/or chatting.
- Trigger interactivity by asking participants to answer questions or to comment on what you are discussing.
- During longer meetings, schedule in coffee breaks and initiate small talk during the breaks.
The Meeting – part D

• At the end, summarize:
  – Whether the purpose of the meeting was achieved.
  – What decisions have been made.
  – Who have been assigned tasks.

• Finish the meeting on time. If it looks like the meeting might run over, inform participants when it is likely to finish.
The Meeting – part E

- Additional guidance to the moderator (and side-kick when applicable):
  - Virtual meetings benefit from good moderation. All meetings do but here shortcomings become more evident.
  - Set the right mood. Obviously this depends of what kind of meeting it is, but it is often productive if we also enjoy participating.
The Follow-up
Virtual meetings offers improved documentation options
The Follow-up – part A

• Copy or e-mail the chat to yourself. Use for meeting minutes and/or Q & A.

• Distribute documentation to the participants, e.g.:
  - Meeting minutes
  - Presentations
  - Recordings
  - Q & A:s
The Follow-up – part B

• Maintain a constructive interaction between meetings.
• Set a date by which to follow up on meeting outcomes.
The **Guide to Successful Virtual Meetings** consists of four parts:

- This presentation (pdf)
- One-page summary (pdf)
- 12 success factors to share with participants (pdf)
- Benefits and Successful Approaches to Virtual/Remote Meetings – a presentation with speaking notes by Dr. Peter Arnfalk, Lund University & REMM and Pontus Grönvall, Stormen Communication & REMM (PPT)

The **Guide to Successful Virtual Meetings** has been compiled by the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the REMM project (remm.se), run by the Swedish Transport Administration.

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