

Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches

(as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006)

CONSTITUTION

I. Basis

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

II. Membership

Churches shall be eligible for membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches who express their agreement with the basis upon which the Council is founded and satisfy such criteria for membership as the assembly or central committee may prescribe. The central committee shall consider applications for membership in accordance with Rule I.

III. Purposes and functions

The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education.

The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.

In seeking koinonia in faith and life, witness and service, the churches through the Council will:

- promote the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation in a spirit of mutual accountability, the development of deeper relationships through theological dialogue, and the sharing of human, spiritual and material resources with one another;
- facilitate common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism;
- express their commitment to diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life;
- nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context;
- assist each other in their relationships to and with people of other faith communities;
- foster renewal and growth in unity, worship, mission and service.

In order to strengthen the one ecumenical movement, the Council will:

- nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;
- establish and maintain relations with national councils, regional conferences of churches, organizations of Christian world communions and other ecumenical bodies;
- support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels;
- facilitate the creation of networks among ecumenical organizations;
- work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations.

IV. Authority

The World Council shall offer counsel and provide opportunity for united action in matters of common interest.

It may take action on behalf of constituent churches only in such matters as one or more of them may commit to it and only on behalf of such churches.

The World Council shall not legislate for the churches; nor shall it act for them in any manner except as indicated above or as may hereafter be specified by the constituent churches.

V. Organization

The World Council shall discharge its functions through an assembly, a central committee, an executive committee, and other subordinate bodies as may be established.

1. The assembly

- a) The assembly shall be the supreme legislative body governing the World Council and shall ordinarily meet at seven-year intervals.
- b) The assembly shall be composed of official representatives of the member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches.
- c) The assembly shall have the following functions:
 - 1) to elect the president or presidents of the World Council;
 - 2) to elect not more than 145 members of the central committee from among the delegates which the member churches have elected to the assembly;
 - 3) to elect not more than 5 members from among the representatives elected to the assembly by churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons;
 - 4) to determine the overall policies of the World Council and to review programmes undertaken to implement policies previously adopted;
 - 5) to delegate to the central committee specific functions, except to amend this constitution and to allocate the membership of the central committee granted by this constitution to the assembly exclusively.

2. The central committee

- a) The central committee shall be responsible for implementing the policies adopted by the assembly and shall exercise the functions of the assembly itself delegated to it by the assembly between its meetings, except its power to amend this constitution and to allocate or alter the allocation of the membership of central committee.
- b) The central committee shall be composed of the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches and not more than 150 members.
 - 1) Not more than 145 members shall be elected by the assembly from among the delegates the member churches have elected to the assembly. Such members shall be distributed among the member churches by the assembly giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the Council, the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council, reasonable geographical and cultural balance, and adequate representation of the major interests of the Council.
 - 2) Not more than 5 members shall be elected by the assembly from among the representatives elected to the assembly by churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.
 - 3) A vacancy in the membership of the central committee, occurring between meetings of the assembly, shall be filled by the central committee itself after consultation with the church of which the person previously occupying the position was a member.
- c) The central committee shall have, in addition to the general powers set out in (a) above, the following powers:

- 1) to elect its moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators from among the members of the central committee;
- 2) to elect the executive committee from among the members of the central committee;
- 3) to elect committees, commissions, and boards;
- 4) within the policies adopted by the assembly, and on the recommendation of the programme committee, to initiate and terminate programmes and activities and to set priorities for the work of the Council;
- 5) to adopt the budget of the World Council and secure its financial support;
- 6) to elect the general secretary and to elect or appoint or to make provision for the election or appointment of all members of the staff of the World Council;
- 7) to plan for the meetings of the assembly, making provision for the conduct of its business, for worship and study, and for common Christian commitment. The central committee shall determine the number of delegates to the assembly and allocate them among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the Council; the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council; reasonable geographical and cultural balance; the desired distribution among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; among men, women and young people; and participation by persons whose special knowledge and experience will be needed;
- 8) to delegate specific functions to the executive committee or to other bodies or persons.

3. *Rules*

The assembly or the central committee may adopt and amend rules not inconsistent with this constitution for the conduct of the business of the World Council.

4. *By-laws*

The assembly or the central committee may adopt and amend by-laws not inconsistent with this constitution for the functioning of its committees, boards, working groups and commissions.

5. *Quorum*

A quorum for the conduct of any business by the assembly or the central committee shall be one-half of its membership.

VI. Other ecumenical Christian organizations

1. Such world confessional bodies and such international ecumenical organizations as may be designated by the central committee may be invited to send representatives to the assembly and to the central committee, in such numbers as the central committee shall determine; however, these representatives shall not have the right to participate when decisions are taken.
2. Such national councils and regional conferences of churches, other Christian councils and missionary councils as may be designated by the central committee may be invited to send representatives to the assembly and to the central committee, in such numbers as the central committee shall determine; however, these representatives shall not have the right to participate when decisions are taken.

VII. Amendments

The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates to the assembly present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been reviewed by the central committee, and notice of it sent to the member churches not less than six months before the meeting of the assembly. The central committee itself, as well as the member churches, shall have the right to propose such amendment.

RULES

I. Membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches is comprised of churches which have constituted the Council or which have been admitted into membership and which continue to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches. The term “church” as used in this article could also include an association, convention or federation of autonomous churches. A group of churches within a country or region, or within the same confession, may choose to participate in the World Council of Churches as one member. Churches within the same country or region or within the same confession may apply jointly to belong to the fellowship of the Council, in order to respond to their common calling, to strengthen their joint participation and/or to satisfy the requirement of minimum size rule (I.3.b.3). Such groupings of churches are encouraged by the World Council of Churches; each individual church within the grouping must satisfy the criteria for membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, except the requirements of size. A church seeking affiliation with a grouping of autonomous churches which is a member of the World Council of Churches must agree with the basis and fulfil the criteria for membership.

The general secretary shall maintain the official lists of member churches that have been accepted to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, noting any special arrangement accepted by the assembly or central committee. Separate lists shall be maintained of member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC that do or do not participate in decision-making.

1. Application

A church that wishes to join the World Council of Churches shall apply in writing to the general secretary.

2. Processing

The general secretary shall submit all such applications through the executive committee to the central committee together with such information as he or she considers necessary to enable the central committee to make a decision on the application.

