

16 September 2025

Original: English

E

**Report of the 3rd meeting of the
Joint Committee**

1. The Joint Committee met for the third time in London, United Kingdom, on 16 June 2025. The meeting was presided by the Chair of the Committee, Mr Zoltan Agai of the EU-European Commission.
2. Representatives of the following Members were present:
 - (a) Exporting Members: Brazil, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Nepal, Philippines and Togo; and
 - (b) Importing Members: European Union and Switzerland.
3. The Executive Director gave an opening address, remarking that the focus of the third meeting was to discuss how to achieve or address the stated objective of the Organization: to strengthen the global coffee sector and promote its sustainable expansion in a market-based environment for the betterment of all participants in the sector.
4. The Head of Operations informed those present that a quorum had been reached.
5. The Chair reminded Members of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the Joint Committee and that it was responsible for making recommendations to the Council on all matters concerning projects, statistics, and promotion and market development. He also referred to Article 34 of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) 2007 which indicates that the International Coffee Council “shall adopt an annual work programme of studies, surveys and reports, with estimated resource requirements”. The Chair reminded all participants that the third meeting had been convened in response to Members’ desire to hold discussions on statistics, market development, project and study proposals, supported by more detailed information on the respective initiatives. These discussions were to be based on internal consultations among Members, for which a six-week period had been foreseen, as agreed during the second meeting of the Joint Committee on 12 March 2025, with the purpose of improving consultation and transparency and to understand the priorities of Member countries. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for providing detailed information on the proposals, for organizing the

consultation process in a timely manner and for also providing the status of implementation of the ICO's Five-Year Action Plan.

Item 1 Draft Agenda – to adopt

6. In response to the Chair's request for comments on the Draft Agenda ([JC-10/25 Rev. 1](#)), the delegate of Brazil greeted all meeting attendees and then requested three explanations from the Secretariat regarding the procedures of the present meeting and the documentation circulated. He deemed such clarifications essential for the proceedings of the meeting and in order for the Brazilian delegation to adopt the agenda. The requests are detailed below and elaborated upon later in the report:

- (a) The Secretariat's continued interpretation of a supposed "mandatory" obligation regarding the presentation of reports on Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), despite the Brazilian delegation having repeatedly indicated that this endeavour had never been officially recognized as such;
- (b) The failure to identify the proponents of the initiatives;
- (c) The observation that the proposed procedures for Member consultations were based on a so-called "agreed-upon test".

7. In response to the delegate of Brazil's question as to why the report on MRLs was described as "mandatory", the Head of Operations referred to Article 24 of the ICA 2007 and stated that Members were required to provide information on market obstacles on an annual basis. She explained that, in March 2010, the International Coffee Council had requested that the Secretariat keep Members informed about food safety issues, particularly MRLs, in the different Member States. As such, in September 2010 the Executive Director at the time had committed to preparing a regular report on the topic, with subsequent editions in 2013, 2018 and 2022.

8. The delegate of Brazil stated that the explanation provided regrettably failed to convince his country. Recalling Article 24 of the ICA 2007, which specifically deals with the removal of obstacles to trade and consumption, he referred to the definitions agreed by Member States in the text of said article, whereby "Members recognize the importance of [...] the removal of current obstacles and avoidance of new obstacles which may hinder trade and consumption". Furthermore, he explained that the article in question indicated the "right of Members to regulate, and to introduce new regulations, in order to meet national health and environmental policy objectives, consistent with their commitments and obligations under international agreements, including those related to international trade". Finally, he mentioned that, in the same article, Member countries had agreed to list a set of measures which they considered "may to a greater or lesser extent hinder the increase of

consumption of coffee”. This concrete list, he explained, contained the very topics that Member countries agreed to inform the Council about annually and which were in fact “mandatory”, as follows:

- (a) import arrangements applicable to coffee, including preferential and other tariffs, quotas, operations of governments monopolies and official purchasing agencies, and other administrative rules and commercial practices;
- (b) export arrangements as regards direct or indirect subsidies and other administrative rules and commercial practices; and
- (c) internal trade conditions and domestic and regional, legal and administrative provisions which may affect consumption.

9. The delegate of Brazil further clarified that the term “administrative rules” found in Article 24 was understood and internationally accepted to be related to commerce and transit procedures, bureaucratic formalities, paperwork, and processing time, etc. He added that none of the above three items dealt with phytosanitary measures or MRLs.

10. The Chair asked for permission to intervene, noting that the delegate of Brazil had begun detailed discussion before the agenda was formally adopted. He explained that the delegate of Brazil would have the opportunity to express his concerns under the appropriate item and suggested that, at this point of the meeting, he simply specify any items which he believed should be removed from the agenda.

11. The delegate of Brazil noted that, if the Chair did not want to listen to the full explanations, they could be sent in written form. He further clarified that it was necessary to define if the report on MRLs was indeed “mandatory” before starting the meeting and requested that this word be deleted. He emphasized that discussions could not progress without at least a basic agreement on what the meeting was dealing with and highlighted that his country had already raised the issue on multiple occasions. He added that if the Chair wanted to terminate the discussions there, it was somewhat surprising, as he believed that he was in the midst of a process of dialogue, explaining his country’s position. He stated that he had not yet finished explaining what his country thought about the topic, but that if the Chair wished to proceed, his current request was that the report on MRLs should not be described as “mandatory”. If the Organization decided it was not, in fact, a mandatory report to be produced, he fully agreed to terminate the discussion at this point.

12. The Chair thanked the delegate of Brazil and apologized for the interruption. He explained that he understood that Brazil would like to rename agenda item 3 and remove the reference to it being “mandatory.”

13. The delegate of Brazil reaffirmed his country’s position that the Organization should not designate the report on MRLs as mandatory. He stated that this was the purpose of the discussion at hand, because otherwise Members would be entering into a dialogue without agreeing on the minimum conditions that they were dealing with. He stated that, from that point on, it should be agreed that the study on MRLs is not mandatory, as it was not covered by the ICA 2007.

