



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



World Commission on
the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge
and Technology (COMEST)

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RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE WORLD COMMISSION ON THE ETHICS OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY (COMEST)

I. MEMBERSHIP

Rule 1 Membership

- 1.1 The World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”, shall be composed of 18 members, in accordance with Article 3.1 of its Statutes.
- 1.2 The Chairpersons of UNESCO’s five intergovernmental scientific programmes (IOC, MAB, MOST, IGCP and IHP), of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC), and those of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS), of the International Social Science Council (ISSC), of the International Council of Science (ICSU), as well as the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs are ex officio members of the Commission, in accordance with Article 3.5 of its Statutes.

II. SESSIONS

Rule 2 Regular and extraordinary sessions (Article 5 of the Statutes of COMEST)

- 2.1 The Commission shall normally meet in regular session once every 2 years.
- 2.2 The Commission shall meet in extraordinary session, such sessions being convened by the Director-General of UNESCO, at the request of the Chairperson of the Commission, provided that the necessary resources are available.

Rule 3 Convening of sessions of the Commission (Article 5 of the Statutes of the Commission)

- 3.1 The sessions of the Commission shall be convened by the Director-General of UNESCO.
- 3.2 The Director-General shall inform the members of the Commission of the date, venue and provisional agenda of each regular session at least 60 days before the opening of the session; in the case of an extraordinary session, members shall be informed, if possible, at least 30 days before the opening of the session.
- 3.3 The Director-General shall, at the same time, inform the States and the organizations mentioned in Article 4 of the Statutes of the Commission, of the date, venue and agenda of each session.

Rule 4 Date and venue of the sessions

- 4.1 The Director-General, in consultation with the Bureau of the Commission, shall set the date and venue of each session.
- 4.2 Any Member State of UNESCO, or member of any one of the United Nations system may invite the Director-General to convene a session of the Commission on its territory.

III. OBSERVERS AND HEARINGS

Rule 5 Observers (Article 4 of the Statutes of the Commission)

The States and organizations mentioned in Article 4 of the Statutes of the Commission may attend the sessions of the Commission as observers, on the invitation of the Director General.

Rule 6 Hearings (Article 3.6 of the Statutes of the Commission)

The Director-General shall invite specialists, representatives of non-governmental organizations and eminent persons designated by the Commission to participate in any hearings organized during the sessions of the Commission.

IV. AGENDA

Rule 7 Agenda

- 7.1 The agenda for the sessions of the Commission shall be prepared by the Director-General in consultation with the Chairperson of the Commission.
- 7.2 The agenda of a regular session of the Commission shall include:
- (i) all items and study topics the inclusion of which has been decided by the Commission at its previous sessions;
 - (ii) all items proposed by the Bureau of the Commission;
 - (iii) all items which the Director-General has decided to include.
- 7.3 The agenda of an extraordinary session shall include only the items for the examination of which the extraordinary session was convened.

Rule 8 Addition of new items

The Commission may add new items to the agenda thus established, if so decided by a two-thirds majority of the Commission members present.

V. BUREAU

Rule 9 Elections (Article 6 of the Statutes of the Commission)

- 9.1 At each of its regular sessions, the Commission shall elect a Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, who, assisted by the Executive Secretary, shall constitute the Bureau of the Commission and shall remain in office until the opening of the regular session thereafter, provided that they remain members of the Commission.
- 9.2 The Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur shall be immediately eligible for re-election only once.

Rule 10 Functions of the Bureau (Article 6 of the Statutes of the Commission)

The Bureau shall be responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Commission and setting the date, time and agenda of meetings. It shall perform any other function entrusted to it by the Commission.

Rule 11 Duties of the Chairperson

11.1 The chairperson shall declare the opening and closure of sessions, direct the discussions, ensure observance of these Rules and accord the right to speak. He/She shall discharge any other duties entrusted to him/her by the Commission.

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

Rule 12 Replacement of the Chairperson

12.1 If the Chairperson is unable to exercise his/her functions during a whole session of the Commission or part thereof, his/her duties shall be carried out in turn by the Vice-Chairperson following the French alphabetical order.

12.2 If a Chairperson ceases to be a member of the Commission or for any reason is unable to complete his/her term of office, he/she shall be replaced by a Vice-Chairperson, following the French alphabetical order, for the unexpired portion of the term of office.

Rule 13 Replacement of the Rapporteur

13.1 If the Rapporteur is unable to exercise his/her functions during a whole session of the Commission or part thereof, his/her duties shall be carried out in turn by a Vice-Chairperson, following the French alphabetical order, for the unexpired portion of the term or office.

13.2 If the Rapporteur ceases to be a member of the Commission, or for any reason cannot complete his/her term of office, he/she shall be replaced by a Vice-Chairperson, following the French alphabetical order, for the unexpired portion of the term of office.

VI. CONDUCT OF DEBATES

Rule 14 Quorum

A majority of the members of the Commission present at the session shall constitute a quorum.

Rule 15 Special consultation by correspondence

The Bureau may be consulted by the Secretariat by correspondence concerning urgent and important measures.

Rule 16 Order of speeches

16.1 The Chairperson of the meeting shall give the floor to speakers in the order in which they signify their wish to speak.

16.2 The Chairperson of the meeting may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker when circumstances call for such a decision.

16.3 The observers referred to in Rule 6 of these Rules may take the floor during a meeting with the prior consent of the Chairperson of the meeting.

Rule 17 Public nature of meetings

Meetings shall be held in public unless the Commission decides otherwise.

Rule 18 Working languages

18.1 The working languages of the Commission shall be English and French. Statements made during meetings of the Commission in one of these two languages shall be interpreted into the other language.

18.2 The documents of the Commission shall be issued in English and French.

VII. SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMISSION

Rule 19 Secretariat (Article 7 of the Statutes of the Commission)

19.1 The Commission shall be assisted by a secretariat whose members shall be appointed by the Director-General.

19.2 The Director-General or his representative shall participate in the work of the Commission.

19.3 The secretariat shall be responsible for preparing, translating and distributing all official documents of the Commission and shall arrange for the interpretation of the discussions in accordance with Rule 18 of these Rules.

19.4 The secretariat shall also perform all other duties necessary for the proper conduct of the work of the Commission.

VII. ADOPTION, AMENDMENT AND SUSPENDED APPLICATION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rule 20 Adoption of the Rules of Procedure (Article 9 of the Statutes of the Commission)

The Commission shall adopt its Rules of Procedure by a decision taken by a simple majority of the members of the Commission present. The Rules shall be submitted to the Director-General for approval.

Rule 21 Amendment of the Rules of Procedure

These Rules of Procedure, except for rules which reproduce certain provisions of the Statutes of the Commission, may be amended by a decision of the Commission taken by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Commission present, provided that the proposal for amendment is included in the agenda of the session, in accordance with Rules 7 or 8 of these Rules.

Rule 22 Suspended Application of the Rules of Procedure

The application of certain rules in the Rules of Procedure, except for rules which reproduce provisions of the Statutes of the Commission, may be suspended by a decision of the Commission taken by a two-thirds majority of its members present.