

UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

# **WORKING METHODS AND RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION**

*Dhaka Session – April 2017*

## **RULES AND WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

### **SUMMARY OF THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

**April 2010**

Note: It was agreed at the Copenhagen session (October 1994) that a summary of the working methods of the Association should be sent to all at each session. This summary reflects the changes to the Rules of the Association agreed at Bangkok in April 2010.

#### **TYPES OF BUSINESS**

1. Under Rule 21 of the Association, the Agenda setting out the business of the Association for a session or meeting is proposed by the Executive Committee. It is provisionally agreed by the plenary at the conclusion of the preceding session or meeting and is confirmed at the beginning of the session.

2. The Association's business is of five types:

- (a) General debates on subjects
- (b) Communications by Members
- (c) Other presentations
- (d) Questionnaires
- (e) Reports based on analysis of the responses to a Questionnaire

#### **GENERAL DEBATES ON SUBJECTS**

3. At the end of each session or meeting, the Executive Committee will normally propose the inclusion in the orders of the day for the next session or meeting a debate on a particular subject. That subject will relate to the law or practice of parliament, the working practices of parliamentary structures, institutions and administrations, or any other subject of common interest. The aim of the debate is to allow exchange of experience between members.

4. Each debate is introduced by a principal speaker who also acts as a moderator of the discussion. The principal speaker's presentation is followed by a general debate, in the course of which any member or substitute (under Rule 6) is invited to make a contribution. Such contributions are preferably submitted in writing in advance; in which case it may be sent before the opening of the session or meeting in the official languages of the Association, to one or other of the Joint Secretaries.

5. At the end of the various interventions which must be short, a general discussion may be started. That is ended by the final response of the main speaker for that debate.

6. The minutes of these general debates are published in the Review of the Association, "Constitutional and Parliamentary Information".

#### **COMMUNICATIONS**

7. The draft Agenda for each session makes provision for one or more Communications from members. These are short presentations by members on issues of interest to them, particularly presentations on recent developments in their own Parliament. They may be followed by question and answer sessions. The Communications to be presented are agreed by the Association, on proposal from the Executive Committee following suggestions from

members. A summary of the presentation is prepared for inclusion in the minutes of the session and publication in “Constitutional and Parliamentary Information”.

### **OTHER PRESENTATIONS**

8. Longer presentations may also take place in other circumstances. Two common occasions are:

(a) the presentation by the host Secretaries General, at the beginning of each session for which there is a host, on the parliamentary system of the host country, and

(b) presentations by officers of the Inter-Parliamentary Union under Rule 13 of the Association.

### **QUESTIONNAIRES AND REPORTS**

9. The Association gathers and analyses information from its members on topics of general interest through Questionnaires.

10. A member wishing to invite responses to a Questionnaire first needs the agreement of the Executive Committee and the Association that the topic in question is suitable for a Questionnaire.

11. When a subject has been agreed, the member responsible produces a draft Questionnaire, which is also subject to the amendment and agreement of the Executive Committee and the Association.

12. Soon after it has been agreed, the Questionnaire is sent by the Joint Secretaries to every member Chamber. Each Secretary General sends a reply to the member responsible, who analyses the returns and presents their findings to the Association by way of a Communication. This is printed in “Constitutional and Parliamentary Information”. The Executive Committee may also propose:

(a) a general debate on the results of a Questionnaire.

(b) the adoption by the Association of a Report based on analysis of the responses to the Questionnaire. Such a Report is prepared in draft by the member responsible for the Questionnaire, is circulated to all members, and is debated and amended at the next session. The Report as amended is then finally agreed by the Association.

### **TABLING OF SUBJECTS**

13. Any member may propose subjects for the Association’s Agenda. The proposal may be tabled by being given to the President of the Association or to one of the two Joint Secretaries. The member should indicate whether it is proposed for consideration as a subject for a Questionnaire, for general debate, as a Communication or as another presentation.

14. If it is for a Questionnaire, the proposal should be tabled before the last day of a session. It will then be considered by the Executive Committee. If it is approved by the Committee, consideration of a draft Questionnaire on the subject will then be included in the draft Agenda for the next session, which is provisionally agreed by the plenary at the end of the sitting on

the last day of the session. If it is for general debate, the proposal should normally be tabled before the last day of the previous session, as for a Questionnaire. In exceptional circumstances, however, a proposal for a general debate may be tabled later than this, but before the first meeting of the Executive Committee at the session in question.