14. The Chair thanked the delegate of Brazil and returned to the point being discussed, which was the adoption of the agenda. He asked again what the proposal was – whether it was to remove the reference to mandatory reports and simply refer to them as reports.

15. The delegate of Brazil explained that his country had repeatedly stated that it did not consider the item to be a mandatory report, but that the circulated Agenda had listed it as such. Therefore, in order to adopt the agenda, and deal with all documents related to it, the delegate of Brazil requested a clarification from the Secretariat.

16. The Chair acknowledged the delegate of Brazil's comments, while noting that there were in fact other mandatory reports. He pointed out that the Agenda, as displayed on the screen, did not specifically mention the report on MRLs. He therefore asked whether item 3 could be accepted as it was, and whether, once they reached said item 3, they could then decide whether to categorize the report as mandatory or not.

17. The delegate of Brazil requested that the Secretariat clarify whether it was now accepted that the report was not mandatory. He stressed that, otherwise, it would be difficult to proceed.

18. The Executive Director thanked the delegate of Brazil for highlighting the question. Apologising for the confusion, she confirmed that the report on MRLs was not related to Article 24 of the ICA 2007. She clarified that the International Coffee Council's "request for the Secretariat to keep Members informed about food safety issues"¹ was the result of a proposal by the PSCB, but that it was not strictly mandatory based on the provisions of the ICA 2007.

19. The Joint Committee agreed to remove the term "mandatory" in reference to the report, and the delegate of Brazil further clarified that none of the communications from the Executive Director circulated since 2010 had ever mentioned that the exercise in question was of a "mandatory" nature.

20. The delegate of Brazil stated that his second observation was related to a request that had been repeatedly raised during the second meeting of the Joint Committee, as well as during the 139th Session of the International Coffee Council in March 2025. He noted that the proposed list of projects did not clearly state the proponents of each initiative, emphasizing that this was very important information, as it was connected to the entire set of documents being discussed at the meeting. However, this was not observed either in the list of projects proposed (document [JC-8/25](#)) or the list being further elaborated based on the recommendation made at the second meeting of the Joint Committee on 12 March 2025, which cited the "Secretariat" of the International Coffee Organization as the proponent. The delegate of Brazil sought further explanation from the Executive Director or the Secretariat in this sense.

¹ Document [ICC-104-9](#).

21. The Executive Director provided clarification that, for the purpose of this particular exercise, the initiatives under discussion had been proposed by the Secretariat. She noted that the focus was on mandatory reporting and institutional enhancements, specifically referencing Initiatives 7, 4, and 5. These, she explained, did not constitute formal projects, but rather represented ongoing efforts to strengthen the Organization's statistical capacity. She recalled that the Secretariat had been engaged in this work for some time – at least since the beginning of her tenure – with the objective of improving the quality and functionality of existing databases. With regard to Initiative 6, the Executive Director observed that it had already been the subject of prior discussions, including within the framework of the Coffee Public-Private Task Force, and had been shared with several members and partners of that group. On initiative 7, she reiterated that the proposal originated from the Secretariat and highlighted that item 5 of the agenda was intended to establish a more structured process for receiving input and suggestions from Members. She further noted that, in preparing this proposal, the Secretariat had consulted a number of international organizations to identify best practices and had subsequently decided to recommend the adoption of this procedure to facilitate broader contributions.

22. The delegate of Brazil pointed out that, according to Article 28 of the ICA 2007, only “Members and the Executive Director may submit project proposals which contribute to the achievement of the objectives of this Agreement and one or more of the priority areas for work identified in the strategic action plan approved by the Council pursuant to Article 9”. He added that the ICA 2007, by explicitly avoiding the use of the term “Secretariat” and specifically mentioning the term “Executive Director”, clearly articulated that the faculty to propose projects was granted only to the Executive Director, thereby avoiding the dilution of responsibility for authorship within the anonymous group of the Secretariat. Furthermore, the delegate of Brazil continued to explain that, by entrusting the Executive Director, as the only elected official of the Organization, with the right to propose projects, the ICA 2007 also indicated that the role of the Secretariat was restricted to the operational dimension of the Organization, including the implementation of the decisions and mandates agreed upon by Member States and the Executive Director. The delegate of Brazil continued to explain that the Executive Director's right to propose project initiatives should be used wisely, reflecting the responsibilities as the main executive of the Organization and as a focal point for Member States.

23. The delegate of Brazil expressed concern over the fact that all initiatives proposed for coffee year 2024/25 had previously been attributed to the Secretariat, as reflected in document [JC-13/25](#) and others. He argued that this conflicted with Article 28 of the ICA 2007 and circumvented a formal request made by the Brazilian delegation during the second meeting of the Joint Committee, when it requested that the proponents of proposed initiatives be clearly identified, and that Members be consulted regarding the priority initiatives. He also recalled that, during both the second meeting of the Joint Committee and the 139th Session of the International Coffee Council, it was noted that the Secretariat had not sought inputs from Member States regarding the schedule of studies and projects, and that the former had been accustomed to acting with a large degree of autonomy.

24. In light of these concerns, Brazil requested that all documents listed on the Draft Agenda of the third meeting be revised to comply with Article 28 of the ICA 2007. Specifically, the delegate of

Brazil called for the removal of all references identifying the “Secretariat” as the proponent of projects. Furthermore, the delegate expressed interest in hearing the views of the Executive Director or a representative of the Secretariat on this matter.

25. The Executive Director then agreed that the proponent of the initiatives and projects was, indeed, the Executive Director. She also accepted the delegate of Brazil’s request to replace all references to the “Secretariat” as the proponent of project proposals with “Executive Director”.