3. Criteria

Churches applying to join the World Council of Churches (“applicant churches”) are required first to express agreement with the basis on which the Council is founded and confirm their commitment to the purposes and functions of the Council as defined in articles I and III of the constitution. The basis states: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Applicant churches should give an account of how their faith and witness relate to these norms and practices:

a) Theological

- 1) In its life and witness, the church professes faith in the triune God according to the scriptures, and as this faith is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
- 2) The church maintains a ministry of proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the sacraments as understood by its doctrines.
- 3) The church baptizes in the name of the one God, “*Father, Son and Holy Spirit*” and acknowledges the need to move towards the recognition of the baptism of other churches.
- 4) The church recognizes the presence and activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside its own boundaries and prays for the gift of God’s wisdom to all in the awareness that other member churches also believe in the Holy Trinity and the saving grace of God.
- 5) The church recognizes in the other member churches of the WCC elements of the true church, even if it does not regard them “as churches in the true and full sense of the word” (Toronto statement).

b) Organizational

- 1) The church must produce evidence of sustained autonomous life and organization.
- 2) The church must be able to take the decision to apply for formal membership in the WCC and continue to belong to the fellowship of the WCC without obtaining the permission of any other body or person.
- 3) An applicant church must ordinarily have at least fifty thousand members. The central committee, for exceptional reasons, may dispense with this requirement and accept a church that does not fulfil the criteria of size.
- 4) An applicant church with more than 10,000 members but less than 50,000 members that has not been granted membership for exceptional reasons under rule I.3.b.3, but is otherwise eligible for membership, can be admitted as a member subject to the following conditions: (a) it shall not have the right to participate in decision-making in the assembly, and (b) it may participate with other churches in selecting five representatives to the central committee in accordance with rule IV.4.b.3. Such church shall be considered as a member church belonging to the fellowship of the WCC in all other respects.
- 5) Churches must recognize the essential interdependence of the member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC, particularly those of the same confession, and should make every effort to practise constructive ecumenical relations with other churches within their country or region. This will normally mean that the church is a member of the national council of churches or similar body and of the regional/sub-regional ecumenical organization.

4. Consultation

Before admitting a church to membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, the appropriate world confessional body or bodies and national council or regional ecumenical organization shall be consulted.

5. Decision on acceptance

The Central Committee shall consider applications for membership according to the consensus model of decision making. The application shall be accepted for a specified interim period of participation in the work of the World Council of Churches and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches. The member churches of the World Council of Churches shall be consulted during the interim period. The Central Committee shall assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application, in which event the applicant church shall be considered a new member church. If there is no consensus, the Central Committee shall deem the application rejected.

6. Resignation

A church which desires to resign its membership in the fellowship of the Council can do so at any time. A church which has resigned but desires to rejoin the Council must again apply for membership.

II. Responsibilities of membership

Membership in the World Council of Churches signifies faithfulness to the basis of the Council, fellowship in the Council, participation in the life and work of the Council and commitment to the ecumenical movement as integral to the mission of the church. Churches which are members of the World Council of Churches are expected to:

- 1) appoint delegates to the assembly, the major policy-making body of the Council, and participate in council with other member churches in shaping the ecumenical vision and the ecumenical agenda;
- 2) inform the World Council of their primary concerns, priorities, activities and constructive criticisms as they may relate to its programmes as well as any matters which they feel need expression of ecumenical solidarity or which merit the attention of the Council and/or churches around the world;
- 3) communicate the meaning of ecumenical commitment, to foster and encourage ecumenical relations and action at all levels of their church life and to pursue ecumenical fellowship locally,

- nationally, regionally and internationally;
- 4) interpret both the broader ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, its nature, purpose and programmes throughout their membership as a normal part of their own reporting to their constituency;
 - 5) encourage participation in World Council programmes, activities and meetings, including:
 - a) proposing persons who could make a particular contribution to and/or participate in the Council's various committees, meetings and consultations, programmes, publications and staff;
 - b) establishing links between their own programme offices and the appropriate World Council programme offices; and
 - c) submitting materials for and promoting World Council communications resources: books, periodicals and other publications;
 - 6) respond to decisions of the central committee which call for study, action or other follow-up by the member churches as well as respond to requests on matters referred by the central or executive committee or the general secretary for prayer, advice, information or opinion;
 - 7) make an annual contribution to the general budget of the Council: the amount of the contribution shall be agreed upon in consultation between the church and the Council and shall be regularly reviewed;
 - 8) participate, in ways commensurate with their resources and in consultation with the Council, in assuming responsibility for the costs of the Council's programmes and for expenses related to travel and accommodation of their representatives to Council events.

The implications of not fulfilling such obligations shall be such as the central committee shall decide.

III. Churches in association with the World Council of Churches

A church that agrees with the basis of the Council may request in writing to be received as a church in association with the World Council of Churches, stating its reasons for requesting this mode of relating with the Council. If the reasons are approved by the central committee, such a church may be accepted to be in association with the World Council of Churches.

Churches in association with the World Council of Churches:

- 1) can send representative(s) to the assembly and the central committee who can speak with permission of the chair, but have no right to participate in formal decision-making, whether by consensus or by vote;
- 2) can be invited to participate in the work of the commissions, advisory groups and other consultative bodies of the Council as consultants or advisers;
- 3) have the possibility of participating in the work of the WCC as described, but will not be identified with decisions taken or statements issued by the Council;
- 4) shall make an annual contribution to the general budget of the Council; the amount of the contribution shall be agreed upon in consultation between the church and the Council and shall be regularly reviewed; no financial support will ordinarily be made available from the Council to such churches to facilitate their participation.

The general secretary shall maintain a list of churches in association with the Council.

IV. The assembly

1. Composition of the assembly

a) Persons with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making

The assembly shall be composed of official representatives of the member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches, with the right to speak and with the responsibility to participate in decision-making.

- 1) The central committee shall determine the number of delegates to the assembly well in advance of its meeting.

- 2) The central committee shall determine the percentage of the delegates, not less than 85 percent, who shall be both nominated and elected by the member churches. Each member church shall be entitled to a minimum of one delegate. The central committee shall allocate the other delegates in this group among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the World Council of Churches, the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council, and reasonable geographical and cultural balance. The central committee shall recommend the proper distribution within delegations among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; and among men, women, young people and Indigenous peoples. The central committee may make provision for the election by the member churches of alternate delegates who shall serve only in place of such delegates who are unable to attend meetings of the assembly.
- 3) The remaining delegates, not more than 15 percent, shall be elected by certain member churches upon nomination of the central committee as follows:
 1. If the moderator or any vice-moderator of the central committee is not elected a delegate within the provisions of paragraph 2 above, the central committee shall nominate such officer to the member church of which such officer is a member. Paragraphs 5 and 6 below apply to such nominees.
 2. The central committee shall determine the categories of additional delegates necessary to achieve balance in respect of:
 - a) the varied sizes of churches and confessions;
 - b) the historical significance, future potential or geographical location and cultural background of particular churches, as well as the special importance of united churches;
 - c) the presence of persons whose special knowledge and experience will be necessary to the assembly;
 - d) proportions of women, youth, lay persons and local pastors;
 - e) participation of Indigenous peoples.
 3. The central committee shall invite the member churches to propose the names of persons in the categories so determined whom the churches would be willing to elect, if nominated by the central committee.
 4. From the list so compiled, the central committee shall propose the nomination of particular individuals to their respective member church.
 5. If that member church elects the said nominee, he or she shall become an additional delegate of that member church.
 6. The member churches shall not elect alternate delegates for such delegates. Member churches are encouraged to consult regionally in the selection of the delegates described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, provided that every delegate is elected by the church of which he or she is a member in accordance with its own procedures.

