



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Bioethics
Committee (IBC)

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RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE (IBC)*

I. MEMBERSHIP

Rule 1

The International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO (IBC), hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee', shall be composed of 36 members, in accordance with Article 3 of its Statutes.

II. SESSIONS

Rule 2 Regular and extraordinary sessions

- 2.1 The Committee shall normally meet in regular session at least once a year.
- 2.2 The Committee shall meet in extraordinary session, such sessions being convened by decision of the Director-General or at the request of at least two thirds of its members, provided that the necessary resources are available.

Rule 3 Convening of sessions of the Committee (Article 5 of the Statutes of IBC)

- 3.1 The sessions of the Committee shall be convened by the Director-General of UNESCO.
- 3.2 The Director-General shall inform the members of the Committee 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 organizations mentioned in Article 4 of the Statutes of the Committee, 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 Committee, shall set the date and venue of each session.
- 4.2 Any Member State of UNESCO may invite the Director-General to convene a session of the Committee on its territory.

* Adopted by the IBC at its Fifth Session on 2 December 1998 and approved by the Director-General on 21 December 1998. Amended by the IBC at its Seventh Session on 6 November 2000 and approved by the Director-General on 30 November 2000. Amended by the IBC at its Eighth Session on 14 September 2001 and approved by the Director-General on 23 November 2001. Amended by the IBC at its Extraordinary Session on 22 February 2021 and approved by the Director-General on 23 March, 2021.

III. PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

Rule 5 Participants (Article 3 of the Statutes of IBC)

The members of the Committee, invited by the Director-General of UNESCO in accordance with Rule 3 above, shall participate in the work of the Committee.

Rule 6 Observers (Article 4 of the Statutes of IBC)

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

Rule 7 Hearings (Article 4 of the Statutes of IBC)

The Director-General shall invite specialists and eminent persons designated by the Committee to participate in any hearings organized during the sessions of the Committee.

IV. WORK PROGRAMME

Rule 8 Work Programme

- 8.1 In accordance with Article 2 of its Statutes, the Committee shall determine its work programme, which will be reviewed at each regular session.
- 8.2 Subject to any request of the Director-General, the Committee shall recommend the priorities to be assigned by the Committee and the Secretariat to the activities of the Committee.

V. AGENDA

Rule 9 Agenda

- 9.1 The agenda for the sessions of the Committee shall be prepared by the Director-General in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee.
- 9.2 The agenda of a regular session of the Committee shall include:
- (i) all items and study topics the inclusion of which has been decided by the Committee at its previous sessions;
 - (ii) all items proposed by the Bureau of the Committee, after consultation with the members of the Committee;
 - (iii) all items which the Director-General has decided to include.
- 9.3 The agenda of an extraordinary session shall include only the items for the examination of which the extraordinary session was convened.
- 9.4 The documents relevant to the items on the Agenda for consideration at a regular session of the Committee shall be distributed to members of the Committee, if possible, before a meeting of the Committee.

Rule 10 Addition of new items

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

VI. BUREAU

Rule 11 Elections

- 11.1 The Committee shall elect a Chairperson, four Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur who, assisted by the Secretary-General of the Committee, shall constitute the Bureau of the Committee and shall remain in office until the closing of the second regular session thereafter, provided that they remain members of the Committee.
- 11.2 The Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur shall be immediately eligible for re-election only once.

Rule 12 Functions of the Bureau

- 12.1 The Bureau shall be responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Committee and setting the date, time and agenda of meetings. It shall perform any other function entrusted to it by the Committee.
- 12.2 Members of the Committee who are not members of the Bureau may attend Bureau meetings as observers.

Rule 13 Duties of the Chairperson

- 13.1 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 Committee.
- 13.2 A Vice-Chairperson acting as Chairperson, in accordance with Rule 14 of the present Rules, shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairperson.

Rule 14 Replacement of the Chairperson

- 14.1 If the Chairperson is unable to exercise his/her functions during a whole session of the Committee or part thereof, his/her duties shall be carried out in turn by the Vice-Chairpersons following the French alphabetical order.
- 14.2 If the Chairperson ceases to be a member of the Committee 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, until the close of the following regular session of the Committee. In this case, the new Chairperson will be elected among the members of the Bureau for a term of office of one year.
- 14.3 In case Rule 14.2 is applied, a new member of the Bureau shall be elected on the vacant seat for a term of office of one year.

