

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**Paris, UNESCO Headquarters
22-23 November 2023**

**Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda:
Revisions to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly
of the States Parties to the Convention**

SUMMARY

The proposed revisions to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties to the 1972 Convention are hereby presented as part of the Culture Sector's effort to harmonize the equivalent rules for the seven assemblies of the culture conventions. The present document should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/23/24.GA/INF.9 which contains proposed revisions to the Rules of Procedure based on the Model Rules of Procedure annexed to Document 41 C/55 together with concise explanatory notes.

Draft Resolution: 24 GA 9, see Point 9.

I. BACKGROUND

1. This session of the General Assembly of the 1972 Convention is requested to examine a proposed revisions to its Rules of Procedure. These revisions are presented in response to the requests made by Member States to harmonize procedures of the governing bodies of UNESCO's culture conventions¹
2. The initiative to harmonize the Rules of Procedures across the Culture Conventions dates back to 2015, when the 38th General Conference of UNESCO² invited all committees and organs of the Conventions to discuss the follow-up to the recommendations of the External Auditor's report to improve their governance. The same session of the General Conference also established an Open-Ended Working Group on Governance, Procedures and Working Methods of the Governing Bodies of UNESCO with the objective to pursue greater synergy, harmonization, efficiency, and impact. The 39th session of the General Conference in 2017 subsequently examined the report of the Open-Ended Working Group³ and endorsed the group's recommendations.⁴ These recommendations are of relevance as they invite governing bodies of the culture Conventions, through broad consultations, to further explore, as appropriate, harmonization of the rules of procedure and coherence in decision-making procedures, taking into account their respective mandates and specificities.⁵
3. The Secretariats of the 1972, 2003 and 2005 Conventions established an internal working group in 2019 to carry out an informal comparative analysis of the Rules of Procedures of these instruments. Subsequently, a Model Rules of Procedure was developed through a collaboration between the Secretariats of all Conventions in the field of Culture and the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs in 2021. The Model Rules of Procedure are intended to serve as a basis for assemblies wishing to harmonize the terminology and the technical provisions of their rules of procedure with the rules of procedure of the other UNESCO conventions in the field of culture. The group conducted an in-depth comparative study of the regulatory texts and procedural practices of each assembly. The Model Rules of Procedure respect each Convention's specificities and practices and aim to serve as a basis for the harmonization exercise, with the following goals:
 - To bring coherence in terminology to allow for a uniform interpretation;
 - To clarify ambiguities and formalize certain practices when helpful;
 - To introduce procedures reflecting the best practices of the assemblies;
 - To include new provisions aimed at addressing certain shortcomings in the rules.
4. The forty-first session of UNESCO's General Conference in 2021 examined this set of model rules of procedure for the assemblies of the States Parties to UNESCO's culture conventions annexed to document [41 C/55](#). The General Conference adopted [41 C/Resolution 74](#), by which it '[took] note of the model rules of procedure for the assemblies of UNESCO's conventions in the field of culture annexed to document 41 C/55, from which the said assemblies may draw insights to explore possible ways to harmonize their respective rules of procedure, as appropriate'. The General Conference

¹ The rules of procedure of the seven assemblies correspond to the Rules of Procedure of: the Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the 1954 Convention, the Meeting of States Parties to the 1970 Convention, the General Assembly of States Parties to the 1972 Convention, the Meeting of States Parties to the 1999 Second Protocol, the Meeting of States Parties to the 2001 Convention, the General Assembly of States Parties to the 2003 Convention and the Conference of Parties to the 2005 Convention.

² [38 C/Resolution 101](#); [document 38 C/23](#)

³ [Document 39 C/20](#)

⁴ [39 C/Resolution 87](#), as amended by APX Commission ([document 39 C/70](#))

⁵ See [Recommendations](#), in particular 96 as well as 58, 65, 66, 67 and 71.

also requested the Director-General to submit a report at its next session ‘on the follow-up to this resolution on raising effectiveness of UNESCO’s conventions in the field of culture’.

5. During the debates of the 23rd session of the General Assembly of the 1972 Convention in 2021, the importance of [41C/Resolution 74 referring to](#) the model rules of procedure for the assemblies of UNESCO’s conventions in the field of culture annexed to Document 41 C/55, from which the said assemblies may draw insights to explore possible ways to harmonize their respective rules of procedure, was noted.
6. Accordingly, the Secretariat is presenting some proposed revisions to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

II. PROPOSED REVISIONS

7. The proposed revisions are based on the Model Rules of Procedure and Document WHC/23/24.GA/INF.9 includes a comparative table to demonstrate how the seventeen current Rules of Procedure could be revised to include rules proposed in the Model Rules of procedure (some of them with sub-rules), supported by explanatory notes.
8. It is also important to recall that as indicated within the framework of the development of the Model Rules of Procedure, the Rules of Procedure of all six relevant assemblies include detailed provisions concerning the respective committees, such as rules on the procedure for the presentation of candidatures for membership in the committee, geographical representation and other criteria to be fulfilled by candidates, elections, terms of office, etc. While these provisions are similar in general terms, their language and the applicable rules they establish vary from one assembly to the other, which reflects the differences between the institutional structure of each convention. It is also noteworthy that the rules that concern the functions, composition and election of the committees are often governed by the texts of the respective conventions and were the result of lengthy negotiations. Consequently, the text of proposed Rule 35 related to Elections of the members of the World Heritage Committee is the exact text of current Rule 14, which was the subject of a consensus between States Parties after numerous meetings, including a first extraordinary session of the General Assembly of States Parties in 2015. In light of the above and taking into account the sensitivity of this matter, the Secretariat is not proposing harmonization of this chapter and, hence, no change in the current Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure is proposed.

III. DRAFT RESOLUTION

Draft Resolution: 24 GA 9

The General Assembly,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC/23/24.GA/9 and WHC/23/24.GA/INF.9,*
2. *Recalling **41C/Resolution 74**, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 41st session in 2021,*
3. *Commends the efforts of the UNESCO Culture Sector and the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs to establish the Model Rules of Procedure, and thanks the Secretariat of the 1972 Convention for having explored possible ways to harmonize the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly on that basis,*
4. *Adopts the amendments to the Rules of Procedure as foreseen in Document WHC/23/24.GA/INF.9.*