

# **United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea**

Geneva, Switzerland  
24 February to 27 April 1958

## **Rules of Procedure**

Extract from the *Official Records of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Volume II (Plenary Meetings)*

## RULES OF PROCEDURE<sup>1</sup>

### CHAPTER I. REPRESENTATION AND CREDENTIALS

#### *Composition of delegations*

##### *Rule 1*

The delegation of each State participating in the Conference shall consist of accredited representatives and such alternate representatives and advisers as may be required.

#### *Alternates or advisers*

##### *Rule 2*

An alternate representative or an adviser may act as a representative upon designation by the Chairman of the delegation.

#### *Submission of credentials*

##### *Rule 3*

The credentials of representatives and the names of alternate representatives and advisers shall be submitted to the Executive Secretary if possible not later than twenty-four hours after the opening of the Conference. The credentials shall be issued either by the Head of the State or Government, or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

#### *Credentials Committee*

##### *Rule 4*

A Credentials Committee shall be appointed at the beginning of the Conference. It shall consist of nine members who shall be appointed by the Conference on the proposal of the President. It shall examine the credentials of representatives and report to the Conference without delay.

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<sup>1</sup> As adopted by the Conference at its first and second plenary meetings and circulated as document A/CONF.13/35.

The text of the rules approved by the Conference does not differ from that of the provisional rules contained in document A/CONF.13/10, apart from the following changes:

(a) The Conference, at its 1st plenary meeting held on 24 February 1958, decided that thirteen Vice-Presidents should be elected. Consequential changes were therefore made in rule 6 of the provisional rules prepared by the Secretariat, in which the number of nine Vice-Presidents had been proposed, and in rule 13, in which the composition of the General Committee was laid down.

(b) The Conference, at the same meeting, agreed that the expression "the majority required" occurring in rules 43 and 44 of the provisional rules of procedure should be amended, for the sake of clarity, to read "a majority of the representatives present and voting".

(c) Also at its first plenary meeting, the Conference decided that the proposed "Special Committee on the Question of Free Access to the Sea of Land-locked Countries" should be constituted as a Main Committee of the Conference. Consequential changes were therefore made in rules 6, 13, 46, 47, 48, 60 and 63 of the provisional rules.

### *Provisional participation in the Conference*

##### *Rule 5*

Pending a decision of the Conference upon their credentials, representatives shall be entitled provisionally to participate in the Conference.

### CHAPTER II. OFFICERS

#### *Elections*

##### *Rule 6*

The Conference shall elect a President and thirteen Vice-Presidents, and such other officers as it may decide. The Vice-Presidents shall be elected after the election of the Chairmen of the five Main Committees.

#### *President*

##### *Rule 7*

The President shall preside at the plenary meetings of the Conference.

##### *Rule 8*

The President, in the exercise of his functions, remains under the authority of the Conference.

#### *Acting President*

##### *Rule 9*

If the President is absent from a meeting or any part thereof, he shall appoint a Vice-President to take his place.

##### *Rule 10*

A Vice-President acting as President shall have the same powers and duties as the President.

#### *Replacement of the President*

##### *Rule 11*

If the President is unable to perform his functions, a new President shall be elected.

#### *The President shall not vote*

##### *Rule 12*

The President, or Vice-President acting as President, shall not vote but shall appoint another member of his delegation to vote in his place.

### CHAPTER III. GENERAL COMMITTEE

#### *Composition*

##### *Rule 13*

There shall be a General Committee of nineteen members, which shall comprise the President of the Conference, the Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of the Main Committees. No two members of the General Committee shall be drawn from the same delegation, and it shall be so constituted as to ensure its

representative character. The President of the Conference or, in his absence, a Vice-President designated by him, shall serve as Chairman of the General Committee.

#### *Substitute members*

##### *Rule 14*

If the President or a Vice-President of the Conference finds it necessary to be absent during a meeting of the General Committee, he may designate a member of his delegation to sit and vote in the Committee. The Chairman of a Committee shall, in case of absence, designate the Vice-Chairman of that Committee as his substitute. A Vice-Chairman shall not have the right to vote if he is of the same delegation as another member of the General Committee.

