United Nations A/CONF.240/2023/2

Distr.: General
10 October 2022

Original: English

United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028
New York, 22–24 March 2023
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Adoption of the rules of procedure

Provisional rules of procedure

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit herewith the provisional rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028. The General Assembly, in its resolution 75/212, recommended the present provisional rules of procedure for adoption by the Conference.

* A/CONF.240/2023/1.

22-22447 (E) 121022

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Provisional rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028

I. Representation and credentials

Rule 1
Composition of delegations

The delegation of each State participating in the Conference and that of the European Union shall consist of a head of delegation and such other representatives, alternate representatives and advisers as may be required.

Rule 2
Alternates and advisers

The head of delegation may designate an alternate representative or an adviser to act as a representative.

Rule 3
Submission of credentials

The credentials of representatives and the names of alternate representatives and advisers shall be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, if possible, not less than one week before the date fixed for the opening of the Conference. The credentials shall be issued either by the Head of the State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or, in the case of the European Union, by the President of the European Commission.

Rule 4
Credentials Committee

A Credentials Committee of nine members shall be appointed at the beginning of the Conference. Its composition shall be based on that of the Credentials Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. It shall examine the credentials of representatives and report to the Conference without delay.

Rule 5
Provisional participation in the Conference

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

II. Officers

Rule 6
Elections

The Conference shall elect from among the representatives of participating States the following officers: two Presidents, one from Tajikistan and one from the Kingdom of the Netherlands,[1] each of whom shall preside separately. The Conference shall also elect 13 Vice-Presidents, one of whom shall be designated as Rapporteur-

[1] Three from each of the following groups: African States; Asia-Pacific States; Eastern European States; Latin American and Caribbean States; and Western European and other States. The election of the two Presidents will, however, have the effect of reducing by one the number of Vice-Presidents allocated to the regions from which each of the Presidents is elected.

General, as well as a chair for the Main Committee established in accordance with rule 46. The officers shall be elected with a view to ensuring the representative character of the General Committee. The Conference may also elect such other officers as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.

Rule 7
General powers of the presiding President

1. The Presidents shall take turns in presiding at the plenary meetings of the Conference. In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon her or him elsewhere by these rules, the presiding President shall declare the opening and closing of each meeting, put questions to the vote and announce decisions. The presiding President shall rule on points of order and, subject to those rules, shall have complete control over the proceedings and the maintenance of order thereat. The presiding President may propose to the Conference the closure of the list of speakers, a limitation on the time to be allowed to speakers and on the number of times each representative may speak on a question, the adjournment or closure of the debate and the suspension or adjournment of a meeting.

2. The presiding President remains, in the exercise of her or his functions, under the authority of the Conference.

Rule 8
Acting President

1. If both Presidents are to be absent from a meeting or any part thereof, they may designate one of the Vice-Presidents to preside.

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

Rule 9
Replacement of a President or the Presidents

If either of the Presidents is unable to perform her or his functions, a new President shall be elected. If both Presidents are unable to perform their functions, new Presidents shall be elected.

Rule 10
Voting rights of the presiding President

The presiding President, or a Vice-President acting as the presiding President, shall not vote in the Conference, but may appoint another member of her or his delegation to vote in her or his place.

III. General Committee

Rule 11
Composition

The two Presidents, the Vice-Presidents, the Rapporteur-General and the Chair of the Main Committee shall constitute the General Committee. One of the two Presidents, as agreed between them, or, in their absence, one of the Vice-Presidents designated by them, shall serve as Chair of the General Committee. The Chair of the Credentials Committee and other committees established by the Conference in accordance with rule 48 may participate, without the right to vote, in the General Committee.

Rule 12
Substitute members

If a President or a Vice-President of the Conference is to be absent during a meeting of the General Committee, she or he may designate a member of her or his delegation to sit and vote in the Committee. In case of absence, the Chair of the Main Committee shall designate the Vice-Chair of that Committee as her or his substitute. When serving on the General Committee, a Vice-Chair of the Main Committee shall not have the right to vote if she or he is a member of the same delegation as another member of the General Committee.