b) *Persons with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making*

In addition to the delegates, who alone have the right to vote, the following categories of persons may attend meetings of the assembly with the right to speak:

- 1) *Presidents and officers:* Any president or presidents of the Council or moderator or vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee who have not been elected delegates by their churches.
- 2) *Members of the retiring central committee:* Any members of the retiring central committee who have not been elected delegates by their churches.
- 3) *Representatives of churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons:* Each one of these churches may elect one representative.
- 4) *Advisers:* The central committee may invite a small number of persons who have a special contribution to make to the deliberations of the assembly or who have participated in the activities of the World Council. Before an invitation is extended to an adviser who is a member of a member church, that church shall be consulted.

- 5) *Delegated representatives:* The central committee may invite persons officially designated as delegated representatives by organizations with which the World Council maintains relationship.
 - 6) *Delegated observers:* The central committee may invite persons officially designated as delegated observers by non-member churches.
- c) *Persons without the right to speak or to participate in decision-making*
The central committee may invite to attend the meetings of the assembly without the right to speak or to participate in decision-making:
- 1) *Observers:* Persons identified with organizations with which the World Council maintains relationship which are not represented by delegated representatives or with non-member churches which are not represented by delegated observers.
 - 2) *Guests:* Persons named individually.

2. *Presiding officers and committees*

- a) At the first decision session of the assembly the central committee shall present its proposals for the moderatorship of the assembly and for the membership of the business committee of the assembly and make any other proposals, including the appointment of other committees, their membership and functions, for the conduct of the business of the assembly as it sees fit.
- b) At the first or second decision session, additional nominations for membership of any committee may be made in writing by any six concurring delegates.
- c) Election shall be by ballot unless the assembly shall otherwise determine.

3. *Agenda*

The agenda of the assembly shall be proposed by the central committee to the first decision session of the assembly. A delegate may propose changes to the agenda in accordance with rule XX.6.c. New business or any change may be proposed by the business committee under rule IV.5.b.2.

4. *Nominations committee of the assembly*

- a) At an early decision session of the assembly, the assembly shall elect a nominations committee, on which there shall be appropriate confessional, cultural and geographical representation of the membership of the assembly and representation of the major interests of the World Council.
- b) The nominations committee in consultation with the officers of the World Council and the executive committee shall make nominations for the following:
 - 1) the president or presidents of the World Council;
 - 2) not more than 145 members of the central committee from among the delegates which the member churches have elected to the assembly;
 - 3) not more than 5 members of the central committee from among the representatives elected to the assembly by the churches which do not fulfill the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.
- c) In making nominations, the nominations committee shall have regard to the following principles:
 - 1) the personal qualifications of the individual for the task for which he or she is to be nominated;
 - 2) fair and adequate confessional representation;
 - 3) fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation;
 - 4) fair and adequate representation of the major interests of the World Council.

The nominations committee shall satisfy itself as to the general acceptability of the nominations to the churches to which the nominees belong.

Not more than seven persons from any one member church shall be nominated as members of the central committee.

The nominations committee shall secure adequate representation of lay persons – men, women and young people – so far as the composition of the assembly makes this possible.

- d) The nominations committee shall present its nominations to the assembly. Additional nominations may be made by any six delegates concurring in writing, provided that each such nominee shall be proposed in opposition to a particular nominee of the nominations committee.

- e) Election shall be by ballot unless the assembly shall otherwise determine.

5. *Business committee of the assembly*

- a) The business committee of the assembly shall consist of the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, the general secretary, the presidents of the Council, the co-moderators of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration participating as a delegate, the moderator or a member of the assembly planning committee participating as a delegate, the moderators of hearings and committees who may appoint substitutes and ten delegates who are not members of the outgoing central committee, who shall be elected in accordance with rule IV.2. If a co-moderator of the permanent committee and/or the moderator of the assembly planning committee is not a delegate, he/she shall be invited as an adviser to the assembly and its business committee with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- b) The business committee shall:
- 1) coordinate the day-to-day business of the assembly and may make proposals for rearrangement, modification, addition, deletion or substitution of items included on the agenda. Any such proposal shall be presented to the assembly at the earliest convenient time by a member of the business committee with reasons for the proposed change. After opportunity for discussion on the proposal, the moderator shall put the following question to the assembly: Shall the assembly approve the proposal of the business committee? The assembly shall decide the question by consensus or voting procedures. If decided according to voting procedures, then any proposed change must receive a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present to be adopted;
 - 2) consider any item of business or change in the agenda proposed to the business committee by a delegate under rule XX.6.c;
 - 3) determine whether the assembly sits in general, hearing or decision session as defined in rule XX.2;
 - 4) receive information from and review the reports of other committees in order to consider how best the assembly can act on them.

6. *Other committees of the assembly*

- a) Any other committee of the assembly shall consist of such members and shall have such powers and duties as are proposed by the central committee at the first decision session or by the business committee after its election and accepted by the assembly.
- b) Any such committee shall, unless the assembly otherwise directs, inform the business committee about its work and shall make its report or recommendations to the assembly.

V. Presidents

1. The assembly shall elect the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches; the number of presidents elected shall, however, not exceed eight; the role of the presidents being to promote ecumenism and to interpret the work of the World Council of Churches, especially in their respective regions.
2. The term of office of a president shall end at the end of the next assembly following his or her election.
3. A president who has been elected by the assembly shall be ineligible for election for a second consecutive term of office.
4. The presidents should be persons whose ecumenical experience and standing is widely recognized among the ecumenical partners of the World Council in their respective regions.
5. The presidents shall be ex officio members of the central committee.
6. Should a vacancy occur in the presidium between assemblies, the central committee may elect a president to fill the unexpired term.

