VIC MEETING GUIDELINES: COVID-19

Guidance for organizers holding meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last update: 25 November 2020

For further advice, contact VIC Medical Service at: medical-admin.contact-point@iaea.org

BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses. Some cause less severe disease, such as the common cold, and others more severe disease, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The current coronavirus pandemic is still ongoing; it is passed from human to human primarily by asymptomatic and symptomatic (micro-)droplet spread. Whilst many cases will result in a mild illness, a small percentage progress to more severe illness and pneumonia. The host country has implemented a range of screening, contact tracing and isolation measures to limit the spread of COVID-19. The VIC remains in compliance with all measures required by the Austrian health authorities.

PREVENTION AND GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

Influenza might be an additional risk factor for meeting attendees in the autumn/winter season. General tips on how to reduce risks of contracting COVID-19, influenza or any of the respiratory viruses are listed below:

1. Avoid being exposed to respiratory viruses
   - Avoid close contact with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
   - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently — this is one of the most effective measures.

2. Avoid spreading respiratory viruses if you are unwell
   - Stay at home or in your accommodation if you become unwell, develop a fever or have other respiratory symptoms. Seek medical care but first call ahead.
   - Maintain your distance from others — at least 1 metre.
   - Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
   - Wear a mask when required.
   - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently — especially after coughing, before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after contact with ill persons, or during exposure to high traffic public areas.

3. Be prepared to provide contact details as part of the contact tracing
   - The meeting organizer is required to keep a record of the seating arrangements for any meeting.
   - For this purpose, participants will need to provide their contact details.
   - Contact tracing information is confidential, and the Secretariat will not use it for any other purpose. The information is kept 28 days and will be destroyed thereafter.
HEALTHCARE FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

For participants with respiratory illness, acute or severe symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, such as fever, cough or respiratory symptoms: A participant who is unwell with fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms alone is most likely to have a more common illness (the common cold or even influenza) rather than COVID-19. They should be advised to seek care from a healthcare provider, of which there are many in the city. In the event of a close contact with a confirmed case or having cared for someone with COVID-19, they may be considered a suspected COVID-19 case. Organizers should call the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22222) or call the Security Emergency Operations Centre (ext. 99). Security Officers have been briefed on specific procedures, and the clinical staff of the VIC Medical Service clinic have the appropriate protective equipment, procedures and training to manage ill participants and suspected cases. They will also advise on any necessary clean-up in the meeting room.

For participants with medical emergencies: Organizers should call the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22222) or the Security Emergency Operations Centre (ext. 99). The Security Emergency Operations Centre will then mobilize a VIC medical emergency team.

For all other medical issues: Organizers should advise participants who are unwell for any reason to either go to a local urgent care clinic or, for an emergency, call the Vienna emergency number on 144. The VIC Medical Service is located in the F tower, 7th floor, and is open on weekdays for consultations/appointments by telephone from 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. It provides first aid, urgent care and advice on seeking care from Vienna City healthcare providers but does not provide prescriptions or replacements for prescriptions.

Contact: medical-admin.contact-point@iaea.org; Clinic reception — ext. 22224.

For assistance after hours: Organizers should advice participants that for respiratory symptoms related to COVID-19 they should call the Vienna Health telephone on 1450 (German and English). For emergencies, they should call the Vienna emergency number 144; for all other medical issues participants should seek out a local urgent care clinic (example of a hospital with staff speaking English: Akutversorgung Privatklinik Döbling, Heiligenstädter Straße 55–63, 1190 Vienna: +43 1 360 66-5599) or go to an emergency department of any general Vienna hospital. For house visits it is possible to call Dr Sabanas: +43 660 686 2276 or DocAround The Clock: +43 664 144 9 144.

SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR MEETINGS AT HEADQUARTERS IN VIENNA

Local authorities have cancelled all events until 6 December. In person meetings at the workplace necessary for conducting the business are exempted from these regulations.

Please note that when planning an in-person event at the VIC, organizers must conform to any specific instructions regarding holding of such events and must follow applicable internal clearance procedures.
Fundamental rules for meetings:

A distance of at least one metre from other people must be maintained at meetings with assigned and marked seats. If this distance cannot be maintained due to seating arrangements, every second seat must remain vacant, unless the risk of infection can be minimized by other suitable protective measures.