Rule 13
Functions

The General Committee shall assist both Presidents in the general conduct of the business of the Conference and, subject to the decisions of the Conference, shall ensure the coordination of the work of the Conference.

IV. Secretariat of the Conference

Rule 14
Duties of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations or a designated representative shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the Conference and its subsidiary organs.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations or a designated representative shall direct the staff required by the Conference.

Rule 15
Duties of the secretariat of the Conference

The secretariat of the Conference shall, in accordance with the present rules:

(a) Provide simultaneous interpretation of speeches made at meetings;

(b) Receive, translate, reproduce and circulate the documents of the Conference;

(c) Publish and circulate the official documents of the Conference;

(d) Prepare and circulate records of public meetings;

(e) Make and arrange for the keeping of sound recordings of meetings;

(f) Arrange for the custody and preservation of the documents of the Conference in the archives of the United Nations;

(g) Generally perform all other work that the Conference may require.

Rule 16
Statements by the Secretariat

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, or any member of the Secretariat designated for that purpose, may, at any time, make either oral or written statements concerning any question under consideration.

V. Opening of the Conference

Rule 17
Temporary President

The Secretary-General of the United Nations or, in his absence, any member of the Secretariat designated by him for that purpose, shall open the first meeting of the Conference and preside until the Conference has elected its Presidents.

Rule 18
Decisions concerning organization

The Conference shall, at its first meeting:

(a) Adopt its rules of procedure;

(b) Elect its officers and constitute its subsidiary organs;

(c) Adopt its agenda, the draft of which shall, until such adoption, be the provisional agenda of the Conference;

(d) Decide on the organization of its work.

VI. Conduct of business

Rule 19
Quorum

The presiding President may declare a meeting open and permit the debate to proceed when at least one third of the States participating in the Conference are present. The presence of a majority of the States so participating shall be required for any decision to be taken.

Rule 20
Speeches

1. No representative may address the Conference without having previously obtained the permission of the presiding President. Subject to rules 21, 22 and 25 to 27, the presiding President shall call upon speakers in the order in which they indicate their desire to speak. The secretariat shall be in charge of drawing up a list of speakers.

2. Debate shall be confined to the question before the Conference and the presiding President may call a speaker to order if her or his remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.

3. The Conference may limit the time allowed to each speaker and the number of times each participant may speak on any question. Permission to speak on a motion to set such limits shall be accorded to only two representatives in favour of and to two opposing such limits, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. In any event, with the consent of the Conference, the presiding President shall limit each intervention on procedural matters to five minutes. When the debate is limited and a speaker exceeds the allotted time, the presiding President shall call her or him to order without delay.

Rule 21
Points of order

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may at any time raise a point of order, which shall be immediately decided by the presiding President in accordance with the present rules. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the presiding President. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote, and the

presiding President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the States present and voting. A representative may not, in raising a point of order, speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Rule 22
Precedence

The Chair or the Rapporteur of the Main Committee, or of other subsidiary organs, may be accorded precedence for the purpose of explaining the conclusions arrived at by the body concerned.

Rule 23
Closing of the list of speakers

During the course of a debate, the presiding President may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the Conference, declare the list closed.

Rule 24
Right of reply

1. Notwithstanding rule 23, the presiding President shall accord the right of reply to a representative of any State participating in the Conference or of the European Union who requests it. Any other representative of a State may be granted the opportunity to make a reply.

2. The statements made under the present rule shall normally be made at the end of the last meeting of the day, or at the conclusion of the consideration of the relevant item if that is sooner.

3. Representatives of a State or of the European Union may make no more than two statements under the present rule at a given meeting on any item. The first shall be limited to five minutes and the second to three minutes. Representatives shall, in any event, attempt to be as brief as possible.

Rule 25
Adjournment of debate

A representative of any State participating in the Conference may at any time move the adjournment of the debate on the question under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded to only two representatives in favour and to two opposing the adjournment, after which the motion shall, subject to rule 28, be immediately put to the vote.