26. The delegate of Brazil explained that his third remark on the agenda concerned how the current meeting had been configured by the Secretariat. Recalling the second meeting of the Joint Committee held on 12 March 2025, he noted that one delegation had pointed out the absence of procedures for consulting Member States on proposed projects, including rules for their submission and evaluation. He referred to paragraph 2 of document [JC-13/25](#), where the Secretariat had claimed that “a decision was made to test procedures during a first round of consultations with Members on the initiatives proposed by the ICO Secretariat for coffee year 2024/25.” However, the delegate of Brazil argued that this assertion did not seem to correspond to the discussions that had taken place during the second meeting of the Joint Committee. Furthermore, he highlighted that the report of that meeting, contained in document [JC-09/25](#), did not include any mandate or authorization for such a test or for implementing the referenced mechanism. Accordingly, the delegate of Brazil requested that either the Executive Director or a member of the Secretariat clarify the basis for this supposed mandate.

27. The Head of Operations acknowledged the concern and stated that the second meeting of the Joint Committee had included a discussion on an initial consultation process, which would later be re-evaluated. She agreed that the term “test” had not been used and emphasized that the intention was to move forward due to the lack of sufficient explanation and the absence of established procedures at the time.

28. The delegate of Brazil reiterated his delegation’s disappointment with the procedures undertaken by the Secretariat, which, in their view, had disregarded the principle that all organizational actions should first be discussed with Member States. He noted that, in document [JC-13/25](#), the Secretariat had proposed procedures for evaluating project proposals before those procedures had been debated, amended, or accepted. He highlighted that the Secretariat had unilaterally decided that the procedures’ “effectiveness and suitability [would] be assessed and fine-tuned during the third meeting of the Joint Committee on 16 June 2025 based on the outcomes of the first test.” In doing so, he argued that the Secretariat had not only presented a proposal for Member States to analyse and debate, but also, without instruction or authorization, required delegations to conform to a methodology not previously agreed upon. The delegate of Brazil argued that this action implied that the Secretariat’s proposal would only be open to adjustments—not full approval—during the current Joint Committee meeting, thereby suggesting a non-existent endorsement from Member States.

29. Although his country had specific comments and observations on each of the seven proposed initiatives, the delegate of Brazil informed the Committee that, following consultations with its National Coffee Policy Council (*Conselho Deliberativo de Política do Café* – CDPC), Brazil had chosen not to participate in the exercise proposed by the Secretariat. This decision was made to avoid setting an undue precedent or giving any impression of endorsement for a strategy that, in Brazil's view, sought to consolidate an inappropriate role for the Secretariat at the expense of Member States' authority. The delegate of Brazil therefore requested that the Secretariat refrain from subjecting Member States to procedures that had not been discussed and agreed upon in the future.

30. The Chair of the meeting asked the delegate of Brazil to clarify the following points:

- (a) Brazil's decision not to participate in the consultation regarding the proposal of initiatives for 2024/25, as set out during the second meeting of the JC;
- (b) The comments made regarding the future procedures, which were scheduled to be discussed during the present meeting; and
- (c) The connection made between these two points.

31. The delegate of Brazil clarified that he was still commenting on the Draft Agenda and the procedures of the meeting. He explained that Brazil's concern was that the Secretariat had decided to impose procedures on Member States without prior approval and without having been requested to do so. He reiterated that the three points Brazil had raised previously related specifically to how the meeting was configured, stressing that this was very important in order to avoid setting undue precedents in how meetings of the Organization are conducted.

32. The Chair, speaking in his capacity as the delegate of the European Union, explained that the third meeting was being conducted under a kind of ad hoc procedure, which was why, under item 5 of the agenda, the Executive Director had proposed formal procedures for future meetings. He acknowledged that the wording in the titles of the agenda items could be made clearer and clarified that item 5, which dealt with procedures, would not apply to the present meeting. He added that the only ad hoc procedure being tested for the third meeting was related to the proposed initiatives. On that point, he noted that it had been agreed during the second meeting that the Secretariat would submit documents for review six weeks in advance—and that this had been done. Resuming his role as Chair of the Joint Committee, he sought further clarification from the Secretariat.

33. The Head of Operations echoed the **remarks** of the Chair, **noting that the current approach constituted an "ad hoc" arrangement, agreed upon at the conclusion of the second meeting to allow for more thorough consultation on initiatives previously proposed by the Executive Director. She observed that even the Executive Director had acknowledged the need for enhanced consultation, which prompted the Secretariat to propose a discussion on formal procedures – intended to be openly debated and, in due course, considered for approval by the Members. She clarified that the input provided by the Secretariat under item 5 was merely a suggestion regarding how such a consultation process might be structured. Emphasizing the provisional nature of the proposal, she underscored that**

it remains entirely flexible and subject to revision, and could be dismantled or reconfigured in accordance with Members' feedback and decisions. The Head of Operations drew attention to the fact that the draft procedures under Item 5 explicitly include provisions allowing Members to act as proponents of initiatives – a principle she believes enjoys broad support. She further reiterated that the lack of prior consultation and insufficient detail surrounding the initiatives presented during the second meeting had led to an unsatisfactory situation. In this regard, she expressed agreement with the position put forward by Brazil, affirming that procedural improvements are warranted and that this concern rightly falls under the scope of Item 5. In conclusion, she reaffirmed that the current arrangement is indeed ad hoc, and stressed that no Member is under any obligation to accept it prematurely. She acknowledged that Members are fully entitled to withhold endorsement until the procedure is formally adopted, a position she fully respects.

34. The delegate of Brazil stressed that if the Organization deemed it necessary to present a set of procedures, then that was not a problem; on the contrary. However, he added that it could not at the same time impose the suggestion on Member States or require their compliance prior to a formal approval. The delegate of Brazil explained that this was a reminder from the Brazilian delegation on how procedures should be dealt with, and how agreement should be obtained before the implementation of any measure.

35. The Chair then asked Members to adopt the agenda, taking into account the changes requested by the delegate of Brazil. The amended Agenda was adopted.