15. If it is for discussion as a Communication or as another presentation, it should be tabled before the beginning of the session (by fax or e-mail to one of the two Joint Secretaries) or, in exceptional circumstances, on the first day of the session. Those proposals received before the first meeting of the Executive Committee will be considered at that meeting and, if approved, submitted to the plenary with the Agenda for the session. Any proposals received later than this will be considered by the Executive Committee if there is an opportunity to do so, and, if approved, submitted to the plenary for inclusion in the Agenda for one of the later days of the session.

## **RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION**

**April 2010**

**Based on the Rules of September 1971 (as amended October 1973, April 1974, September 1977, September 1984, October 1999, October 2000, April 2001, April 2003, October 2003, April 2004, May 2007 and April 2010)**

### **Aims**

#### **Rule 1**

The Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, is a consultative organism of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in accordance with Section VIII, Article 27 of the Statutes of the Union. It aims:

- to facilitate personal contacts between its members;
- in conjunction with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to co-operate with those Parliaments which request legal and technical assistance and support;
- to study the law, practice and procedure of Parliament;
- to propose measures for improving the working methods of different Parliaments;
- to secure co-operation between the services of different Parliaments.

#### **Rule 2**

Each member of the Association shall furnish information about the law, practice, procedure, working methods and organisation of his own Parliament and the administration of the parliamentary services, for any inquiry by the Association or at the request of any other member.

### **Composition**

#### **Rule 3**

(1) The Association shall consist of Secretaries General and Deputy Secretaries General of national Parliaments, whether or not such Parliaments are affiliated to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and of any other Parliaments or Assemblies that are affiliated to the Inter-Parliamentary Union as full members.

(2) Secretaries General and Deputy Secretaries General of international parliamentary assemblies may be admitted as associate members.

(3) Where a Secretary General or Deputy Secretary General is unable to take part directly and personally in the work of the Association, the Association may admit as a member a high officer of that Assembly who will act under the authority of the Secretary General.

#### **Rule 4**

By a Secretary General of a parliamentary assembly is meant a person who is in charge of the parliamentary services.

#### **Rule 5**

(1) The Association shall decide upon applications for membership on a report from the Executive Committee.

(2) The procedure set out in sub-paragraph (1) will apply to suspension of members.

**Rule 6**

- (1) If a member is unable to attend a session, meeting or sitting of the Association, he/she may nominate as a substitute another member of his/her parliamentary staff.
- (2) Any such nomination shall be communicated to the President of the Association in writing not later than the opening of a sitting to which it applies. It shall remain valid for that session or meeting only.

**Rule 7**

No Assembly may be represented by more than two members at any one time.

**Rule 8**

The Association may confer honorary membership upon a former member of the Association who has rendered it important services at the proposal of the Executive Committee, either of its own motion or at the request of any member.

**Rule 9**

The Association may, taking into account the principles and conditions set out in the Statute of the IPU, at the proposal of the Executive Committee admit observers by reason of their particular status or technical expertise.

**Rule 10**

- (1) When the affiliation of a Parliament to the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been suspended because it is in arrears in the payment of its contribution to the Union, a member from that Parliament may continue to be a member of the Association.
- (2) When the affiliation of a Parliament to the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been suspended because the Parliament has ceased to function, the Executive Committee shall report to the Association at the earliest opportunity on the eligibility of any member from that Parliament to remain a member of the Association.

**Sessions****Rule 11**

- (1) In every year the Association shall meet in session concurrently with the Assemblies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and at the same place.
- (2) It may also meet otherwise, concurrently with meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Council of the IPU, and at the same place.
- (3) The Association may also hold exceptional meetings in co-operation with the IPU.

**Rule 12**

The President shall convene each session or meeting of the Association in a circular which shall set out the draft Agenda for the session or meeting. The draft Agenda shall set out the proposed order and timing of contributions and other matters.

**Rule 13**

A representative of the Union shall be heard if he/she so wishes at full sessions and other meetings of the Association.

## **Executive Committee and Bureau**

### **Rule 14**

The Executive Committee shall consist of

- eleven elected members: the President of the Association, the two Vice-Presidents, and eight other members who shall be elected by the Association; and
- former Presidents who are members or honorary members of the Association.

