



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Tenth meeting
Provisional agenda item 2**

**EBPDC10/6
4 December 2003**

Proposed resolutions: streamlining of procedures

Report on practice in other bodies of the United Nations system

1. At its ninth meeting, the Programme Development Committee of the Executive Board discussed a paper outlining existing rules and previous arrangements pertaining to the time frame for considering resolutions at the Health Assembly.¹
2. It was felt that firm recommendations would be premature at that stage and the Committee requested a report on practices in governing bodies in other organizations of the United Nations system.²
3. The Board subsequently adopted resolution EB112.R1 which amended some of its Rules of Procedure. The revised Rules 8 and 9 regarding the agenda of the Board, while not specifically addressing resolutions, clearly indicate that Member States are entitled to propose items for the agenda.
4. The Annex outlines procedures for tabling of resolutions of three specialized agencies (ILO, FAO and UNESCO), and the United Nations General Assembly.
5. Most of the Rules of Procedure of the governing bodies of other organizations of the United Nations system have specific provisions on establishment of the agenda and on the link between resolutions and agenda items. The governing body of the organization that has the possibility of a seven-day period between inclusion of an item and discussion of it (UNESCO) has a three-week meeting. The Health Assemblies that last one week only (non-budget years) would be unable to accommodate such a procedure.
6. The few provisions that are specifically related to the consideration or reconsideration of resolutions are largely the same type of provision as for WHO's governing bodies. The International Labour Conference has rules similar to those of the Health Assembly on submission of resolutions related to items on the agenda (see Standing Orders, Article 15). It also has a special procedure for submission of resolutions unrelated to an item on the agenda (see Standing Orders, Article 17). The Resolutions Committee meets during the Conference and both decides on the inclusion of, and prioritizes, such resolutions (paragraphs 4 and 5). Inclusion of such a resolution during the session is

¹ Document EB111/26.

² Document EBPDC9/3.

subject to a time frame of 15 days before the opening of the Conference (paragraph 1(1)). WHO does not have a mechanism for dealing with resolutions unrelated to agenda items.

7. In summary, with the possible exception of ILO, the Rules of Procedure of governing bodies of other organizations of the United Nations system are similar to those of WHO, with most specifying a period between receipt by members or delegates of a proposed resolution in the appropriate languages and discussion of the resolution. WHO differs from the others in that the duration of its Health Assembly is generally shorter, thereby providing less scope for dealing with newly introduced resolutions.

ANNEX

**PROCEDURES FOR TABLING OF RESOLUTIONS IN
OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

International Labour Organization. The International Labour Conference meets annually in a session of approximately three weeks. Article 15, Motions, resolutions and amendments, paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6, and Article 17, Resolutions relating to matters not included in an item placed on the agenda, paragraphs 1 to 5 of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference apply to tabling of resolutions.

Article 15. Motions, resolutions and amendments

3. *All resolutions and amendments other than motions as to procedure must be submitted in writing in one of the official languages or in Spanish.*

4. (1) *No resolution relating to an item on the agenda shall, unless it be a motion as to procedure, be moved at any sitting of the Conference unless a copy has been handed in to the Secretariat of the Conference at least two days previously.*

(2) *Any resolution thus handed in shall be translated and circulated by the Secretariat not later than the day following that on which it was received.*

5. *Resolutions relating to matters not included in the agenda of the Conference shall be subject, in addition to the applicable provisions of this article, to the special rules set forth in article 17.*

6. *Amendments to a resolution may be moved without previous notice if a copy of the text of the amendment is handed in to the Secretariat of the Conference before the amendment is moved.*

Article 17. Resolutions relating to matters not included in an item placed on the agenda

1. (1) *... no resolution relating to a matter not included in an item placed on the agenda by the Conference or the Governing Body shall be moved at the session of the Conference preceding the beginning of biennial financial period. Such resolutions may be moved at other sessions of the Conference provided that a copy of resolution has been deposited with the Director-General of the International Labour Office at least 15 days before the opening of the session of the Conference, by a delegate to the Conference.*