Rule 26
Closure of debate

A representative of any State participating in the Conference may at any time move the closure of the debate on the question under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified her or his wish to speak. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded to only two representatives opposing the closure, after which the motion shall, subject to rule 28, be immediately put to the vote.

Rule 27
Suspension or adjournment of the meeting

Subject to rule 38, a representative of any State participating in the Conference may at any time move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. No discussion on such motions shall be permitted and they shall, subject to rule 28, be immediately put to the vote.

Rule 28
Order of motions

The motions indicated below shall have precedence in the following order over all proposals or other motions before the meeting:

(a) To suspend the meeting;

(b) To adjourn the meeting;

(c) To adjourn the debate on the question under discussion;

(d) To close the debate on the question under discussion.

Rule 29
Submission of proposals and substantive amendments

Proposals and substantive amendments shall normally be submitted in writing to the Secretary-General or her or his designated representative, who shall circulate copies to all delegations in the languages of the Conference. Unless the Conference decides otherwise, substantive proposals shall not be discussed or put to a decision unless copies have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting. The presiding President may, however, permit the discussion and consideration of amendments, even though those amendments have not been circulated or have been circulated only the same day.

Rule 30
Withdrawal of proposals and motions

A proposal or a motion may be withdrawn by its sponsor at any time before a decision on it has been taken, provided that it has not been amended. A proposal or a motion thus withdrawn may be reintroduced by any representative.

Rule 31
Decisions on competence

Subject to rule 28, any motion calling for a decision on the competence of the Conference to adopt a proposal submitted to it shall be put to the vote before a decision is taken on the proposal in question.

Rule 32
Reconsideration of proposals

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

VII. Decision-making

Rule 33
General agreement

The Conference shall make its best endeavour to ensure that the work of the Conference is accomplished by consensus.

Rule 34
Voting rights

Each State participating in the Conference shall have one vote.

Rule 35
Majority required

1. Subject to rule 33, decisions of the Conference on all matters of substance shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of the States present and voting.

2. Except as otherwise provided in the present rules, decisions of the Conference on all matters of procedure shall be taken by a majority of the States present and voting.

3. If the question arises whether a matter is one of procedure or of substance, the presiding President of the Conference shall rule on the question. An appeal against that ruling shall be immediately put to the vote, and the presiding President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the States present and voting.

4. If a vote is equally divided, the proposal or motion shall be regarded as rejected.

Rule 36
Meaning of the phrase "States present and voting"

For the purpose of the present rules, the phrase "States present and voting" means States casting an affirmative or negative vote. States which abstain from voting shall be regarded as not voting.

Rule 37
Method of voting

1. Except as provided in rule 44, the Conference may vote by show of hands, except that a representative may request a roll call, which shall then be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the States participating in the Conference, beginning with the delegation whose name is drawn by lot by the presiding President. The name of each State shall be called in all roll calls, and its representative shall reply "yes", "no" or "abstention".

2. When the Conference votes by mechanical means, a non-recorded vote shall replace a vote by show of hands and a recorded vote shall replace a roll call. A representative may request a recorded vote, which shall, unless a representative requests otherwise, be taken without calling out the names of the States participating in the Conference.

3. The vote of each State participating in a roll-call or a recorded vote shall be inserted in any record of or report on the meeting.

Rule 38
Conduct during voting

After the presiding President has announced the commencement of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting, except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting.

Rule 39
Explanation of vote

1. Representatives may make brief statements, consisting solely of explanations of vote, before the voting has commenced or after the voting has been completed. The presiding President may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations. The representative of a State sponsoring a proposal or motion shall not speak in explanation of vote thereon, except if it has been amended.

2. When the same matter is considered successively in several organs of the Conference, a State should, as far as possible, explain its vote only in one such organ, unless its vote in one organ is different from that in another organ.

Rule 40
Division of proposals

A representative may move that parts of a proposal be decided on separately. If a representative objects, the motion for division shall be voted upon. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded to only two representatives in favour of and to two opposing the division. If the motion is carried, those parts of the proposal that are subsequently approved shall be put to the Conference for decision as a whole. If all operative parts of the proposal have been rejected, the proposal shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.