VI. Central committee

1. *Membership*

- a) The central committee shall consist of the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches together with not more than 150 members elected by the assembly (see constitution, article V.2.b).
- b) Any member church, not already represented, may send one representative to the meetings of the central committee. Such a representative shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- c) If a regularly elected member of the central committee is unable to attend a meeting, the church to which the absent member belongs shall have the right to send a substitute, provided that the substitute is ordinarily resident in the country where the absent member resides. Such a substitute shall have the right to speak and to participate in decision-making. If a member, or his or her substitute, is absent without excuse for two consecutive meetings, the position shall be declared vacant, and the central committee shall fill the vacancy according to the provisions of article V.2.b.3 of the constitution.
- d) Moderators and vice-moderators of committees, commissions and boards who are not members of the central committee may attend meetings of the central committee and shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- e) Advisers for the central committee may be appointed by the executive committee after consultation with the churches of which they are members. They shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- f) Members of the staff of the World Council appointed by the central committee as specified under rule XII.3. shall have the right to attend the sessions of the central committee unless on any occasion the central committee shall otherwise determine. When present they shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- g) The newly elected central committee shall be convened by the general secretary during or immediately after the meeting of the assembly.

2. *Officers*

- a) The central committee shall elect from among its members a moderator and a vice-moderator or vice-moderators to serve for such periods as it shall determine.
- b) The general secretary of the World Council of Churches shall be ex officio secretary of the central committee.

3. *Meetings*

- a) The central committee shall ordinarily meet once every year. The executive committee may call an extraordinary meeting of the central committee whenever it deems such a meeting desirable and shall do so upon the request in writing of one-third or more of the members of the central committee.
- b) The general secretary shall take all possible steps to ensure that there be adequate representation present from each of the main confessions and from the main geographical areas of the membership of the World Council of Churches and of the major interests of the World Council.
- c) The central committee shall determine the date and place of its own meetings and of the meetings of the assembly.

4. *Functions*

In exercising the powers set forth in the constitution the central committee shall have the following specific functions:

- a) In the conduct of its business, the central committee shall elect the following committees:
 - nominations committee;
 - executive committee;
 - permanent committee on consensus and collaboration;
 - programme committee (a standing committee);
 - finance committee (a standing committee);
 - reference committee or committees (appointed as needed at each meeting to advise the central

committee on any other questions arising which call for special consideration or action by the central committee).

- b) It shall adopt the budget of the Council.
- c) It shall deal with matters referred to it by member churches.
- d) It shall determine the policies to be followed in the work of the World Council of Churches, including the task to initiate and terminate programmes and activities. It shall provide for the organizational structure to carry out the work mentioned herein before and to this end, amongst others, shall elect commissions and boards.
- e) It shall report to the assembly the actions it has taken during its period of office and shall not be discharged until its report has been received.

VII. Nominations committee of the central committee

1. In its first meeting during or immediately after the assembly, the central committee shall elect a nominations committee which shall:
 - a) nominate persons from among the members of the central committee for the offices of moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee;
 - b) nominate members of the executive committee of the central committee;
 - c) nominate a person for the office of president to fill the unexpired term should a vacancy occur in the presidium between assemblies;
 - d) nominate members of committees, commissions and boards and where appropriate their moderators;
 - e) make recommendations regarding the election of persons proposed for staff positions under rule XII.3.

In making nominations as provided for by (a) and (b) to (d) above, the nominations committee shall have regard to principles set out in rule IV.4.c and, in applying principles (2), (3) and (4) to the nomination of members of committees, commissions and boards, shall consider the representative character of the combined membership of all such committees. Any member of the central committee may make additional nominations, provided that each such nominee shall be proposed in opposition to a particular nominee of the nominations committee.

2. In between meetings of the central committee, the executive committee shall act as the nominations committee of the central committee.
3. Election shall be by ballot unless the committee shall otherwise determine.

VIII. Executive committee

1. *Membership*
 - a) The executive committee shall consist of the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, the moderators of programme and finance committees of the central committee and 20 other members of the central committee.
 - b) If a member of the executive committee is unable to attend, he/she has the right – provided that the moderator agrees – to send a member of the central committee as a substitute. Such a substitute shall – as far as possible – be of the same region and church family, and shall have the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making.
 - c) The moderator of the central committee shall also be the moderator of the executive committee.
 - d) The general secretary of the World Council of Churches shall be ex officio the secretary of the executive committee.
 - e) The officers may invite other persons to attend a meeting of the executive committee for consultation, always having in mind the need for preserving a due balance of the confessions and of the geographical areas and cultural backgrounds, and of the major interests of the World Council.

2. *Functions*

- a) The executive committee shall be accountable to the central committee, and shall present to the central committee at its next meeting a report of its work for approval. The central committee shall consider such a report and take such action in regard to it as it thinks fit.
- b) The executive committee shall be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the ongoing programmes and activities of the World Council of Churches including the task of determining the allocation of resources. The executive committee's power to make public statements is limited and defined in rule XIII.5.
- c) The central committee may by specific action provide for the election of staff to those positions specified in rule XII.3.a by the executive committee which should report these actions to the next meeting of the central committee.
- d) The executive committee shall supervise the operation of the budget and may, if necessary, impose limitations on expenditures.

3. *Elections*

- a) The central committee shall elect an executive committee at its first meeting during or immediately after the assembly.
- b) Vacancies on the executive committee shall be filled by the next meeting of the central committee.

IX. Permanent committee on consensus and collaboration

1. At its first full meeting after an assembly, the central committee shall elect from among its members the membership of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (the "permanent committee"), consisting of fourteen members, of whom half shall be Orthodox.
2. The Orthodox members of the nominations committee of the central committee, in consultation with all Orthodox members of the central committee, shall nominate the seven Orthodox members, and the other members of the nominations committee of the central committee shall nominate the remaining seven. The central committee as a whole shall elect the permanent committee. For election of the permanent committee, the provisions of rule VII.1. shall not apply: no counter nominations shall be accepted from the floor.
3. Of the overall membership at least half shall be members of the WCC executive committee. Proxies may substitute for absent members. Advisers may be invited from member churches. Observers may be invited from non-member churches, or on occasion from churches in association with the WCC.
4. Two co-moderators shall be elected by the membership of the permanent committee, one by the Orthodox members of the central committee, and one by the other members of the central committee.
5. The term of the members of the outgoing permanent committee shall conclude upon election of replacement members following an assembly. The permanent committee shall be considered a committee of the assembly and shall advise the business committee of the assembly.
6. The permanent committee will have responsibility for:
 - a) continuing the authority, mandate, concerns and dynamic of the Special Commission (mandated by the eighth assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998);
 - b) giving advice and making recommendations to governing bodies of the WCC during and between assemblies in order to contribute to the formation of consensus on matters proposed for the agenda of the WCC;
 - c) facilitating improved participation of the Orthodox in the entire life and work of the Council;
 - d) offering counsel and providing opportunity for action in matters of common interest;
 - e) giving attention to matters of ecclesiology.
7. The permanent committee will report to the central committee and to the executive committee.