Item 2: Report of the 2nd meeting of the Joint Committee – *to consider and, if appropriate, to approve*

36. The delegate of Brazil requested explicit and comprehensive reporting in paragraphs 25, 28 and 36 of the Report of the 2nd meeting of the Joint Committee (document [JC-09/25](#)):

37. Concerning paragraph 36, the delegate of Brazil requested that the full text of his intervention be included. He referred to the final sentence of said paragraph, and recalled his previous descriptions of two studies prepared by the Organization. He referenced the first study, carried out by the University of Wageningen, which stated that coffee was a factor in deforestation. Said study also stated that Arabica coffee in South America, in particular, was responsible for deforestation. The delegate of Brazil recalled that the International Coffee Council had decided that the link to the study should be deleted from the website of the Organization. The second study was prepared by the ICO in 2024, the first draft of which accused the two largest, most efficient and most sustainable coffee producers of creating a cycle of poverty among countries. The second draft was formulated in a different way, stating that the largest producers were responsible for a concentration of production which generates undue competition. The delegate of Brazil explained that, to his knowledge, the ICO was the only commodity organization that had prepared a document criticizing the two main producers of the very same commodity. He compared this to being like the International Organisation of Vine and Wine criticizing France and Italy for being too efficient, or the International Olive Council, which is based in Madrid,

criticizing Spain and Italy for their productivity. Finally, he mentioned that the second study was still on the webpage of the Organization.

38. The delegate of Brazil reiterated that he would send the text of his intervention from the second meeting of the Joint Committee so that the aforementioned studies could be referenced in the future as examples which did not help, did not comply and did not add value to the efforts of producing countries.

39. Regarding paragraph 25, the delegate of Brazil explained that the sentence “The delegate referred to the International Sugar Organization, where traditionally countries were consulted about [...] topics of interest” was inaccurate. Rather, it should read “...topics of interest for projects to be developed by that organization”. Furthermore, he clarified that it was the entire consultation system used by the International Sugar Organization that should serve as a template for the ICO, and added that the Brazilian delegation would submit a correction to said paragraph 25.

40. As for paragraph 28, the delegate of Brazil noted that it was a very summarized version of what had actually been said. He explained that the paragraph referred to a previous statement made by the former Head of Operations when he was questioned about procedures related to studies. The delegate of Brazil stated that his delegation had reviewed the recording of the second meeting and would submit corrections.

41. The Chair noted that the Report of the 2nd meeting of the Joint Committee had not been approved and that the Secretariat would await the comments to be sent by the Brazilian delegation. He added that the Report would be added to the agenda of the following meeting of the Joint Committee for approval.

Item 3 Proposed initiatives and reports 2024/25 - to consider and, if appropriate, to approve

42. Referring to the Chair’s suggestion to present the proposed initiatives under three blocks (“Markets and Promotion”, “Statistics” and the “Study on climate change”), the delegate of Brazil recalled that one of the main objectives of creating the Joint Committee was to enhance discussion and increase the participation of Member countries. He therefore proposed that, instead of analysing the proposed initiatives under thematic blocks, each proposition should be individually presented by the Secretariat, followed by an open floor for remarks, observations, and comments. He emphasized that this approach would better serve the interests of Members, given the limited opportunities for such discussions, noting that only two meetings of the Joint Committee had been held to date.

43. The Chair agreed to this proposal.

Initiative 1: Report on Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs)

44. The Head of Operations presented Initiative 1. She clarified that the initiative was no longer regarded as mandatory and that it had been incorporated into the approved budget, although the

specific content of that budget had yet to be formally endorsed. She added that the modifications to the usual approach would be as follows:

- (a) Existing information would be used as a basis, in collaboration with the European Coffee Federation (ECF).
- (b) The survey sent to Members would mainly be a validation survey and would be more targeted (with fewer open questions than before). The response time would be one month.
- (c) In the past, only countries with residue levels that had exceptions or did not follow the Codex Alimentarius were mentioned; now all countries would be included in order to provide a more neutral overview.

45. Before opening the floor for comments, the Chair remarked that a request for written comments on the initiatives had been sent to members of the Joint Committee prior to the third meeting. However, only the European Union had responded, submitting an inquiry about whether existing secondary sources of information could be used and subsequently validated by Member States. He explained that the request had been intended to provide Members with an opportunity to express their views on the Organization's work in a transparent manner, as also requested by the Brazilian delegation. The Chair encouraged all Members to participate by sharing their questions, comments and proposals.

46. In response to the European Union's inquiry, the Head of Operations clarified that existing information could indeed be used. She explained that the information in question was less publicly available compared to data on other market and consumption obstacles. Therefore, the Secretariat intended to collaborate with the ECF and make use of their database, in addition to using the information obtained through previous surveys, which did not necessarily change every year.

47. The delegate of Brazil explained that he had several observations to share after reviewing the proposal contained in Initiative 1 and consulting with the CDPC, an entity comprising representatives from councils, associations, federations and research institutions from the Brazilian coffee chain, as well as officials from various federal ministries involved in coffee policy. Firstly, he reiterated Brazil's understanding that the ICA 2007 did not establish any obligation from Member States to annually inform the Organization about MRLs or to prepare a report on the matter. He also recalled that the International Coffee Council had not formally mandated the preparation of such a report.

48. Secondly, the delegate of Brazil added that information on MRLs was of a public nature. He clarified that in several countries, including Brazil, this information was available on the websites of the agencies and ministries responsible for phytosanitary issues, such as the National Health Surveillance Agency (*Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária* – ANVISA) and could be freely accessed by producers, importers, and roasters across the coffee supply chain.

49. Thirdly, he emphasized that the dynamic nature of regulatory changes in different countries and economic areas, a fact recognized by the ICO itself, made the issuance of a static PDF report by the ICO of limited use, since the figures therein contained would only reflect a specific moment in time and would not serve as a reliable reference for agents in the coffee chain who required up-to-date information. As proposed, the delegate of Brazil stated that his country had found the initiative to be of little significance or practical benefit.