Rule 41
Amendments

A proposal is considered an amendment to another proposal if it merely adds to, deletes from or revises part of that proposal. Unless specified otherwise, the word "proposal" in these rules shall be regarded as including amendments.

Rule 42
Order of voting on amendments

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

Rule 43
Order of voting on proposals

1. If two or more proposals, other than amendments, relate to the same question, they shall, unless the Conference decides otherwise, be voted on in the order in which they were submitted. The Conference may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

2. Revised proposals shall be voted on in the order in which the original proposals were submitted, unless the revision substantially departs from the original proposal. In that case, the original proposal shall be regarded as withdrawn and the revised proposal shall be treated as a new proposal.

3. A motion requiring that no decision be taken on a proposal shall be put to the vote before a decision is taken on the proposal in question.

Rule 44
Elections

All elections shall be held by secret ballot unless, in the absence of any objection, the Conference decides to proceed without taking a ballot when there is an agreed candidate or slate of candidates.

Rule 45
Balloting

1. When one or more elective places are to be filled at one time under the same conditions, those candidates, in a number not exceeding the number of such places, obtaining in the first ballot a majority of the votes cast and the largest number of votes shall be elected.

2. If the number of candidates obtaining such majority is less than the number of places to be filled, additional ballots shall be held to fill the remaining places, the voting being restricted to the candidates obtaining the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, to a number not more than twice the places remaining to be filled.

VIII. Subsidiary organs

Rule 46
Main Committee

The Conference may establish a Main Committee.

Rule 47
Representation on the Main Committee

Each State participating in the Conference and the European Union may be represented by one representative on the Main Committee. They may assign to the Committee such alternate representatives and advisers as may be required.

Rule 48
Other committees and working groups

1. In addition to the Main Committee referred to above, the Conference may establish such committees and working groups as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.

2. Subject to the decision of the plenary of the Conference, the committees may set up subcommittees and working groups.

Rule 49
Members of committees, subcommittees and working groups

1. The members of the committees and working groups of the Conference, referred to in rule 48, paragraph 1, shall be appointed by the two Presidents, subject to the approval of the Conference, unless the Conference decides otherwise.

2. Members of the subcommittees and working groups of committees shall be appointed by the Chair of the committee in question, subject to the approval of that committee, unless the committee decides otherwise.

Rule 50
Officers

Except as otherwise provided in rule 6, each committee, subcommittee and working group shall elect its own officers.

Rule 51
Quorum

1. The Chair of the Main Committee may declare a meeting open and permit the debate to proceed when at least one quarter of the States participating in the

Conference are present. The presence of a majority of the States so participating shall be required for any decision to be taken.

2. A majority of the members of the General Committee or the Credentials Committee or of any committee, subcommittee or working group shall constitute a quorum.

Rule 52
Officers, conduct of business and voting

The rules contained in sections II, VI (except rule 19) and VII above shall be applicable, mutatis mutandis, to the proceedings of committees, subcommittees and working groups, except that:

(a) The Chairs of the General Committee and the Credentials Committee and the Chairs of the committees, subcommittees and working groups may exercise the right to vote, provided that they are representatives of participating States;

(b) Decisions of committees, subcommittees and working groups shall be taken by a majority of the members present and voting, except that the reconsideration of a proposal or an amendment shall require the majority established by rule 32.

IX. Languages and records

Rule 53
Languages of the Conference

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

Rule 54
Interpretation

1. Speeches made in a language of the Conference shall be interpreted into the other five languages.

2. A representative may speak in a language other than a language of the Conference if the delegation concerned provides for interpretation into one of the languages of the Conference.

Rule 55
Languages of official documents

Official documents of the Conference shall be made available in the languages of the Conference.