X. Programme committee

1. The programme committee shall consist of up to 40 members including:
 - a) a moderator who shall be a member of the executive committee;
 - b) not more than 30 central committee members of whom 2 shall also be members of the executive committee;
 - c) the moderators of all commissions, boards and advisory groups that relate directly to the programme committee.
2. The programme committee shall normally meet in conjunction with the central committee and shall be required to report to it regularly.
3. Within the guidelines established by the assembly, the programme committee shall have the responsibility to make recommendations to the central committee on all matters regarding the programmes and activities of the World Council of Churches.
In particular, it shall:
 - a) ensure that the development of programmes takes account of the major thrusts and policies adopted by the central committee as well as of the available financial resources;
 - b) consider in particular the theological inter-relationship of different World Council activities;
 - c) recommend to the central committee to initiate and terminate programmes and activities, as well as to make decisions on other basic questions of policy;
 - d) provide for and make recommendations for regular evaluation of programmes and activities;
 - e) recommend to the central committee the mandate and size of the commissions which are to advise the central committee through the programme committee in areas of constitutional responsibility of the Council;
 - f) recommend to the central committee the mandate and size of boards, in particular the board of the Ecumenical Institute;
 - g) appoint other advisory groups for specific areas or constituencies, as required. The size and periodicity of meetings of such advisory groups are to be determined in light of the tasks assigned and the resources available.

XI. Finance committee of the central committee

1. The finance committee of the central committee shall consist of not less than nine members, including:
 - a) a moderator, who shall be a member of the executive committee;
 - b) five members, who shall be members of the central committee, two of whom shall also be members of the executive committee;
 - c) three members, to be designated by the programme committee from its membership. The programme committee may designate alternates who may attend if the principal member is unable to be present.
2. The committee shall have the following responsibilities and duties:
 - a) To present to the central committee:
 - 1) in respect of the expired calendar year, an account of income and expenditure of all operations of the World Council of Churches and the balance sheet of the World Council of Churches at the end of that year and its recommendation, based on review of the report of the auditors, regarding approval and granting of discharge in respect of the accounts of the World Council of Churches for the completed period;
 - 2) in respect of the current year, a review of all financial operations;
 - 3) in respect of the succeeding calendar year, a budget covering all activities of the World Council of Churches and its recommendations regarding the approval of that budget in the light of its judgment as to the adequacy of the provisions made for the expenditure involved in the proposed programme of activities and the adequacy of reasonably foreseeable income to finance the budget; and
 - 4) in respect of the year next following the succeeding calendar year a financial

- forecast together with recommendations thereon as in (3) above.
- b) To consider and make recommendations to the central committee on all financial questions concerning the affairs of the World Council of Churches, such as:
- 1) the appointment of the auditor or auditors who shall be appointed annually by the central committee and shall be eligible for reappointment;
 - 2) accounting procedures;
 - 3) investment policy and procedures;
 - 4) the basis of calculation of contributions from member churches;
 - 5) procedures and methods of raising funds.

XII. Staff

1. The central committee shall elect or appoint or provide for the election or appointment of persons of special competence to conduct the continuing operations of the World Council of Churches. These persons collectively constitute the staff.
2. The general secretary shall be elected by the central committee. He or she is the chief executive officer of the World Council. As such, he or she is the head of the staff. When the position of general secretary becomes vacant, the executive committee shall appoint an acting general secretary.
3.
 - a) In addition to the general secretary, the central committee shall itself elect one or more deputy general secretaries, the directors for programme and management, and any other executive director.
 - b) The executive committee shall appoint all programme staff and shall report its actions to the central committee.
Specialized, administrative and house staff shall be appointed by the general secretary.
4. The staff leadership group shall consist of the general secretary (moderator), the deputy general secretary or secretaries, the executive secretary in the general secretariat (secretary), and the executive directors. Other staff may be invited for specific items on the agenda.
The staff leadership group is the chief internal management team. Its overall responsibility is to advise the general secretary in his/her role as chief executive officer of the Council. It has the task of ensuring that all activities of the Council are carried out in an integrated and cohesive manner. For this purpose it will:
 - a) Implement policies and priorities established by the central and executive committees and facilitate proposals to be submitted to them.
 - b) Provide for overall coordination, decide on priorities and the direction of the Council's activities.
 - c) Manage and allocate human and financial resources, propose the budget to the finance committees of the executive and central committees and ensure that programme planning is integrated with anticipated resources available.
 - d) Assist the general secretary in the appointment of staff and special reference groups.
5. There shall be a staff executive group. Its membership shall include ex-officio the members of the staff leadership group, the programme team coordinators, the director of Bossey and the management services managers. It shall meet regularly (normally twice a month); it shall be moderated by a member of the staff leadership group on a rotating basis.
The staff executive group shall advise the general secretary and the staff leadership group. Its purpose is to:
 - a) advise on matters of long-range planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities;
 - b) consider the preparation of the budget;
 - c) assure regular sharing of information and provide for discussion and interpretation of policies and issues affecting the Council as a whole;
 - d) facilitate the coordination of the activities of the teams;
 - e) appoint ad-hoc or permanent functional staff groups to advise on specific areas of concern;
 - f) promote a spirit and style of work to strengthen and promote integration, cooperation and collegiality.

6. The normal terms of appointment for the general secretary and for the deputy general secretary or secretaries shall be five years. Unless some other period is stated in the resolution making the appointment, the first term of office for all other staff appointed by the executive or central committee shall normally be four years from the date of the appointment. All appointments shall be reviewed one year before their expiration.
7. Retirement shall normally be at sixty-five for both men and women and in no case shall it be later than the end of the year in which a staff member reaches the age of sixty-eight.

XIII. Public statements

1. In the performance of its functions, the World Council of Churches through its assembly or through its central committee may issue statements on any situation or concern with which the Council or its constituent churches may be confronted.
2. While such statements may have great significance and influence as the expression of the judgment or concern of so widely representative a Christian body, yet their authority will consist only in the weight which they carry by their own truth and wisdom, and the publishing of such statements shall not be held to imply that the World Council as such has, or can have, any constitutional authority over the constituent churches or right to speak for them.
3. Any commission may recommend statements to the assembly or to the central committee for its consideration and action.
4. When, in the judgment of a commission, a statement should be issued before approval of the assembly or central committee can be obtained, the commission may do so provided the statement relates to matters within its own field of concern and action, has the approval of the moderator of the central committee and the general secretary, and the commission makes clear that neither the World Council of Churches nor any of its member churches is committed by the statement.
5. Between meetings of the central committee, when in their judgment the situation requires, a statement may be issued, provided that such statements are not contrary to the established policy of the Council, by:
 - a) the executive committee when meeting apart from the sessions of the central committee; or
 - b) the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee and the general secretary acting together; or
 - c) the moderator of the central committee or the general secretary on his or her own authority respectively.

