

**ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES GENERAL
OF PARLIAMENTS**

Working Methods and Rules of the Association

**Geneva
September 2004**

SUMMARY OF THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSOCIATION

April 2004

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 Marrakech in March 2002.*

TYPES OF BUSINESS

1. Under Rule 21 of the Association, the Agenda setting out the business of the Association for a session or meeting 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) Proceedings on Reports
 - (b) General debates on subjects decided by the Executive Committee
 - (c) Topical discussions under the "supplementary item" procedure
 - (d) "Communications" by Members
 - (e) Other presentations

REPORTS

3. Reports are prepared by a Rapporteur on the basis of information supplied by members and are agreed by the Association as a whole; the process takes place over two sessions.
4. When a subject has been agreed by the Executive Committee and confirmed by the Association as being suitable for a report, a general Debate on the subject is included in the agenda for the following session. The Rapporteur prepares an introductory note on the topic, together with a short draft questionnaire. These are circulated to all Members before the general debate, which is introduced by a speech from the Rapporteur. Other Members contribute to the debate, based on experience in their own Parliament. At the conclusion of the debate, the text of a questionnaire is agreed. (During discussion on the questionnaire the President may propose that the drafting of all or part of the questionnaire be delegated to a drafting Committee.)
5. After the session, the questionnaire is sent by the Joint Secretaries to every member Chamber. Each Secretary General sends a reply to the Rapporteur, who then prepares a Draft Report. This 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.
6. The final Report, as amended, is printed in the Association's journal "Constitutional and Parliamentary Information".

GENERAL DEBATES ON TOPICS DECIDED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

7. 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. It is normally divided into several round table debates and usually takes up an entire day.

Each round table 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.

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 round table.

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

TOPICAL DISCUSSION UNDER THE "SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM" PROCEDURE

8. The draft Agenda for each session includes provision for a Topical Discussion on a "supplementary item"; the subject for the discussion is agreed by the Association early in the session, on a proposal from the Executive Committee following suggestions from Members. Such a Discussion is introduced by a speech from the Member who has proposed the subject, who may also submit a written introductory note. A summary of the Discussion is prepared for inclusion in the minutes of the session and publication in the Association's journal "Constitutional and Parliamentary Information".

COMMUNICATIONS

9. 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 the Association's journal "Constitutional and Parliamentary information".

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

10. 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, on the parliamentary system of the host country, and
- (b) presentations by officers of the Interparliamentary Union under Rule 13 of the Association.

TABLING OF SUBJECTS

11. 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 Report, for discussion as the "supplementary item", or as a Communication.

12. If it is for a Report, 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, a Debate 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.

13. If it is for Discussion as the "supplementary item" or as a "Communication", it should be tabled before the beginning of the session (by fax to one of the two Joint Secretaries) or on the first day of the session. Those proposals received before the first meeting of the Executive Committee¹ will be considered at the meeting and, if approved, submitted to the plenary with the agenda for the session.

¹This meeting normally takes place on the first (Monday) afternoon at 1430 or 1445, with the plenary starting at 1530.

Any proposals received later on the first day will be considered by the Executive Committee at a later meeting and, if approved, submitted to the plenary for inclusion in the agenda for one of the later days of the session.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

At its session in Mexico in Spring 2004 the ASGP agreed the following guidelines 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 reports as a rapporteur, sponsoring topical discussions, or presenting communications;
 - Regular attendance at Association meetings and participation in discussion of draft reports, topical discussions or communications;
 - 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.