Masks must be worn in all common spaces in the VIC, such as corridors, elevators, the Rotunda and kitchens. This is in addition to those spaces where masks were already required, such as the Commissary, banks and post office.

Fitted nose-mouth coverings/masks rather than face shields/visors must be worn. This is because new scientific evidence shows better reduction of droplets and aerosols when wearing a mask or a nose-mouth covering made from fabric compared to face shields/visors.

A mask or a nose-mouth covering has to be worn by all participants even when they are sitting in their assigned seat. A distance of at least one metre from other people must be maintained at all times during meetings. If possible, maintaining a distance of at least two metres is beneficial as this is considered "a low risk". Masks could be exceptionally removed if 2 meters distance is kept and the person is not speaking for more than 15 minutes.

BEFORE THE MEETING
Organizers should:

- For all indoor meetings:
  - Ensure that the list of participants registered to attend in-person is provided to UNSSS, including contact details in an Excel sheet or other database format, including full name and email, before the meeting.
  - Gather the contact details and seating arrangements for all meetings, and are encouraged to use the 'contact tracing information form'.
  - Appoint a COVID-19 contact person responsible for overseeing the COVID-19-related measures.
  - Develop and implement a COVID-19 prevention concept (see points below).
- The COVID-19 prevention concept must include guidelines for training employees and, based on a risk analysis, measures to minimize the risk of infection. These include in particular:
  - Measures to manage the flow of participants.
  - Specific hygiene measures.
  - Procedures in case of COVID-19 infections or symptoms.
  - Procedures regarding the use of restrooms.
  - Procedures regarding the administration of food and beverages. Please note that no food and beverages are allowed to be served at the meeting except in designated areas such as the VIC cafeteria and coffee corners.
- The COVID-19 prevention concept should also include a system for traceability of contacts, such as a system to record attendance on a voluntary basis. This system can also be electronic.
- Distribute the document Guidance for participants of meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic and the flyer COVID-19 QUICK GUIDE: Precautions.
- Seek the most current guidance or specific issues from the VIC Medical Service.
- Communicate clearly to participants that no one who is ill should attend the meeting.
- Communicate that physical distancing and wearing a mask or nose-mouth covering will be key prevention measures. Face masks will not be provided.
- Face masks or nose-mouth coverings must be worn in all common areas at the VIC, including when passing through security checkpoints (e.g. Gate 1) and approaching a security officer,
and when collecting badges. A face mask or other nose-mouth covering must also be worn when entering, leaving or moving inside a meeting room; participants have to wear it also when seated.
- Communicate a “no handshake” meeting policy.
- Organize a cleaning protocol and availability of hand sanitizers.
- Ensure that proper air conditioning/ventilation is available, checked and maintained.
- Ensure that there is an operational procedure to take care of any suspected COVID-19 case and for subsequent tracing of close contact participants (name, address, telephone, email). In the event of a confirmed case, all close contacts would be instructed by VIC Medical Service to begin quarantine immediately for the regulated number of days.
- Consideration should also be given to providing videoconferencing capability for participants and presenters who are not able to attend in person.

**DURING THE MEETING**

Organizers should:

- Provide an introductory briefing (see below).
- Make available in the meeting room copies of the document *Guidance for participants of meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic* and the flyer *COVID-19 QUICK GUIDE: Precautions*.
- Remind participants of the information provided on risk and preventive measures (including handwashing and cough etiquette advice).
- Inform participants that hand sanitizers are located throughout the VIC and indicate the location of the hand sanitizer nearest the meeting room.
- Remind participants to wear face masks as required and to avoid group gatherings (e.g. coffee breaks, close contact risk scenarios).
- Monitor and check the attendance list or assigned seating plan and record any changes.
- Monitor to not exceed the respective limit in numbers of participants.
- Provide a sign-in sheet at each seat. Require participants to record their full name, contact information and the date and time period they occupied that seat. Issue reminders as necessary.
- Communicate the contact tracing procedure in case a participant becomes unwell, either in the meeting or afterwards.
- Be prepared to work closely with local health authorities in case of necessary contact tracing in association with a COVID-19 case, which will be assisted by the VIC Medical Service.
- Be prepared to provide the seating plan and contact details in a Excel sheet or other database format (including name, email, telephone number and address).