XIV. Associate councils

1. Any national Christian council, national council of churches or national ecumenical council, established for purposes of ecumenical fellowship and activity, may be recognized by the central committee as an associate council, provided:
 - a) the applicant council, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its desire to cooperate with the World Council towards the achievement of one or more of the functions and purposes of this Council; and
 - b) the member churches of the World Council in the area have been consulted prior to the action.
2. Each associate council:
 - a) shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b) may, at the discretion of the central committee, be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c) shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the World Council shall inform each associate council regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed World Council programmes in its country.

4. In consultation with the associate councils, the central committee shall establish and review from time to time guidelines regarding the relationships between the World Council of Churches and national councils of churches.

XV. Regional ecumenical organizations

1. The World Council of Churches recognizes regional ecumenical organizations as essential partners in the ecumenical enterprise.
2. Such regional ecumenical organizations as may be designated by the central committee:
 - a) shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b) shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c) shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the World Council shall inform each of these regional ecumenical organizations regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed World Council programmes in its region.
4. The central committee, together with the regional ecumenical organizations, shall establish and review as appropriate guiding principles for relationships and cooperation between the World Council and regional ecumenical organizations, including the means whereby programmatic responsibilities could be shared among them.

XVI. Christian world communions

1. The World Council of Churches recognizes the role of Christian world communions or world confessional bodies in the ecumenical movement.
2. Such Christian world communions as may be designated by the central committee and which express their desire to this effect:
 - a) shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly; and
 - b) shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c) shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all World Council member churches.
3. The central committee shall establish and review as appropriate guidelines for relationships and cooperation with Christian world communions.

XVII. Specialized ministries engaged in ecumenical relief and development

1. Specialized ministries engaged in ecumenical relief and development are those church-based, church-related or ecumenical offices and organizations within the family of WCC member churches, serving the ecumenical movement particularly in the area of world service and development.
Any specialized ministry, committed to ecumenical diaconal services, may be recognized by the central committee as an organization with which the World Council of Churches has working relationships, provided:
 - a) the organization, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its willingness to relate to and cooperate with it; and
 - b) the WCC member church or churches with whom the specialized ministry is related do not formally oppose this form of relationship.
2. Each specialized ministry:
 - a) shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly (cf. rule IV.1.b.5);
 - b) shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c) shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.

3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the World Council may inform each of these specialized ministries regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed World Council programmes in its area of commitment and expertise.
4. In consultation with specialized ministries, the central committee shall establish and review from time to time guidelines regarding the relationships between the World Council of Churches and specialized ministries.

XVIII. International ecumenical organizations

1. Ecumenical organizations other than those mentioned under rules XIV, XV, XVI and XVII may be recognized by the central committee as organizations with which the World Council of Churches has working relationships, provided:
 - a) the organization is international in nature (global, regional or sub-regional) and its objectives are consistent with the functions and purposes of the World Council; and
 - b) the organization, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its desire to relate to and cooperate with it.
2. On the basis of reciprocity, each international ecumenical organization:
 - a) shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly (cf. rule IV.1.b.5);
 - b) shall be provided with copies of general communications sent to all World Council member churches.

XIX. Legal provisions

1. The duration of the World Council of Churches is unlimited.
2. The legal headquarters of the Council shall be at Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland. It is registered in Geneva as an association according to art. 60ff. of the Swiss civil code. Regional offices may be organized in different parts of the world by decision of the central committee.
3. The World Council of Churches is legally represented by its executive committee or by such persons as may be empowered by the executive committee to represent it.
4. The World Council shall be legally bound by the joint signatures of two of the following persons: the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, the general secretary, the deputy general secretary or secretaries. Any two of the above-named persons shall have power to authorize other persons, chosen by them, to act jointly or singly on behalf of the World Council of Churches in fields circumscribed in the power of attorney.
5. The Council shall obtain the means necessary for the pursuance of its work from the contributions of its member churches and from donations or bequests.
6. The Council shall not pursue commercial functions but it shall have the right to act as an agency of interchurch aid and to publish literature in connection with its aims. It is not entitled to distribute any surplus income by way of profit or bonus among its members.
7. Members of the governing bodies of the Council or of the assembly shall have no personal liability with regard to the obligations or commitments of the Council. The commitments entered upon by the Council are guaranteed solely by its own assets.

XX. Conduct of meetings

1. *General*
 - a) These provisions for conduct of meetings shall apply to meetings of the assembly, the central committee, the executive committee and all other bodies of the WCC. During an assembly, the titles “president, moderator and vice-moderators of the central committee” shall refer to the persons holding those offices in the outgoing central committee. During the term of a central committee such titles shall refer to the current presidents and officers of that central committee.
 - b) “Delegate” shall mean an official representative of a member church to an assembly with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making (rule IV.1.a). For meetings of the

central committee, “delegate” shall mean a member of the central committee or that member’s substitute (rule VI.1.c), with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making.

- c) “Participant” shall include delegates as well as persons invited to the assembly or a meeting of the central committee as persons with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making (rule IV.1.b).

2. *Categories of sessions*

The assembly shall sit in one of the following categories of sessions: general, hearing or decision. The business committee shall determine the category of session appropriate for different parts of the agenda.

a) *General session*

General sessions shall be reserved for ceremonial occasions, public acts of witness and formal addresses. Only matters proposed by the central committee or by the business committee shall be included in general sessions. No decisions shall be made during general sessions.

b) *Hearing session*

Hearing sessions shall be designated for plenary presentations, discussion, dialogue, and exchange of ideas as a resource for developing understanding, deepening fellowship among member churches and coming to a common mind on matters on the agenda. A wide range of perspectives shall be encouraged during hearing sessions. No decisions shall be made during hearing sessions, other than to move to a decision session, if deemed necessary or to deal with a point of order or procedural proposals.

c) *Decision session*

Decision sessions shall be designated for matters requiring a decision, including:

- 1) adoption of the agenda;
- 2) proposal for change in the agenda;
- 3) appointments and elections;
- 4) reception or adoption of reports or recommendations;
- 5) actions to be taken on recommendations or proposals of committees or commissions, or 6) arising out of hearing sessions;
- 6) adoption of accounts and financial audits; and
- 7) amendment of constitution or rules.

3. *Moderating sessions*

- a) A moderator for each session of the assembly shall be designated before an assembly by the outgoing central committee, and during an assembly by the business committee, as follows:

- 1) in general sessions one of the presidents or the moderator of the central committee shall preside;
- 2) in hearing sessions one of the presidents, the moderator or a vice-moderator of the central committee, or a delegate with specific expertise in the subject matter of the hearing shall preside;
- 3) in decision sessions the moderator or a vice-moderator of the central committee or delegate to the assembly who was a member of the outgoing central committee shall preside.