Rule 56
Sound recordings of meetings

Sound recordings of the plenary meetings of the Conference, the interactive dialogues and of the meetings of the Main Committee shall be made and kept in accordance with the practice of the United Nations. Unless otherwise decided by the Conference or the Main Committee, no such recordings shall be made of any of the other meetings held during the Conference.

X. Public and private meetings

General principles

Rule 57

The plenary meetings of the Conference and the meetings of any committee shall be held in public unless the body concerned decides otherwise. All decisions taken by the plenary of the Conference at a private meeting shall be announced at an early public meeting of the plenary.

Rule 58

As a general rule, meetings of the General Committee, the Credentials Committee, subcommittees or working groups shall be held in private.

Rule 59
Communiqués on private meetings

At the close of a private meeting, the presiding officer of the organ concerned may issue a communiqué through the Secretary-General of the United Nations or a designated representative.

XI. Other participants and observers

Rule 60
Intergovernmental organizations and other entities[2] having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and work of the General Assembly

Representatives designated by intergovernmental organizations and other entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and work of the General Assembly have the right to participate as observers, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference, the Main Committee and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group.

Rule 61
Associate members of regional commissions[3]

Representatives designated by the associate members of regional commissions listed in the footnote below may participate as observers, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference, the Main Committee and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group.

[2] For the purpose of the present rules, the term “other entities” includes the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Olympic Committee, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Sovereign Order of Malta.

[3] American Samoa, Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Curaçao, French Polynesia, Guam, Montserrat, New Caledonia, Puerto Rico, Sint Maarten, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands.

Rule 62
Representatives of the specialized agencies and related organizations[4]

Representatives designated by the specialized agencies and related organizations may participate as observers, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference, the Main Committee and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group on questions within the scope of their activities.

Rule 63
Representatives of other intergovernmental organizations and other international bodies

Save where otherwise specifically provided with respect to the European Union in these rules of procedure, representatives designated by other intergovernmental organizations and other international bodies invited to the Conference may participate as observers, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference, the Main Committee and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group on questions within the scope of their activities.

Rule 64
Representatives of interested United Nations organs

Representatives designated by interested organs of the United Nations may participate as observers, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference, the Main Committee and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group on questions within the scope of their activities.

Rule 65
Representatives of non-governmental organizations[5]

1. Non-governmental organizations accredited to participate in the Conference may designate representatives to attend public meetings of the Conference and the Main Committee as observers.

2. Upon the invitation of the presiding officer of the Conference and subject to the approval of the Conference, such observers may make oral statements on questions in which they have special competence. If the number of requests to speak is too large, the non-governmental organizations shall be requested to form themselves into constituencies, such constituencies to speak through spokespersons.

Rule 66
Written statements

Written statements submitted by the designated representatives referred to in rules 60 to 65 shall be circulated by the secretariat to all delegations in the quantities and the languages in which the statements are made available to it at the site of the

[4] For the purpose of the present rules, the term “related organizations” includes the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Criminal Court, the International Organization for Migration, the International Seabed Authority, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the World Trade Organization.

[5] Paragraph 23.3 of Agenda 21 provides that “Any policies, definitions or rules affecting access to and participation by non-governmental organizations in the work of United Nations institutions or agencies associated with the implementation of Agenda 21 must apply equally to all major groups”. Agenda 21 defines major groups as comprising women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and their trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers. Therefore, based on Agenda 21, rule 65 shall apply equally to non-governmental organizations and other major groups.

Conference, provided that a statement submitted on behalf of a non-governmental organization must be related to the work of the Conference and be on a subject in which the organization has a special competence. Written statements shall not be made available at United Nations expense and shall not be issued as official documents.

XII. Suspension and amendment of the rules of procedure

Rule 67
Method of suspension

Any of these rules may be suspended by the Conference provided that 24 hours' notice of the proposal for the suspension has been given, which may be waived if no representative objects. Any such suspension shall be limited to a specific and stated purpose and to a period required to achieve that purpose.

Rule 68
Method of amendment

These rules of procedure may be amended by a decision of the Conference taken by a two-thirds majority of the States present and voting, after the General Committee has reported on the proposed amendment.