**AFTER THE MEETING**

Organizers should:

- Archive the attendance list or assigned seating plan for 28 days (to be treated confidentially).
- Be prepared to work closely with local health authorities in case of necessary contact tracing in association with a COVID-19 case, which will be assisted by the VIC Medical Service.

**Introductory briefing by the Chair of the meeting to participants**

VIC Medical Service suggests something along these lines:

“As you are aware, the World Health Organization has declared the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. Whilst the emphasis is on global measures to control the pandemic, individuals can contribute by following the advice to ‘think global, act local’. I urge all attendees to follow the guidance provided by the Secretariat as host of this meeting, which includes:
• To strictly not attend the meeting if you are unwell, have a fever, cough or respiratory symptoms;
• To report to the event organizer if you are unwell and have been in an ‘at risk situation’ for coronavirus in the last 14 days. The event organizer (not the individual) will contact the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22222) here in the Headquarters by telephone;
• To undertake regular preventive measures as described in the document Guidance for participants of meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic available online and in the meeting room; and
• To wear face masks as required.

These measures are for your safety, and to safeguard the wellbeing of us all.”

FAQs FOR MEETING ORGANIZERS

A person with an important role or presenter is unwell. What should we do?
The person should not attend the meeting and should be provided with support to receive medical advice.

A participant is coughing and feeling unwell. What should we do?
The first step is that all other participants should keep the appropriate distance. Encourage the person to wear a nose-mouth covering or medical mask and to seek advice from a healthcare provider.

A participant is coughing and feeling unwell AND indicates that he had close contact with a confirmed positive COVID-19 case or has a loss of taste and smell. What should we do?
Encourage the person to wear a nose-mouth covering and the designated COVID-19 contact person should contact the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22224) for advice. They will conduct a risk assessment over the phone to determine the next steps.

In the event someone should be ‘quarantined’, what does this mean?
This means, the person should:
- Avoid any contacts (stay in their accommodation and at least 1 metre away from others).
- Minimize the spread of the virus by covering coughs, cleaning surfaces, and washing or sanitizing their hands regularly and wearing a mask if required.
- Seek health advice by phone first before seeing a healthcare provider in person.

The quarantine period for identified close contacts is normally for ten days (period may change subject to Austrian health authorities’ guidance).

Will hand sanitizers be available?
Organizers should contact Facilities Management Services to ensure that hand sanitizers are available.

Should participants bring and wear their own face masks?
Yes. Face masks will not be provided. All visitors to the VIC will be asked to wear face masks or other nose-mouth covering in all common areas, including when passing through security checkpoints (e.g. Gate 1) and approaching a security officer, and when collecting badges. A face mask or other nose-mouth covering must also be worn when entering, leaving moving inside, or being seated in a meeting room.

Does this guideline apply also to internal meetings with personnel at the VIC?
If face-to-face internal meetings are required, personnel should follow the general prevention measures as stated in this guidance. This includes e.g. following hygiene measures, use of masks and adhering to the physical distancing of at least one metre.

If possible, maintaining a distance of at least two metres is beneficial. This is considered “a low risk”, which means in case a participant is later tested positive, there is no need for a quarantine (only self-observation).

As framework for preventive measures for the VIC and its personnel is already in place and communicated, there is no need to produce a specific COVID-19 prevention concept for every internal meeting. Since contact details of all UN personnel are accessible internally, collecting contact tracing information forms is also not required. However, the meeting organizer (or the COVID-19 contact point if the organizer has delegated this responsibility), is responsible for overseeing the COVID-19-related measures. He or she maintains a seating plan of all participants and all personnel should wear masks even when in an assigned seat.

Is there any other information available?
For further information, we suggest only reliable and up-to-date sources. We suggest reviewing the ‘Travel Advice’ and ‘Protect Yourself’ sections on the World Health Organization website, which is constantly updated to reflect the most recent guidance.
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

For local information, see the website of the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.