- b) The role of session moderators shall be:

- 1) to convene the session, including announcing the category of session;
- 2) to facilitate and encourage discussion and dialogue, for the exchange and development of ideas, and to assist the meeting to come to a common mind;
- 3) during decision sessions, to test any emerging agreement on a particular point and whether the meeting is ready to move to a decision by consensus;
- 4) in the event the category of session is to change during a session, to announce the change in category, providing a break in the session to mark the change in category; and
- 5) to close the session.

- c) The moderator shall consult with the recorder for the session to ensure that the developing consensus is accurately noted and any changed wording promptly made available to the meeting.

- d) All moderators shall undertake specific training in conducting meetings based upon the consensus

model of decision-making, as described in these rules and the accompanying guidelines.

4. *Moderator of the assembly*

The moderator of the assembly shall announce the opening, suspension and the adjournment of the assembly.

5. *Official minutes, records and reports*

- a) The business committee shall appoint recorders from among delegates for each decision session. Their role shall be to follow the discussion of a decision session, to record the language of the emerging consensus, including final language of decisions taken, and to assist the moderator of the session in discerning an emerging consensus. Recorders shall also assist the moderator in ensuring that the final agreed wording of a proposal is translated and available to delegates before a decision is made.
- b) The business committee shall appoint rapporteurs for each hearing session and for committee meetings for which official minutes are not maintained, to prepare a report of the meeting including major themes and specific proposals. A rapporteur appointed for a committee meeting shall function as a recorder of that meeting.
- c) The business committee shall appoint minute-takers to record the official minutes of general, hearing and decision sessions of an assembly or any meeting for which formal minutes must be kept, and shall include a record of the discussion, motions and decisions. The minutes will normally incorporate by reference any report of the meeting. The minutes shall be signed by the moderator and the minute-taker for the session and shall be sent to the participants of the meeting. For all minutes other than minutes of an assembly, if there is no objection within six months from the sending of the minutes, the minutes shall be considered to be accepted. The first full central committee meeting following an assembly shall confirm the minutes of the assembly.
- d) Decision sessions shall produce official minutes, a record and/or report.
- e) If, after the close of a meeting, a member church declares that it cannot support a decision of the meeting, the member church may submit its objection in writing and have its position recorded in the minutes or report of a subsequent meeting. The decision itself shall not be rescinded by this action.

6. *Agenda*

- a) Matters may be included on the agenda of a meeting according to rule IV.3 and procedures established by the business and programme committees, and any other committee established by central committee for that purpose. Normally, matters included on an agenda will be based upon reports, recommendations or proposals that previously have been fully considered and have the consensus support of the proposing group or committee.
- b) The business committee shall ensure that the moderator is advised before each session, and if appropriate during breaks within a session, as to the conduct of the business and the priority of various agenda items.
- c) A delegate may propose to the business committee an item of business to be included on, or any change in, the agenda. If after consideration the business committee has not agreed to the proposal, the delegate may appeal the decision to the moderator of the assembly in writing. The moderator shall at a convenient time inform the assembly of the proposal, and a member of the business committee shall explain the reasons for this refusal. The delegate may give reasons for proposing it. The moderator shall then without further debate put the following question: Shall the assembly accept this proposal? If the assembly agrees to accept the proposal, the business committee as soon as possible shall bring proposals for the inclusion of the matter or the change in the agenda.
- d) Matters concerning ecclesiological self-understanding: Where a matter being raised is considered by a delegate to go against the ecclesiological self-understanding of his or her church, the delegate may request that it not be submitted for decision. The moderator shall seek the advice of the business committee in consultation with this delegate and other members of the same church or confession present at the session. If agreed that the matter does in fact go against the ecclesiological self-understanding of the delegate's church, the moderator shall announce that the matter will be

removed from the agenda of the decision session and may be considered in a hearing session. The materials and minutes of the discussion shall be sent to the member churches for their study and comment.

- e) Subject to the provisions of this rule, the agenda shall be proposed, amended and/or adopted in accordance with rule IV.3. and IV.5.

7. *Speaking*

- a) In hearing sessions, participants wishing to speak either may submit to the moderator a written request or may queue at the microphones when the moderator so invites, but may speak only when called by the moderator.
- b) In decision sessions of the assembly or central committee, only delegates may speak. Delegates wishing to speak either may submit to the moderator a written request or may queue at the microphones when the moderator so invites, but may speak only when called by the moderator.
- c) In sessions of committees and advisory bodies where both hearing and decision may take place, participants who are not delegates have the right to speak but not to take part in decision-making.
- d) The moderator shall decide who shall speak, ensuring that a fair distribution of opinions is heard, and may take advice on the order of speakers from a small sub-committee of the business committee. If time allows and others are not left unheard, the moderator may permit speakers to intervene more than once.
- e) When called by the moderator, a speaker shall speak from a microphone, first stating his or her name, church, country, and role at the meeting, and shall address all remarks to the moderator.
- f) Remarks will normally be limited to three minutes; however, the moderator may use discretion in allowing extra time if there is a difficulty in language or interpretation or if the issues being discussed are unusually complex.
- g) Procedural proposals – hearing or decision sessions: Provided that a speaker is not interrupted, a delegate may ask for clarification of the pending matter or may raise suggestions about procedure. The moderator immediately shall provide clarification or respond to the suggestion for change of procedure.
- h) Points of order – hearing or decision sessions: This provision is available to question whether procedures being followed are in accordance with these rules, to object to offensive language, to make a point of personal explanation, or to request that a meeting move to closed session. Points of order may be raised by a participant at any time, even by interrupting another speaker. A participant gains the attention of the moderator by standing and calling, “point of order!” The moderator shall ask the participant to state the point of order and then (without discussion) shall rule on it immediately.
- i) If any delegate disagrees with the moderator’s decision on a procedural proposal or point of order, the delegate may appeal against it. In this case the moderator will put this question, without discussion, to the meeting: “Does the meeting concur with the decision of the moderator?” The delegates present shall decide the question according to the decision-making procedures then being employed.

8. *Reaching consensus: seeking the common mind of the meeting*

- a) Consensus shall be understood as seeking the common mind of the meeting without resort to a formal vote, in a process of genuine dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and empowering, whilst prayerfully seeking to discern God’s will.
- b) Decisions will normally be by consensus, unless otherwise specified by the rules.
- c) A consensus decision on a particular matter shall be recorded when one of the following occurs:
- 1) all delegates are in agreement (unanimity); or
 - 2) most are in agreement and those who disagree are satisfied that the discussion has been both full and fair and do not object that the proposal expresses the general mind of the meeting.

- d) A consensus decision shall mean that there is agreement about the outcome of a discussion. This may mean agreement to accept a proposal or a variation of a proposal; it also may mean agreement about another outcome, including agreement to reject a proposal, to postpone a matter, that no decision can be reached, or that there are various opinions that may be held. When consensus has been reached that various opinions can be held concerning a matter, those various opinions shall be recorded in the final wording of the minutes and the report and the record of the meeting.