50. The delegate of Brazil also expressed concern over the editing and formatting techniques used in previous editions of the report, which, he noted, were also indicated to appear in the current proposal. He described these techniques as “inadequate” and “inconsistent” with the report’s stated objective of providing information to Member States. He further criticized the Secretariat’s past decisions to make comparisons between national regulations—despite not having a technical team specialized in phytosanitary issues—as an attempt to establish assessment procedures that did not correspond to the report’s stated aim.

51. The delegate of Brazil stressed that MRL values were determined by each country based on scientific evidence, the in-depth knowledge of national research and regulatory institutions, and consideration of environmental, phytosanitary, and toxicological factors applicable to local agricultural practices. In Brazil’s case, he referred to the strict technical standards that governed the approval of substances, which involved intense dialogue among scientific and governmental entities. The Brazilian delegation therefore objected to the Secretariat’s prior attempts to compare limits across countries and over time, which, in their view, disregarded national specificities in both production and consumption.

52. The delegate of Brazil emphasized that his country considered it the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and specifically the Codex Alimentarius through the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR), to scientifically define internationally accepted MRLs. Furthermore, he added that, **in the view of the delegation of Brazil**, the appropriate and relevant international forum for discussing phytosanitary measures impacting trade was the World Trade Organization (WTO), particularly its Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. He noted that the last report on MRLs published by the ICO in 2022 had failed to include a significant portion of Member countries. **In light of concerns regarding the practical utility and relevance of the proposed initiative for the global coffee value chain, the delegation of Brazil chose not to endorse its implementation.**

53. The Chair reiterated that the work on the MRLs began in 2010 at the request of the International Coffee Council and, as such, could only be revoked by the Council. He stated that when the initiatives were submitted to the Council, it could be considered whether the information still held value. If it did not, as suggested, the Council could revoke the earlier request that led to the study.

54. The delegate of Brazil clarified that, **in the absence of a consensual agreement among members of the Joint Committee, the initiative in question could not be forwarded** to the Council for consideration. Referring to **the historical context, the delegate recalled discussions held in 2010,**

during which the then Head of Operations of the International Coffee Organization presented regulatory changes being advanced by the European Union concerning phytosanitary measures. These measures had been approved in 2009 and were expected to be published shortly thereafter. At that time, the Head of Operations provided a detailed explanation of the EU's proposed phytosanitary framework. The issue was thoroughly deliberated among Member States, and a request was made for the Executive Director to keep Members informed of any developments related to those measures. The delegate emphasized that no formal mandate had ever been issued by the International Coffee Council in support of a mandatory initiative at that time. Referring to the various concerns expressed by stakeholders within the Brazilian coffee sector and government, the delegate of Brazil concluded by recommending that the Joint Committee proceed with caution in its consideration of the matter.

55. In response to the Chair's mention of the request made by the International Coffee Council in 2010, the delegate of Brazil clarified that his delegation had reviewed all relevant documentation from that time. He recalled that the then Head of Operations had presented the changes being introduced by the European Union to its phytosanitary measures and provided a thorough explanation, which was followed by an in-depth discussion and a request for the Executive Director to keep Member States informed about the initiative. The delegate of Brazil further explained that, after a transition in leadership at the ICO, there were additional requests for information regarding the MRLs of Member States. He noted that these were intended to allow for comparisons and to keep Members aware of ongoing developments, but emphasized that no mandate had ever been issued by the International Coffee Council in that sense. Consequently, he reiterated the position of the Brazilian delegation that the current proposal could not be forwarded to the Council, as there was no consensus within the Joint Committee.

56. The Chair clarified that his intention had not been to suggest that any of the proposals would be presented to the Council as though they had received consensus, if that were not the case. He further explained that the Joint Committee could present items that had not been unanimously agreed upon for the Council's attention. He recalled that the Finance and Administration Committee had also proceeded in such a manner in the recent past.

57. Recalling his participation in the discussions to determine the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the Joint Committee, the delegate of Brazil stated that said ToRs clearly indicated that the Committee was expected to consider and agree on proposals and projects before submitting them to the International Coffee Council. Therefore, he reiterated that the Joint Committee did not have the authority to send any projects to the Council without the consensual agreement of its members.

58. The Chair proposed that the Secretariat provide clarification in reference to the Council's request to provide information on MRLs. He stated that the outcome of such analysis could be presented and discussed at the following meeting of the Joint Committee, after which a decision would be taken on whether the proposal on MRLs could be considered by the Council without the consensual agreement of the Joint Committee.

59. The delegate of Brazil reminded the Secretariat that Members should be given sufficient time to discuss such important questions and be provided with an agenda enabling them to fully express their positions. Without that, he stated, the exercise would lack significance. Referring to the current debate, he stressed that the matter under discussion was Initiative 1, and that one delegation had already expressed opposition to it. He insisted this must be clearly understood in order to prevent the initiative from being brought back for renewed consideration in a continuous loop.

60. The Committee accepted that the Secretariat would provide further clarification, as proposed by the Chair.

Initiative 2: Report on obstacles to trade and consumption

61. The Head of Operations explained the second initiative and noted that there was a clear mandate linked to the ICA 2007, with similar reports having been prepared several times in the past. She noted that the report previously relied heavily on surveys submitted by Members, but pointed out that much of this information was now readily available in the databases of the WTO and International Trade Centre (ITC). Therefore, the starting point would be those sources, and only in cases where further clarification or data was needed would the Secretariat consider conducting new surveys. She emphasized that the report would consider all countries, unlike the 2022 MRL report, which only included those with exceptions. The Head of Operations added that the report would cover import tariffs, export tariffs from producing countries, and free trade agreements where coffee was included.

62. The delegate of Brazil sought clarification regarding the methodology of Initiative 2. He noted that there was no explanation on how the request for information would be formulated to Member States, nor any indication of the scope of the information that would be required. As a result, it remained unclear whether Member States would be responsible for providing information on tariffs themselves or simply validating research carried out by the Secretariat.