All the elected members of the Executive Committee must belong to different Parliaments.

### **Rule 15**

The Bureau shall consist of the President, of the Vice-Presidents, and two joint secretaries who shall be appointed by the President.

### **Rule 16**

When Rule 10(2) applies, a member from that Parliament cannot be a candidate for election to any post on the Executive Committee. If at the time of the suspension a member from that Parliament is a member of the Executive Committee, his membership of the Executive Committee shall cease forthwith and the post become vacant.

### **Rule 17**

(1) Any elected member of the Executive Committee who is not present at any meetings of the Executive Committee during two successive sessions of the Association under Rule 11 (1) will be considered to have vacated his/her seat from the start of the next session or meeting unless the Executive Committee decides otherwise. A list of those attending shall be prepared at each sitting of the Executive Committee.

(2) The President shall remind in writing any elected member of the Executive Committee who is not present at any meetings of the Executive Committee during a session of the Association under Rule 11 (1) of the provisions of paragraph (1) of this Rule, unless the President has received apologies from the elected member and these apologies have been accepted by the Executive Committee. Where apologies have been received and accepted, the relevant session of the Association shall not be counted for the purposes of paragraph 1 of this Rule.

### **Rule 18**

(1) Candidates for election to the Executive Committee must be nominated in writing in a set form by a time to be laid down by the Executive Committee. Such nominations must be accompanied by a formal acceptance by the candidate.

(2) Members under the provisions of rule 3(3), associate members and observers shall not stand for election.

(3) No member shall be a candidate for election to an office which they have occupied at any time during the preceding two years, or for election as President if they have ever previously served as President.

(4) No member shall be a candidate for election as President if another member from the same nation has served as President at any time during the preceding five years.

(5) No member shall be a candidate for election as Vice-President if another member from the same nation has served as President or Vice-President at any time during the preceding two years.

(6) No member shall be a candidate for election as ordinary member if other members from the same nation have served as elected members of any category for six or more of the preceding eight years.

(7) The members of the Executive Committee shall be elected for a period of three years.

(8) Elections will take place at the sessions held under Rule 11(1).

(9) At the opening of a session, the Association shall decide on a report from the Executive Committee upon the number and timing of elections to be held at that session, including any consequential elections that may be anticipated. Elections may stand postponed to a future session.

(10) No more than two members of the bureau shall be elected at a single session.

(11) Terms of office shall take effect from the day after the close of the session at which elections take place and shall terminate at the close of the session at which new elections take place.

### **Rule 19**

(1) If a vacancy occurs during the term of office of a member of the Executive Committee, an election to fill the vacancy for a new full term of office shall be held.

(2) If the President is absent or a vacancy occurs in the office of President, the duties of President shall be carried out temporarily by the earlier elected Vice-President. Otherwise, the duties will be carried out by one of the other members of the Executive Committee, chosen on the same basis. In case of equality of seniority of election, the oldest member will take precedence.

### **Rule 20**

Each elected member of the Executive Committee shall have a vote. If the votes are equal, the President shall have a second, casting vote.

### **Rule 21**

The Executive Committee shall:

(a) initiate subjects of study, consider proposals for Questionnaires and draft Questionnaires and appoint Rapporteurs;

(b) decide about specific topics to be presented and discussed in the course of the forthcoming sessions or meetings;

(c) propose the agenda for sessions or other meetings of the Association;

(d) take any necessary steps to ensure the execution of the Association's decisions;

(e) approve the draft annual budget for the forthcoming year, and present it to the Association for its endorsement; and take note of the audited accounts for the previous year;

(f) decide the place and date of exceptional meetings referred to in Rule 11(3);

(g) consider and submit to the Association proposals to amend the Rules of the Association;

(h) propose arrangements for the holding of elections in accordance with Rule 18; and

(i) report on issues relating to membership of the Association in accordance with Rules 5, 8 and 10.

### **Rule 22**

(1) The Executive Committee shall meet on being convened by the President. The Committee shall meet at least twice at the time of each session or meeting of the Association.

(2) The Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union or his representative may be heard at meetings of the Executive Committee at his request.



(3) The Executive Committee may also make decisions by way of meetings held using electronic means of Communication.