9. *Decision-making by consensus*

- a) A proposal or recommendation considered in a decision session may be affirmed, modified or rejected. Delegates may suggest modifications, and the moderator may allow discussion on more than one modification at a time. Reaching a common mind may require a series of steps, if there is a variety of opinions being expressed. As discussion proceeds, the moderator may ask the meeting to affirm what is held in common before encouraging discussion on those aspects of a proposal about which more diverse opinions have been voiced.
- b) To assist the moderator in discerning the mind of the meeting and to move efficiently towards consensus, the recorder of the session shall maintain a record of the discussion. Delegates may be provided with indicator cards to facilitate participation.
- c) A delegate or the moderator may suggest that the matter under discussion be referred for further work to an appropriate group holding a range of points of view. This suggestion itself shall be tested to discern the mind of the meeting. If agreed, the business committee shall schedule consideration of the matter for a later session.
- d) When it seems that the meeting is close to agreement on an outcome, the moderator shall ensure that the wording of the proposal (or the proposal as varied during the course of the discussion) is clear to all delegates, and then test whether there is consensus on that outcome. If all are agreed consistent with rule XX.8.c.1, the moderator shall declare that consensus has been reached and the decision made. If the meeting is not unanimous, the moderator shall invite those who hold a minority view to explain their reasons if they wish and to indicate whether they can agree with a decision pursuant to rule XX.8.c.2. If so, consensus shall be declared.
- e) If, after every effort has been made to reach consensus, agreement cannot be reached and it is the opinion of an officer or the business committee that a decision must be made before the meeting concludes, the moderator shall ask the business committee to formulate a proposal for how the matter may be considered again in a new form. At the later decision session where this new approach is considered, the meeting itself shall decide whether a decision must be made at this meeting, and, if so, shall proceed on any one of the following courses, which may be followed sequentially:
 - 1) to work further towards consensus on the proposal in its new form;
 - 2) to work to reach agreement among most delegates with some delegates recording an objection, in which event a meeting shall record acceptance of the proposal, providing that each delegate who does not agree is satisfied with that outcome and has the right to have his or her viewpoint recorded in the minutes, in the report, and in the record of the meeting; or
 - 3) to move into voting procedures to decide the matter (rule XX.10).
- f) meeting and there is no ready agreement in accordance with rule XX.9.e.1 or 2, the moderator may offer a procedural proposal: "That the meeting resolve the proposal now by vote". Except for matters described in rule XX.6.d, "matters concerning ecclesiological self-understanding", the moderator shall announce that a vote to decide this change of procedure shall be taken. Delegates shall indicate by voting whether they agree that the matter shall be decided by a vote. If 85 percent of delegates present vote in favour of moving the matter to a voting process, the matter shall so move. If fewer than 85 percent of delegates present vote in favour of moving the matter to a voting process, the matter shall not so move, and the meeting shall decide, again by vote of 85 percent of delegates present, whether discussion should continue to achieve consensus or whether discussion should be discontinued.

10. *Decision-making by vote*

- a) Some matters require decision by vote, rather than by consensus. These include:
 - 1) constitutional changes (two-thirds majority);
 - 2) elections (simple majority, with specific procedures in each case);
 - 3) adoption of yearly accounts and of the financial audit report (simple majority).
- b) For matters that have been moved from consensus procedures to decision-making by vote in accordance with rule XX.9.e.3 or rule XX.9.f, and for matters reserved to a voting procedure according to subsection (a) of this section, the following procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) All motions must be moved and seconded by a delegate, and the mover has the right to speak first.
 - 2) In discussion following the seconding of a motion, no delegate may speak more than once, except that the delegate who moved the motion may answer objections at the end of the discussion.
 - 3) Any delegate may move an amendment, and if a seconder supports it, the amendment shall be considered simultaneously with the original proposal.
 - 4) When discussion is concluded, including the right of mover to reply (see 2 above), the moderator shall call for the vote and shall put any amendment first. If approved, it will be incorporated in the original proposal, which will then be put to the vote without further discussion.
 - 5) If the mover seeks to withdraw a motion or amendment during the discussion, the moderator will seek the consent of the meeting for the withdrawal.
- c) A delegate may move to close the discussion, but in doing so shall not interrupt a speaker. If seconded, the moderator shall call for a vote on this motion immediately without discussion. If two-thirds of the meeting agree, the voting process will then begin. If the motion fails, discussion will proceed, but the same motion to close discussion may be moved again as the discussion continues, but not by the delegate who moved it the first time.
- d) Voting shall be by show of hands or indicator cards and the moderator shall ask first for those in favour, then for those against, and finally for those who wish to abstain from voting. The moderator shall announce the result of the vote immediately.
- e) If the moderator is in doubt, or for any other reason decides to do so, or if a delegate requests it, a vote on the matter shall be taken immediately by count of a show of hands or indicator cards. The moderator may call tellers to count those voting and abstaining. A delegate may ask that voting be by secret written ballot, and if seconded and if a majority of delegates present and voting agree, a secret written ballot shall be taken. The moderator shall announce the result of any count or secret written ballot.
- f) A majority of the delegates present, including those who choose to abstain from voting, shall determine a matter being decided by vote unless a higher proportion is required by the constitution or these rules. If the vote results in a tie, the matter shall be regarded as defeated.
- g) If the moderator wishes to participate in the discussion, he or she shall relinquish the position of moderator of the session to another presiding officer until the matter has been resolved.
- h) A moderator entitled to vote as a delegate may do so, but may not cast the decisive vote in the event of a tie.
- i) Any two delegates who voted with the majority for a previously approved matter may request that the business committee propose reconsideration of the matter. The business committee shall bring the proposal to the next decision session and may express an opinion as to whether the matter should be reconsidered. Reconsideration shall take place only if two-thirds of delegates present agree.
- j) Anyone voting with a minority or abstaining from voting may have his or her opinion recorded in the minutes, in the report, and/or the record of the meeting.

11. Languages

The working languages in use in the World Council of Churches are English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. The general secretary shall make reasonable effort to provide interpretation for any one of those languages into the others and shall endeavour to provide written translation of the specific wording of proposals. A participant may speak in another language only if he or she provides for interpretation into one of the working languages. The general secretary shall provide all possible assistance to any participant requiring an interpreter.

XXI. Amendments

Amendments to these rules may be proposed at any session of the assembly or at any session of the central committee by any member and shall be decided according to the procedures in Rule XX.9; if the meeting shifts from consensus to voting, then the procedures in Rule XX. 10 will apply. In this case, the proposed change must receive a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present to be adopted. No alteration in rules I, VI, VII and XXI shall come into effect until it has been confirmed by the assembly. Notice of a proposal to make any amendment shall be given in writing at least twenty-four hours before the session of the assembly or central committee at which it is to be considered.