63. The Head of Operations explained that the exercise would depend on the transparency of the databases being consulted, namely those of the WTO, ITC, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for countries where the information was available. She explained that, in such cases, the process would purely be one of validation. However, for others, she clarified that a deeper investigation might be required, potentially involving surveys, which would typically be followed up with a phone or digital call.

64. The delegate of Brazil highlighted that one part of his question had not been addressed—specifically, what information would be requested from Member States. He inquired about the scope of the exercise and noted that this information was missing.

65. The Head of Operations clarified that the information to be requested from Member States would be limited to import tariffs of the different types of coffee: green coffee, green coffee (decaffeinated), roasted coffee (not decaffeinated), roasted coffee (decaffeinated), and coffee substitutes. A similar questionnaire would be sent to exporting countries, requesting details on export

tariffs by coffee type. Additionally, Members would be asked to provide information on newly established free trade agreements that included coffee as a tradable good.

66. In response to a question from the Chair, the Head of Operations clarified that while most of the information was publicly available, some was not.

67. The delegate of Brazil raised a second point that required further clarification from the Secretariat, relating to the format in which the Secretariat intended to present the research. Referring to the section on expected deliverables in document [JC-12/25](#), he noted that the study aimed to disclose the “country situation of tariffs and non-tariffs barriers influencing the coffee sector”. He therefore asked how the situation of each country would be presented—whether in a general table format, as had traditionally been done in editions up to 2018, or in another format. Moreover, if a different approach was intended, he requested that the Secretariat indicate what that would be and whether the Secretariat planned to include any commentary or observations on the information provided.

68. The Head of Operations explained that the information would be presented in a neutral fashion in a table. She added that if any observation were made, it would be an analysis of the total of the taxes, without focusing on one particular country.

69. The Executive Director further clarified that the intention was to share the information with Members before publication to ensure that the Organization had correctly understood each situation. She also mentioned that the results received would be circulated prior to the Council. The initiative will be re-drafted taking into account the above points.

70. Addressing the methodology suggested by the Secretariat for the intended study, the delegate of Brazil noted that this methodology included the “[d]istribution of findings to Members to validate information and collect additional information on non-tariffs measures”. He recalled that Members would be given one month to respond and that additional consultation opportunities—such as phone calls and emails—would be considered to ensure a higher response rate. He also remarked that the use of generic terms in the methodology would likely lead to requests for further clarification. The delegate of Brazil also pointed out that Member States would seemingly be required to report non-tariff measures applied to them by other entities or countries, and questioned how the Secretariat intended to proceed on this matter, and specifically how it planned to compile the measures considered to be non-tariff barriers, given that perceptions may vary between countries. He emphasized that, in Brazil’s opinion, this was a very complex topic, and concluded by requesting further information and clarification from the Secretariat.

71. Acknowledging that the issue was indeed complex, the Head of Operations explained that exchanges had already taken place with the ITC on the matter, and that their information **covered** areas such as customs procedures, administrative practices, anti-dumping measures, sanitary measures, and technical barriers to trade. She noted that a survey involving all Members would not be

necessary, and that the Secretariat would be very cautious about what would be presented on this topic.

72. The delegate of Brazil stated that he did not accept the idea of another entity being responsible for determining, on behalf of countries, what constituted a non-tariff barrier. As an example, he questioned whether something like the EUDR would be considered a non-tariff barrier and asked whether the Organization intended to enter into that type of dialogue. Returning to the questions at hand, he expressed concern that the Secretariat had allocated itself two months to compile data, while only giving Member States one month to review and verify the information presented. He argued that the proposed one-month period for Member States was insufficient and emphasized that proper validation required consultations with foreign ministries and national entities responsible for monitoring tariffs. Therefore, he insisted that a minimum of two months be granted to Member States for reviewing the compiled data **and, if needed, further time should be granted.**

73. The delegate of Brazil raised further concerns regarding the methodology proposed for Initiative 2, particularly the concept of a country-neutral analysis and report to be distributed to Members. Despite the ICO's intention to remain neutral in its assessment and diagnosis, Brazil highlighted that it was not appropriate for an intergovernmental organization specialized in agricultural products, such as coffee, to grant itself the power to evaluate public policies. Instead, he stressed that national governments were fully capable of making appropriate judgments on their tariff policies and adopted trade controls. In Brazil's view, it would be sufficient for the Organization to simply provide information such as the tariffs levied between Member States without any assessment whatsoever. Member countries, he argued, were fully capable of interpreting such data and drawing their own conclusions.

74. Finally, the delegate of Brazil referred to a document circulated in 2022 which included observations about countries that were, in his view, inappropriate. He emphasized that by the time the new document was completed, numbered, and distributed, it would already be outdated. He stated that, if the Organization really wished to inform Member States and the global coffee chain about taxation affecting coffee trade worldwide, modern formats should be explored. By way of example, he suggested establishing a webpage with links to the sites of national entities responsible for tariffs and noted that this was the approach already being taken by private consulting firms that served the global coffee sector. The delegate of Brazil concluded by asking the Organization to consider a new way to deliver and configure an annual report on taxes and tariffs, and reiterated the view that non-tariff barriers should not be included unless a thorough and inclusive discussion among countries had taken place beforehand.

75. The Chair acknowledged that he mostly agreed with the points raised by the delegate of Brazil, noting that the exercise was indeed delicate and complex. He expressed his understanding that any outputs would be submitted to the Joint Committee for review before further publication. Speaking in his capacity as the delegate of the European Union, he confirmed that he too would feel reassured by such a procedure, given the concerns that had been expressed. He then invited the Secretariat to respond to the comments.