#### *Functions*

##### *Rule 15*

The General Committee shall assist the President in the general conduct of the business of the Conference and, subject to the decisions of the Conference, shall ensure the co-ordination of its work.

### CHAPTER IV. SECRETARIAT

#### *Duties of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat*

##### *Rule 16*

1. The Secretary-General of the Conference shall be the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He, or his representative, shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the Conference and its Committees.

2. The Secretary-General shall appoint an Executive Secretary of the Conference and shall provide and direct the staff required by the Conference and its committees.

3. The Secretariat shall receive, translate, reproduce and distribute documents, reports and resolutions of the Conference; interpret speeches made at the meetings, prepare and circulate records of the public meetings; have the custody and preservation of the documents in the archives of the United Nations; publish the reports of the public meetings; distribute all documents of the Conference to the participating governments and, generally, perform all other work which the Conference may require.

#### *Statements by the Secretariat*

##### *Rule 17*

The Secretary-General or any member of the staff designated for that purpose may make oral or written statements concerning any question under consideration.

### CHAPTER V. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

#### *Quorum*

##### *Rule 18*

A quorum shall be constituted by the representatives of a majority of the States participating in the Conference.

#### *General powers of the President*

##### *Rule 19*

In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon

him elsewhere by these rules, the President shall declare the opening and closing of each plenary meeting of the Conference, direct the discussions at such meetings, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions. He shall rule on points of order and, subject to these rules of procedure, have complete control of the proceedings and over the maintenance of order thereat. The President may propose to the Conference the limitation of time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak on any question, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate. He may also propose the suspension or the adjournment of the debate on the question under discussion.

#### *Speeches*

##### *Rule 20*

No person may address the Conference without having previously obtained the permission of the President. Subject to rules 21 and 22, the President shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak. The President may call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.

#### *Precedence*

##### *Rule 21*

The Chairman or Rapporteur of a committee, or the representative of a sub-committee or working group may be accorded precedence for the purpose of explaining the conclusion arrived at by his committee, sub-committee or working group.

#### *Points of order*

##### *Rule 22*

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may rise to a point of order, and the point of order shall be immediately decided by the President in accordance with the rules of procedure. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the President. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote and the President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the representatives present and voting. A representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

#### *Time limit on speeches*

##### *Rule 23*

The Conference may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker and the number of times each representative may speak on any question. When the debate is limited and a representative has spoken his allotted time, the President shall call him to order without delay.

#### *Closing of list of speakers*

##### *Rule 24*

During the course of a debate the President may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the Conference, declare the list closed. He may, however, accord the right of reply to any representative if a speech delivered after he has declared the list closed makes this desirable.

## *Adjournment of debate*

### *Rule 25*

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the question under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.

## *Closure of debate*

### *Rule 26*

A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate on the question under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified his wish to speak. Permission to speak on the closure of the debate shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the closure, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. If the Conference is in favour of the closure, the President shall declare the closure of the debate. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.

## *Suspension or adjournment of the meeting*

### *Rule 27*

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. Such motions shall not be debated, but shall be immediately put to the vote. The President may limit the time to be allowed to the speaker moving the suspension or adjournment.

## *Order of procedural motions*

### *Rule 28*

Subject to rule 22, the following motions shall have precedence in the following order over all other proposals or motions before the meeting :

- (a) To suspend the meeting ;
- (b) To adjourn the meeting ;
- (c) To adjourn the debate on the question under discussion ;
- (d) For the closure of the debate on the question under discussion.

## *Proposals and amendments*

### *Rule 29*

Proposals and amendments thereto shall normally be introduced in writing and handed to the Executive Secretary of the Conference, who shall circulate copies to the delegations. As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the Conference unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting. The President may, however, permit the discussion and consideration of amendments, or motions as to procedure, even though these amendments and motions have not been circulated or have only been circulated the same day.

## *Decisions on competence*

### *Rule 30*

Subject to rule 22, any motion calling for a decision

on the competence of the Conference to discuss any matter or to adopt a proposal or an amendment submitted to it shall be put to the vote before the matter is discussed or a vote is taken on the proposal or amendment in question.