### **Decisions and methods of voting of the Association**

#### **Rule 23**

Only decisions taken at a session or other meeting of the Association shall bind the Association. Apart from in exceptional circumstances the Association shall not adopt a Report and authorise its publication until after it has been considered at at least one session.

#### **Rule 24**

- (1) Observers and Associate Members shall not take part in votes or in elections.
- (2) Observers may speak only with the permission of the President.

#### **Rule 25**

The majority required to adopt any proposal submitted to the Association shall be a majority of votes cast.

#### **Rule 26**

The President shall have a vote but no casting vote. If the votes are equal, the proposal shall not be carried.

### **Minutes and publications**

#### **Rule 27**

The minutes of sessions of the Association shall be kept in the official languages of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and made available to members of the Association by the Joint Secretaries.

#### **Rule 28**

(1) The Association shall be responsible for the publication and distribution of the Review "Constitutional and Parliamentary Information" in the official languages of the IPU.

(2) The following shall be published in "Constitutional and Parliamentary Information":

- the consolidated text of the Rules of the Association when amendments to the Rules of the Association have been adopted by the Association;
- the consolidated text of the Working Methods when changes to the Working Methods have been adopted by the Association;
- Reports adopted by the Association;
- the minutes of meetings of the Association;
- Communications and contributions presented at meetings, where these have been provided in the two official languages of the IPU;

as well as, on the decision of the President, whether or not following a proposal from a member:

- new or revised Constitutions;
- other constitutional or parliamentary information of interest to members of the Association.

(3) The Association shall also ensure the distribution and publication of information on its Internet site.

## **Languages**

### **Rule 29**

(1) The languages used at meetings of the Association or the Executive Committee shall be the official languages of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

(2) All Questionnaires, Reports and other documents of the Association shall be drawn up in the official languages of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

(3) If a member cannot use one of these languages, he/she may use an interpreter at his/her own cost who shall interpret into one of the official languages.

## **Budget**

### **Rule 30**

(1) The President shall submit to the Executive Committee of the Association the draft budget for the forthcoming year which he/she has prepared in consultation with the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and after having been heard by the Executive Committee of the Union if the budget estimates of the Association do not correspond to those proposed by the Secretary General of the Union.

(2) The budget shall be submitted for ratification at the earliest opportunity.

(3) Each Chamber represented in the Association shall contribute annually to the budget of the Association a sum to be fixed by the Association.

(4) Observers and Associate members shall pay a contribution equal to half of the least expensive category of subscription of members.

(5) Unless the Executive Committee proposes otherwise and the Association agrees, the right to vote in the Association and the rights to be a member of and to stand for election to the Executive Committee will be suspended if there is a delay of three years or more in the payment of subscriptions.

## **Amendments of the Rules of the Association**

### **Rule 31**

(1) Any member may propose an amendment to the Rules of the Association. A proposal to amend the Rules of the Association shall be considered by the Executive Committee before being submitted to a vote by the Association.

(2) The members of the Association may be informed by the President of any proposals to amend the rules which are sent to the Executive Committee before such proposals are discussed by the Executive Committee.

## **HONORARY MEMBERSHIP**

At its session in Mexico in 2004 the ASGP agreed the following guidelines (amended in Bangkok in 2010) for conferring honorary membership of the Association:

1. As indicated by rule 8, honorary membership of the Association will only be conferred on a former member of the Association, or a former joint secretary of the Association.
2. In accordance with rule 8, the Executive Committee, in proposing the conferral of honorary membership on a former member of the Association, will have regard to:
  - Active participation in the activities of the Association, including the preparation of Questionnaires and Reports, moderating general debates, or presenting Communications or other presentations;
  - Regular attendance at Association meetings and participation in discussion of draft Questionnaires and Reports, general debates, topical discussions or Communications or other presentations;
  - Active participation, as an elected Member of the Executive Committee or a joint secretary, in the deliberations of the Bureau or the Committee; or
  - Other considerations that the Executive Committee believes form a valid basis for consideration by the Association for the conferral of honorary membership of the Association.
3. Formal proposals for honorary membership for former members should be forwarded to one of the joint secretaries, outlining the former member's history in relation to all of the matters outlined in paragraph 2, and including a statement confirming that the former member is content to be accepted as an honorary member.