76. The Head of Operations described the feedback as very constructive and confirmed that the Secretariat would not assess tariffs but merely present them neutrally. She acknowledged that an evaluation had been made in a previous report, agreed that omitting a commentary on non-tariff barriers was a good suggestion, and proposed waiting to see if other Members wished to include such a commentary. She also noted the importance of finding the best way to present the information and said that, in the meantime, the Secretariat would rely on existing databases compiled by the WTO and the ITC. She further clarified that the Secretariat would investigate availability of Member-country websites for future reference.

77. At this point, 10 minutes past the scheduled end time, the Chair proposed extending the third meeting of the Joint Committee. The proposal was approved, although the delegates of Colombia, the Philippines and Nepal had to leave the meeting. The quorum was nevertheless maintained.

Initiative 3: Annual Market Report

78. The Head of Operations presented the proposed initiative related to the Annual Market Report, which was intended to document market developments during the current coffee year due to its remarkability and at the request of several Members. She mentioned that it would also include case studies—either completed or ongoing—on various market issues and that existing data would be incorporated. The report would be based on the Secretariat's internal capacity, though external support might be needed for editing and to ensure timely completion. Finally, she expressed hope that the report would also help Members to identify other specific reports they might want in future years, noting a significant interest in more targeted market reporting.

79. The delegate of Brazil sought clarification on who would be asked to support the initiative, noting that the circulated text did not specify the partners, researchers, organizations, research institutions or consultants involved. He stated that his delegation had repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of transparency regarding the criteria for selecting such partners. **The delegate of Brazil expressed concern regarding a perceived imbalance in the sources of knowledge utilized by the Organization in its research activities. He noted that there appeared to be a tendency to prioritize perspectives originating from historically dominant regions, and cautioned against what he described as a "colonial mindset," wherein only knowledge from former capitals is considered valid for inclusion in studies. He** emphasized that coffee was cultivated in tropical countries, which had many scientific institutions and a great number of scientific papers, researchers and scientific initiatives. However, in his nearly three years with the Organization, he stated that had not seen any university or research institute from coffee-producing countries involved as partners in studies.

80. The Head of Operations stated that external support was not being sought and that the entirety of the study would be executed by the Organization's staff under the supervision of the Executive Director. She added that, on a continuous and increasingly frequent basis, the Organization was engaging with the statistical contacts of its Member countries. The first step, she explained, would be to verify and cross-check findings with these contacts to ensure alignment with their observations.

Furthermore, the Head of Operations stated that the Organization aimed to strengthen its engagement with coffee traders and their associations, particularly those from producing countries. The goal was to share findings and invite observations not only from traders and their associations but also from affiliated researchers, institutions, or mandated organizations. She cited a recent visit to Brazil as an example, during which the Organization had agreed with the National Supply Company (*Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento* – CONAB) to maintain an ongoing exchange. A similar collaboration was being developed with the University of Minas Gerais. She reiterated that any involvement of consultants would be limited strictly to assisting with the final editing of the report and mentioned that the Organization had also started engaging with StoneX, a firm with relevant information, to provide feedback on the report's observations and interpretations. However, she stressed that the research itself would not be undertaken by external consultants.

81. The delegate of Brazil stated that it could not support Initiative 3 unless it incurred no cost to the Organization. He stated his country's opposition to the proposed allocation of £4,000 for hiring a consultant to assist with work that, in its view, merely summarized the Organization's own activities over the year. He recalled that the Organization had repeatedly positioned itself as the focal point and primary source of knowledge on coffee, and as such, should have the internal capacity to handle editing and finalize documents. He concluded by stating that, should the proposed costs be removed from the initiative, his delegation would be willing to support the report.

82. It was agreed that the stipulated funding would be deleted from Initiative 3.

Initiative 4 and Initiative 5

83. The Head of Operation presented Initiatives 4 and 5 concurrently. She explained that they were focused on three main areas: (i) the capacity of members to provide quality data; (ii) the expansion and enhancement of variables and dashboards for better accessibility; and (iii) georeferencing of coffee plots and their linkage with the certificate of origin.

84. The Head of Operations gave an overview of Members' varying degrees of compliance with their obligation to provide the ICO with statistics and clarified the reasons behind these discrepancies. She emphasized that the Organization tried to compensate for data gaps by partnering with other sources and institutions.

85. Turning to the improvement of data types, the Head of Operations said the current focus was on prices and exports, with some attention to imports. The Organization also aimed to gather more detailed data on four types of coffee, including soluble and decaffeinated. Work was ongoing to obtain more frequent stock information and broader supply data, which would require many new indicators and partnerships. Local pricing data would also be enhanced. On data accessibility, she said the Organization maintained reports, publications, and a database, and tracked income and registrations. To improve accessibility, better dashboards were needed—ideally developed in collaboration with Members—so that countries could see how their data would be used and feel less threatened by

sharing it. She also proposed developing a new Annual Market Report and holding a paid event on the economics of coffee, starting on a small scale in the next coffee year.

86. The Head of Operations noted that while the same statistical team remained in place, both statisticians and economists now collaborated on reviews and data analysis. The upcoming budget for discussion would allocate additional resources to statistics.

87. In terms of capacity building, the Head of Operations mentioned that **one training workshop** had already been held in Asia, and similar events were being planned for Africa (in collaboration with the Inter-African Coffee Organization (IACO)) and Honduras (during the upcoming Session of the International Coffee Council). These workshops would aim not only to provide training but also to establish a “community of practice” among Members, facilitating continuous contact and peer learning on how to collect and share statistics.

88. In response to a query from the Chair, the Head of Operations clarified that the costs involved were related to the use of internal staff. No consultants would be engaged, and the only non-staff expenses—already accounted for in the budget of the Programme of Activities—would pertain to travel and workshops.

89. The delegate of Brazil recalled that, at the second meeting of the Joint Committee, his delegation had opposed expanding the scope of the statistical data requested from exporting Members, arguing that the Secretariat should take action to ensure that as many producing countries as possible start providing the basic information required. He emphasized that this was a matter of great interest to both the Brazilian coffee sector and the Brazilian Government.

