



# General Assembly

Distr.: Limited  
6 November 2020

Original: English

---

## Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 126

### Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

**Austria, Barbados, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Jamaica, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Sweden and Switzerland: revised draft decision**

#### **Procedure for decision-making in the General Assembly<sup>1</sup> when an in-person meeting is not possible**

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming that the procedure for adopting proposals in the General Assembly is governed by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and other applicable resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, and stressing that the present decision is without prejudice to any future discussion on the rules of procedure,

Recalling the unprecedented limitations caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, when in-person meetings of the General Assembly were not possible owing to precautionary measures aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19,

Determined to ensure the full functionality of the General Assembly at all times,

Reaffirming that the General Assembly shall, as a rule and in accordance with established practice, always meet in person, and recognizing that exception to that practice shall be made only in the most extraordinary circumstances and for as limited a time period as possible,

Acknowledging that such circumstances call for increased coordination by the President of the General Assembly with Member States, and reaffirming that the procedure set out in the present decision shall be applied in as limited a manner as possible and with a particular focus on the continuity of essential functions of the General Assembly,

Stressing the importance of orderly, transparent and inclusive consultations, in particular in the absence of in-person meetings, with a view to establishing the broadest possible agreement on proposals put before the General Assembly for action:

---

<sup>1</sup> The subsidiary organs of the General Assembly may apply the procedure set out in the present decision.



(a) Decides that the procedure set out in the present decision shall strictly apply without discrimination and only in the most exceptional circumstances, when an in-person meeting of the General Assembly is not possible for a prolonged period of time owing to concrete and ongoing risks to the safety and well-being of representatives of Member States and United Nations personnel;

(b) Also decides that the President of the General Assembly shall determine that the circumstances described in paragraph (a) above apply, after consultation with the Chairs of the Main Committees and guided by the recommendation of the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Medical Director, the head of the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat and the host State authorities, as relevant and applicable to the situation; and further decides that such determination shall immediately be communicated to Member States, reviewed constantly and considered revoked upon convening the first in-person meeting following the application of the procedure prescribed in the present decision;

(c) Authorizes the President of the General Assembly, where an in-person meeting of the General Assembly is not possible, to circulate, upon request by the main sponsor, a proposal that has been issued as a document of the General Assembly in all official languages to all Member States, with a view to taking action thereon;

(d) Decides that the President of the General Assembly shall put the proposal in question under a silence procedure of 72 hours, and decides that, if the silence is not broken, the resolution or decision shall be considered adopted;

(e) Also decides that the President of the General Assembly shall put a proposal to the vote without holding an in-person meeting only in the event that a vote is requested by a Member State in writing during the silence procedure under paragraph (d) above or if the silence was broken by means other than a request for a vote;

(f) Further decides that the General Assembly shall take note of proposals adopted by means of silence procedure at its first plenary meeting held when in-person meetings are possible;

(g) Decides that the President of the General Assembly shall put a proposal to the vote in accordance with the arrangements set out below:

(i) The President shall circulate a letter to all Member States announcing that a vote has been requested on a specific proposal and indicating the date and time at which the vote will commence; such a date and time shall be fixed in a manner that would allow at least 72 hours between the circulation of the letter by the President and the commencement of the vote, except for procedural motions, which shall be put to the vote within 24 hours of the time of circulation of the President's letter; the letter shall be accompanied by the proposal in question, which shall be in the six official languages of the General Assembly;

(ii) No other action may be proposed in relation to the proposal after a vote on the proposal has commenced at the date and time announced by the President, except a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting; this does not prevent the General Assembly from taking decisions on other proposals in parallel;

(iii) Member States may vote "in favour" or "against" or indicate "abstain" through an electronic means provided by the Secretariat within existing resources and specified by the President before the voting period, which shall be one hour; the votes cast by Member States shall become visible to other Member States five minutes before the closure of the voting period;

- (iv) The voting process shall be considered valid if a majority of the members of the General Assembly are present during the voting process, which shall be determined by counting those Member States that affirmed their presence during the voting period before accessing the electronic voting page for the proposal concerned;
- (v) If the votes in favour reach the required majority, the proposal shall be considered adopted and the General Assembly will be informed of the decision at its first plenary meeting held after the cessation of the precautionary measures as soon as the circumstances allow;
- (h) Authorizes the President of the General Assembly, in the event that an amendment or a procedural motion is proposed at least 24 hours in advance of the original date and time of the vote on a proposal announced in the letter of the President pursuant to paragraph (g) (i) above, to immediately suspend the scheduled vote and immediately circulate the amendment or the procedural motion in question, and take one of the following steps:
- (i) If an amendment is proposed, the President shall circulate the amendment to all Member States; the amendment may be placed under a silence procedure or, if a vote is requested, shall be put to the vote in accordance with paragraph (g) above;
- (ii) The President shall put the procedural motion in question to the vote in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure of the General Assembly and paragraph (g) above;
- (i) Decides that if a point of order is raised during the voting period referred to in paragraph (g) (iii) above in connection with the actual conduct of the voting in accordance with rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the President of the General Assembly shall suspend the vote and apply the following procedure:
- (i) The point of order shall be decided by the President in accordance with rule 71 of the rules of procedure; the President's ruling will be communicated by the President to all Member States, indicating the time by which Member States may appeal against the ruling of the President, which shall be one hour from the time at which the communication was sent out;
- (ii) If there is no appeal against the ruling during the specified time frame, the President's ruling shall stand;
- (iii) In the event of an appeal, the President will immediately notify all Member States that an appeal has been made to the President's ruling and indicate the date and time of the voting on the appeal, which shall take place within one hour of the time when the President has notified that an appeal has been made to the ruling; the voting shall be held in accordance with paragraphs (g) (ii) to (v) above;
- (iv) The President will communicate a new date and time at which the voting process on the underlying proposal will resume;
- (j) Also decides that the Secretariat shall, as part of its intergovernmental services and within existing resources, provide technical support and assistance upon request by Member States to ensure the full and equal access by all States to the procedure outlined in the present decision.