Rule 15 Replacement of the Vice-Chairperson(s)

The provisions of Rule 14.3 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the four Vice-Chairpersons.

Rule 16 Replacement of the Rapporteur

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

VII. SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Rule 17 Subsidiary bodies

- 17.1 The Committee, with the agreement of the Director-General, may establish such subsidiary bodies as it considers necessary for the conduct of its business, within the limits of available financial and technical resources.

- 17.2 The Committee shall define the extend to which the present Rules shall apply to each subsidiary body.

VIII. CONDUCT OF DEBATES

Rule 18 Quorum

- 18.1 In plenary meeting, a majority of the states members of the Committee present at the session shall constitute a quorum.
- 18.2 At meetings of subsidiary bodies, a quorum shall be constituted by a majority of the members of the body in question present at the meeting.
- 18.3 The Committee and its subsidiary bodies may take no decision on any matter unless there is a quorum.

Rule 19 Special consultation by correspondence

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

Rule 20 Order of speeches

- 20.1 The Chairperson of the meeting shall give the floor to speakers in the order in which they signify their wish to speak.
- 20.2 The Chairperson of the meeting may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker when circumstances call for such a decision.
- 20.3 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 21 Voting

- 21.1 The Committee shall endeavour to arrive at its decisions by consensus. In the event of a vote being taken, decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Each member of the Committee shall have one vote.
- 21.2 In the event of advice or recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO concerning possible amendments to the Declaration, for submission to the General Conference, the decisions shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.
- 21.3 The phrase 'members present and voting' means members casting an affirmative or negative vote. Members who abstain from voting shall be regarded as non-voting.

Rule 22 Voting by show of hands and roll-call

Voting shall normally be by show of hands, except that any member may, before the voting starts, request a roll-call. The vote or abstention of each member participating in a roll-call shall be recorded in the report.

Rule 23 Voting on amendments

When an amendment to a proposal is moved, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments to a proposal are moved, the voting shall take place in accordance with the practices in force at UNESCO.

Rule 24 Voting by secret ballot

All elections shall be by secret ballot unless, in the absence of objections on the part of any of its members, the Council decides otherwise.

Rule 25 Equally divided votes

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

Rule 26 Public nature of meetings

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

Rule 27 Working languages

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

27.2 The documents of the Committee shall be issued in English and in French.

IX. SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMITTEE

Rule 28 Secretariat (Article 9 of the Statutes of IBC)

28.1 The Committee shall be assisted by a secretariat whose members shall be appointed by the Director-General.

28.2 The Director-General or his representative shall participate in the work of the Committee and its consultative and subsidiary bodies. He may at any time make either oral or written statements concerning any matter under discussion.

28.3 The Secretariat shall be responsible for preparing, translating and distributing all official documents of the Committee and shall arrange for the interpretation of the discussions in accordance with Rule 27 of these Rules.

28.4 The Secretariat shall also perform all other duties necessary for the proper conduct of the work of the Committee, including the distribution of all documents during the work of the Committee.

**X. ADOPTION, AMENDMENT AND SUSPENDED APPLICATION
OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE**

Rule 29 Adoption of the Rules of Procedure (Article 8 of the Statutes of IBC)

The Committee shall adopt its Rules of Procedure by a decision taken by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Committee present and voting. The Rules shall be submitted to the Director-General for approval.

Rule 30 Amendment of the Rules of Procedure

These Rules of Procedure, except for rules which reproduce certain provisions of the Statutes of the International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO (IBC), may be amended by a decision of the Committee taken by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Committee present and voting, provided that the proposal for amendment is included in the agenda of the session, in accordance with Rules 9 and 10 of these Rules. The modification is submitted to the Director-General for approval.

Rule 31 Suspended application of the Rules of Procedure

The application of certain rules in these Rules of Procedure, except for rules which reproduce provisions of the Statutes of the International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO (IBC), may be suspended by a decision of the Committee taken by a two-thirds majority of its members present and voting.