## *Withdrawal of motions*

### *Rule 31*

A motion may be withdrawn by its proposer at any time before voting on it has commenced, provided that the motion has not been amended. A motion which has thus been withdrawn may be reintroduced by any representative.

## *Reconsideration of proposals*

### *Rule 32*

When a proposal has been adopted or rejected it may not be reconsidered unless the Conference, by a two-thirds majority of the representatives present and voting, so decides. Permission to speak on the motion to reconsider shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the motion, after which it shall be immediately put to the vote.

## *Invitations to technical advisers*

### *Rule 33*

The Conference may invite to one or more of its meetings any person whose technical advice it may consider useful for its work.

## CHAPTER VI. VOTING

### *Voting rights*

### *Rule 34*

Each State represented at the Conference shall have one vote.

### *Required majority*

### *Rule 35*

1. Decisions of the Conference on all matters of substance shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of the representatives present and voting.
2. Decisions of the Conference on matters of procedure shall be taken by a majority of the representatives present and voting.
3. If the question arises whether a matter is one of procedure or of substance, the President of the Conference shall rule on the question. An appeal against this ruling shall immediately be put to the vote and the President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the representatives present and voting.

### *Meaning of the expression "representatives present and voting"*

### *Rule 36*

For the purpose of these rules, the phrase "representatives present and voting" means representatives present and casting an affirmative or negative vote. Representatives who abstain from voting shall be considered as not voting.

## *Method of voting*

### *Rule 37*

The Conference shall normally vote by show of hands or by standing, but any representative may request a roll-call. The roll-call shall be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the States participating in the Conference, beginning with the delegation whose name is drawn by lot by the President.

## *Conduct during voting*

### *Rule 38*

After the President has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connexion with the actual conduct of the voting. The President may permit representatives to explain their votes, either before or after the voting, except when the vote is taken by secret ballot. The President may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations.

## *Division of proposals and amendments*

### *Rule 39*

A representative may move that parts of a proposal or of an amendment shall be voted on separately. If objection is made to the request for division, the motion for division shall be voted upon. Permission to speak on the motion for division shall be given only to two speakers against. If the motion for division is carried, those parts of the proposal or of the amendment which are subsequently approved shall be put to the vote as a whole. If all operative parts of the proposal or of the amendment have been rejected, the proposal or the amendment shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.

## *Voting on amendments*

### *Rule 40*

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the Conference shall first vote on the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal and then on the amendment next furthest removed therefrom, and so on until all the amendments have been put to the vote. Where, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter amendment shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted upon. A motion is considered an amendment to a proposal if it merely adds to, deletes from or revises part of that proposal.

## *Voting on proposals*

### *Rule 41*

If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the Conference shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The Conference may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

## *Elections*

### *Rule 42*

All elections shall be held by secret ballot unless otherwise decided by the Conference.

## *Rule 43*

1. If, when one person or one delegation is to be elected, no candidate obtains in the first ballot a majority of the representatives present and voting, a second ballot restricted to the two candidates obtaining the largest number of votes shall be taken. If in the second ballot the votes are equally divided, the President shall decide between the candidates by drawing lots.

2. In the case of a tie in the first ballot among three or more candidates obtaining the largest number of votes, a second ballot shall be held. If a tie results among more than two candidates, the number shall be reduced to two by lot and the balloting, restricted to them, shall continue in accordance with the preceding paragraph.

## *Rule 44*

When two or more elective places are to be filled at one time under the same conditions, those candidates obtaining in the first ballot a majority of the representatives present and voting shall be elected. If the number of candidates obtaining such majority is less than the number of persons or delegations to be elected, there shall be additional ballots to fill the remaining places, the voting being restricted to the candidates obtaining the greatest number of votes in the previous ballot, to a number not more than twice the places remaining to be filled; provided that, after the third inconclusive ballot, votes may be cast for any eligible person or delegation. If three such unrestricted ballots are inconclusive, the next three ballots shall be restricted to the candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes in the third of the unrestricted ballots, to a number not more than twice the places remaining to be filled, and the following three ballots thereafter shall be unrestricted, and so on until all the places have been filled.