90. The delegate of Brazil also observed that the Secretariat lacked speed and agility on distribution of the basic information. He argued the Organization should pause and address the basics before introducing additional demands. Adding new data requirements, he warned, would simply result in some countries continuing to provide information, while others remain absent from the effort altogether. The delegate of Brazil also described the dissatisfaction of the Brazilian coffee chain and the Brazilian government with the service provided by the Secretariat.

91. Regarding Initiative 4, the delegate of Brazil stated that his country had prepared a whole set of proposed amendments. He offered two options: either go through the initiative line by line to make the necessary corrections during the current meeting, or schedule a new meeting of the Joint Committee focused specifically on Initiative 4.

92. The Head of Operations acknowledged that the concerns raised were valid and that the level of participation warranted serious attention. She emphasized that the Organization’s primary efforts were indeed focused on increasing involvement, providing training, and maintaining continuous engagement with Member countries.

93. Regarding the issue of expanding data requirements, the Head of Operations clarified that the Organization was not currently demanding additional information from producers. For example, some of the new data being considered included temperature data, which did not necessarily impose new obligations on producing countries. She stressed that the Organization was not implying that Members should provide more information at this stage. She then affirmed her agreement that priority should be given to strengthening statistical capacity and improving data collection methods, especially in collaboration with producing countries and other Members. The Head of Operations invited the Brazilian delegation to submit their suggested amendments via email and expressed her openness to organizing a bilateral meeting to further improve the document.

94. In response to a request for clarification from the Chair, the Head of Operations confirmed that the Organization's intention was not to request additional information or data from Members, but rather to focus on existing requirements and to strengthen capacities where needed. She added, however, that there were some exceptions, such as for soluble and decaffeinated coffee, where the Organization was trying to gain a deeper understanding. Nonetheless, she clarified that this did not involve requesting more data directly from producers.

95. The delegate of Brazil confirmed that his country would be glad to send the list of suggested changes, but clarified that Brazil could not join any consensus or support any proposal that aimed to introduce new data requirements before the Organization achieved a satisfactory level of compliance with the basic information already mandated by the statistical rules. **The delegate of Brazil noted that stakeholders from both the Brazilian coffee sector and the Brazilian Government – through public and private channels – had conveyed to ICO their dissatisfaction with the services currently provided by the Organization. He emphasized that substantial improvements remain necessary before any consideration may be given to expanding the scope of the Organization's work. He further remarked the understanding of the Brazilian delegation that only once a satisfactory level of excellence is achieved in existing activities should the incorporation of new parameters or initiatives be revisited.** He also referenced recent meetings of the International Sugar Organization and International Grains Council, highlighting the statistical excellence of both bodies and emphasizing that this was the standard to which the ICO should aspire. With reference to the Head of Operations' suggestion, he recommended holding collective discussions involving all countries rather than bilateral meetings, as **the objective of** access to reliable coffee statistics was a shared need across all producers and importers, not just Brazil.

96. Noting the limited time remaining, the Chair opened the floor for questions and comments on Initiative 5.

97. To avoid a prolonged debate, the delegate of Brazil stated that Initiative 5 was not endorsed by the Brazilian Government for the same reasons already outlined in relation to Initiative 4. He noted that Initiative 5 represented an even greater undertaking – one which, in Brazil's view, the Organization currently lacked the capacity to manage effectively. He then suggested that a detailed discussion on each of the proposed initiatives was necessary and proposed that the Secretariat convene a new meeting of the Joint Committee, emphasizing that the positions of the Member governments were of

significant importance and should guide the Organization's actions. He stressed that for the Organization to properly represent and act on behalf of its Member States, their views must be fully understood and incorporated. Therefore, he formally requested that discussion of Initiative 5—on which Brazil was prepared to provide more detailed reasoning for its opposition—be deferred to an additional meeting.

98. The delegate of Brazil commended the Secretariat for the actions taken for the third meeting of the Joint Committee, noting that it was the first instance in three years where Members were discussing studies and initiatives with the Secretariat. He noted that, prior to the third meeting, Members used to simply receive a package of information without any regard for their demands. That said, given the importance of the topics in question, he suggested that it would be preferable to conclude the current meeting and to convene a new meeting of the Joint Committee that would begin with the discussion of Initiative 5.

99. The Chair provided a recap of the meeting proceedings, highlighting that there had been no agreement or consensus on the proposed initiatives. He provided the following summary:

- (a) **Initiative 1** needed clarification in light of the decisions taken in 2010.
- (b) **Initiative 2** would need to be redefined to address Brazil's concerns.
- (c) **Initiative 3** was broadly acceptable, but not approved unless it incurred no additional cost beyond current staff resources.
- (d) **Initiative 4** remained on hold and required clarity on whether it entailed requesting further information from Members.
- (e) **Initiative 5** was not discussed in detail and would depend on written comments from Members.

100. The Chair confirmed that an additional meeting of the Joint Committee would be held before the 140th Session of the International Coffee Council in Honduras. In order to streamline future meetings and enable a real dialogue between all Members, he requested that all Members present their comments in writing in advance.

101. The delegate of Brazil requested that the Joint Committee meeting not be postponed until right before the Council in Honduras. He emphasized that such last-minute meetings had proven ineffective in the past, as positions had to be hastily provided. Instead, he called for the next Joint Committee meeting to take place well ahead of the Council session, or alternatively, after the Council. He clarified that Brazil considered discussions on initiatives 1 through 4 to be concluded, with some not receiving Brazil's endorsement and others requiring changes. He confirmed that Brazil would provide written comments on initiatives 5, 6, and 7, and would be open to participating in a follow-up meeting should the Committee decide to examine those items further. However, if no further meeting was held, Brazil would consider the current discussions closed for the time being.

102. The Chair acknowledged Brazil's position and agreed that the following meeting of the Joint Committee should not be held immediately before the Council. He closed the meeting by thanking all delegates and the Secretariat.