(2) *Copies of all resolutions shall be available to delegates at the International Labour Office not more than 48 hours after the expiry of the time-limit laid down in the preceding subparagraph. Provided that the Director-General may decide to withhold circulation of the text of a particular resolution pending consultation of the Officers of the Governing Body.*

(3) *When circulation of a particular resolution has been withheld pending consultation of the Officers of the Governing Body, that resolution shall, unless the Officers decide unanimously to the contrary, be available to delegates not later than the date fixed for the opening of the session of the Conference.*

2. *The President may, with the approval of the three Vice-Presidents, permit a resolution relating to a matter not included in an item placed on the agenda by the Conference or the Governing Body to be moved, although it would not be otherwise receivable under paragraph 1(1), if it relates either to urgent matters or to matters of an entirely formal nature. If permission is given, the Officers shall also make a recommendation to the Conference as to the manner in which the said resolution is to be considered before submission to the Conference.*

3. *Subject to paragraph 2 above, all resolutions relating to matters not included in an item placed on the agenda by the Conference or the Governing Body shall be referred by the Conference for report to a Resolutions Committee unless the Conference, on the recommendation of the Selection Committee, decides that a particular resolution relates to a matter for which another committee is competent and refers it to that other committee.*

4. *The Resolutions Committee shall consider in respect of each resolution whether it satisfies the conditions of receivability set forth in paragraph 1.*

5. *The Resolutions Committee shall determine the order in which resolutions which have been declared receivable shall be examined, ...*

Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The Conference meets every two years and lasts generally two weeks. The following General Rules of the Organization apply.

Rule XI: Proposals and Amendments

1. *Proposals relating to an item on the agenda shall be introduced in or referred to the commission or committee to which the relevant item has been allocated, except where the item concerned is to be considered at plenary meetings without prior referral to a commission or committee.*

2. *Proposals and amendments shall be introduced in writing and handed to the Secretary-General of the Conference, who shall arrange for their circulation as Conference documents.*

3. *Except as may be decided otherwise by the Conference at a plenary meeting or by a commission or committee, proposals shall not be put to the vote unless copies thereof have been circulated at least twenty-four hours before the vote. The Chairman of the Conference or of the commission or committee concerned may permit voting on amendments even though these amendments have not been circulated or have been circulated less than twenty-four hours before the vote.*

4. *A proposal may be withdrawn at any time before voting on it has commenced, provided that the proposal has not been amended. A proposal which has thus been withdrawn may be reintroduced by any member.*

Rule XII: Quorum and Voting Arrangements at Meetings of Conference and Council

26. *When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same session unless the Conference or Council so decides. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the motion, after which it shall be immediately put to the vote.*

UNESCO General Conference. The Conference is held every two years in a session lasting three weeks. The agenda is set by the Executive Board; Members States are able to add items up to six weeks before the opening. During the session, Rule 15 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference applies. The possibility of deferral of discussion for seven days after inclusion should be noted.

Rule 15. Amendments, deletions and new items

1. *During a session of the General Conference, items may be amended or may be deleted from the agenda by a majority of the Members present and voting.*
2. *New items of an important and urgent character may be added to the agenda by approval of a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting; but such new items shall be referred to the General Committee of the Conference for its report, in accordance with Rule 42, paragraph 1(c), before the vote is taken. The discussion of any new item so added to the agenda shall, at the request of any Member State or Associate Member, be deferred for a period not exceeding seven days after its inclusion in the agenda.*