## *Equally divided votes*

### *Rule 45*

If a vote is equally divided on matters other than elections, the proposal shall be regarded as rejected.

## CHAPTER VII. COMMITTEES

### *Creation of committees*

### *Rule 46*

In addition to the General Committee and the Credentials Committee, the Conference shall establish five Main Committees and such other committees as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions. Each committee may set up sub-committees or working groups.

## *Main Committees*

### *Rule 47*

The Main Committees shall be :

First Committee (Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone)

Second Committee (High Seas : General Régime)

Third Committee (High Seas : Fishing ; Conservation of Living Resources)

Fourth Committee (Continental Shelf)

Fifth Committee (Question of free access to the sea of land-locked countries)

**Rule 48**

Each State participating in the Conference may be represented by one person on each Main Committee. It may assign to these Committees such alternate representatives and advisers as may be required.

*Drafting Committee*

**Rule 49**

A Drafting Committee, composed of not more than nine members, shall be appointed by the Conference on the proposal of the General Committee. It shall be entrusted with the final drafting and co-ordination of the instruments approved by the Committees of the Conference. It shall also prepare the Final Act of the Conference.

*Co-ordination by the General Committee*

**Rule 50**

Questions affecting the co-ordination of their work may be referred by other committees to the General Committee, which may make such arrangements as it thinks fit, including the holding of joint meetings of committees or sub-committees and the establishment of joint working groups. The General Committee shall appoint, or arrange for the appointment of, the Chairman of any such joint body.

*Officers*

**Rule 51**

Except in the case of the General Committee, each committee and sub-committee shall elect its own officers.

*Quorum*

**Rule 52**

A majority of the representatives on a committee or sub-committee shall constitute a quorum.

*Officers, conduct of business, and voting in committees*

**Rule 53**

The rules contained in chapters II, V and VI above shall be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to the proceedings of committees and sub-committees, except that decisions of committees and sub-committees shall be taken by a majority of the representatives present and voting.

CHAPTER VIII. LANGUAGES AND RECORDS

*Official and working languages*

**Rule 54**

Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish shall be the official languages of the Conference. English, French and Spanish shall be working languages.

**Rule 55**

Speeches made in any of the working languages shall be interpreted into the other two working languages.

*Interpretation from official languages*

**Rule 56**

Speeches made in either of the other two official languages shall be interpreted into the three working languages.

*Interpretation from other languages*

**Rule 57**

Any representative may make a speech in a language other than the official languages. In this case he shall himself provide for interpretation into one of the working languages. Interpretation into the other working languages by the interpreters of the Secretariat may be based on the interpretation given in the first working language.

*Summary records*

**Rule 58**

Summary records of the plenary meetings of the Conference and of the meetings of the Main Committees of the Conference shall be kept by the Secretariat. They shall be sent as soon as possible to all representatives, who shall inform the Secretariat within three working days after the circulation of the summary record of any changes they wish to have made.

*Language of documents and summary records*

**Rule 59**

Documents and summary records shall be made available in the working languages.

CHAPTER IX. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MEETINGS

*Plenary meetings and meetings of committees*

**Rule 60**

The plenary meetings of the Conference and the meetings of the Main Committees shall be held in public unless the body concerned decides that exceptional circumstances require that a particular meeting be held in private.

*Meetings of sub-committees or working groups*

**Rule 61**

As a general rule meetings of a sub-committee or working group shall be held in private.

*Communiqué to the press*

**Rule 62**

At the close of any private meeting a communiqué

may be issued to the press through the Executive Secretary.

CHAPTER X. OBSERVERS FROM SPECIALIZED  
AGENCIES AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

*Rule 63*

1. Observers of specialized agencies and inter-governmental bodies invited to the Conference may

participate, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference and its Main Committees, upon the invitation of the President or Chairman, as the case may be, on questions within the scope of their activities.

2. Written statements of such specialized agencies and inter-governmental bodies shall be distributed by the Secretariat to the delegations at the Conference.