Rule 79. General provisions

1. *Draft resolutions, including amendments to previously submitted draft resolutions, shall be transmitted in writing to the Director-General, who shall circulate copies to delegations.*
2. *As a general rule, no draft resolution shall be discussed or put to the vote unless copies of it have been circulated in the working languages to all delegations at least twenty-four hours before the opening of the meeting.*
3. *Notwithstanding the provisions of the foregoing paragraphs, the President may permit the discussion and consideration, without previous circulation of copies, of motions and amendments concerning draft resolutions that have already been circulated.*
4. *When, in the judgement of the Chairman of the Executive Board, any resolution or amendment under consideration in any committee, commission or other subsidiary organ of the Conference is of particular importance either because of the new undertaking that it proposes or because of its budgetary implications, he may, after consultation with the General Committee of the Conference, request that the Board be given an opportunity to communicate its views to the appropriate organ. On such request being made, the discussion of the matter shall be postponed for such time, not exceeding forty-eight hours, as the Board may require for this purpose.*

Rule 80. Admissibility criteria for draft resolutions relating to the Draft Programme and Budget

1. *Draft resolutions proposing the adoption by the General Conference of amendments to the Draft Programme and Budget may only relate to those parts of the Draft Programme and Budget which are concerned with the policies and the main lines of work of the Organization and which require decisions of the General Conference, including the appropriation resolution and the other proposed resolutions in the Draft Programme and Budget. Specific criteria may be elaborated by the Executive Board, subject to approval by the General Conference.*

2. Draft resolutions covered by paragraph 1 of this rule shall be submitted in writing and shall reach the Director-General at least 45 days before the opening of the session of the General Conference; the Director-General shall communicate them, with such notes as he may deem appropriate, to Member States and Associate Members at least 20 days before the opening of the session.

3. Draft resolutions which do not satisfy the requirements laid down in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this rule, and those proposing activities which are purely national in scope or could be financed under the Participation Programme, shall not be admissible.

Rule 81. Examination of admissibility of draft resolutions relating to the Draft Programme and Budget

The Director-General shall examine draft resolutions relating to the Draft Programme and Budget to determine admissibility, and the draft resolutions he considers inadmissible shall not be translated or distributed. The sponsors of these draft resolutions may submit an appeal to the General Conference through its Legal Committee. To consider these appeals the Legal Committee may be convened as soon as necessary.

UNESCO Executive Board. The Board meets, as a general rule, twice a year. Sessions last several weeks.

Rule 22. Time-limits for distribution of documents

1. *The proposed programme and budget to be submitted to the General Conference in its working languages shall be distributed to Members of the Executive Board at least 30 days before the opening of the session of the Board at which it is to be considered.*

2. *Documents relating to items on the provisional agenda of each session of the Board shall normally be distributed to its Members in the working languages of the Board at least 30 days before the opening of the session. Exceptions to this Rule may be made only if the permission of the Chairman has been previously obtained.*

3. *Unless the Board decides otherwise, it shall not discuss any items, except the reports of commissions and committees, until at least 48 hours after the distribution of the relevant documents in its working languages to Members present.*

Rule 34. Texts of proposals

At the request of any Member, supported by two other Members, discussion of any substantive motion, resolution or amendment shall be suspended until the text is circulated in the working languages to all Members present.

United Nations General Assembly. The General Assembly meets annually in regular session, which lasts more than three months. The provisional agenda is communicated to Members of the United Nations at least 60 days before the opening of the session and Member States may propose additional items of an important or urgent character until 30 days before the opening of a regular session. For special sessions, the period is until four days before the opening. Rules 20-24 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly apply in session.

Rule 20. Any item proposed for inclusion in the agenda shall be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum and, if possible, by basic documents or by a draft resolution.

Rule 21. At each session the provisional agenda and the supplementary list, together with the report of the General Committee thereon, shall be submitted to the General Assembly for approval as soon as possible after the opening of the session.

Rule 22. Items on the agenda may be amended or deleted by the General Assembly by a majority of the members present and voting.

Rule 23. Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.

Rule 24. No proposal for a modification of the allocation of expenses for the time being in force shall be placed on the agenda unless it has been communicated to the Members of the United Nations at least ninety days before the opening of the session.

Rule 81 [123]. When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same session unless the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, so decides. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the motion, after which it shall be immediately put to the vote.

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