

Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches

(as amended by the central committee of the WCC in Geneva, Switzerland, 2018)

Constitution

I. Basis

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

II. Membership

Churches shall be eligible for membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches who express their agreement with the basis upon which the Council is founded and satisfy such criteria for membership as the assembly or central committee may prescribe. The central committee shall consider applications for membership in accordance with Rule I.

III. Purposes and functions

The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education.

The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.

In seeking koinonia in faith and life, witness and service, the churches through the Council will:

- promote the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation in a spirit of mutual accountability, the development of deeper relationships through theological dialogue, and the sharing of human, spiritual and material resources with one another;
- facilitate common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism;
- express their commitment to diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life;
- nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context;

- assist each other in their relationships to and with people of other faith communities;
- foster renewal and growth in unity, worship, mission and service.

In order to strengthen the one ecumenical movement, the Council will:

- foster the living fellowship of the member churches and the coherence of the one ecumenical movement;
- nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;
- establish and maintain relations with national councils, regional conferences of churches, organizations of Christian world communions and other ecumenical bodies;
- support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels;
- facilitate the creation of networks among ecumenical organizations;
- work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations.

IV. Authority

The World Council of Churches shall offer counsel and provide opportunity for united action in matters of common interest.

It may take action on behalf of constituent churches only in such matters as one or more of them may commit to it and only on behalf of such churches.

The World Council of Churches shall not legislate for the churches; nor shall it act for them in any manner except as indicated above or as may hereafter be specified by the constituent churches.

V. Organization

The World Council of Churches shall discharge its functions through an assembly, a central committee, an executive committee, and other subordinate bodies as may be established.

1. The assembly

- a. The assembly shall be the supreme legislative body governing the World Council of Churches and shall ordinarily meet at eight-year intervals.
- b. The assembly shall be composed of official representatives of the member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches.
- c. The assembly shall be an expression of the living fellowship of member churches, shall strengthen the one ecumenical movement, and shall have the following functions:
 - i. to elect the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches;
 - ii. to elect not more than 145 members of the central committee from among the delegates which the member churches have elected to the assembly;
 - iii. to elect not more than 5 members from among the representatives elected to the assembly by churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons;
 - iv. to determine the overall policies of the World Council of Churches and to review programmes undertaken to implement policies previously adopted;
 - v. to delegate to the central committee specific functions, except to amend this

constitution and to allocate the membership of the central committee granted by this constitution to the assembly exclusively.

2. The central committee

- a. The central committee shall be that governing body of the World Council of Churches with primary responsibility and authority to:
 - i. carry out the vision and policies of the assembly and to determine and develop the strategies to do so;
 - ii. deepen the living fellowship of member churches, and shall include opportunities for fulfilling together the common calling that is the basis of membership;
 - iii. seek to provide coherence and strategic leadership to the one ecumenical movement, and provide opportunities for consultation among Christian churches on issues of mutual concern;
 - iv. be responsible for elaborating institutional and programmatic strategic plans based on the policies adopted by the assembly and for ensuring their implementation;
 - v. exercise the functions of the assembly itself delegated to it by the assembly between its meetings, except the assembly's power to amend this constitution and to allocate or alter the allocation of the membership of central committee.
- b. The central committee shall be composed of the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches and not more than 150 members.
 - i. Not more than 145 members shall be elected by the assembly from among the delegates the member churches have elected to the assembly. Such members shall be distributed among the member churches by the assembly giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the Council, the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council, reasonable geographical and cultural balance, and adequate representation of the major interests of the Council.
 - ii. Not more than 5 members shall be elected by the assembly from among the representatives elected to the assembly by churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.
 - iii. A vacancy in the membership of the central committee, occurring between meetings of the assembly, shall be filled by the central committee itself after consultation with the church of which the person previously occupying the position was a member.
- c. The central committee shall have, in addition to the general powers set out in (a) above, the following powers:
 - i. to elect its moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators from among the members of the central committee;
 - ii. to elect the executive committee from among the members of the central committee;
 - iii. to elect committees, commissions, and consultative bodies;

- iv. to initiate and terminate programmes and to set priorities for the work of the Council within the policies adopted by the assembly;
 - v. to elect the general secretary;
 - vi. to elect one or more deputy general secretaries, and to make provision for the appointment of all members of the staff of the Council;
 - vii. to decide membership matters;
 - viii. to adopt the reports of executive committee actions, and to receive the budget and financial reports;
 - ix. to determine and develop the strategies to deliver the goals set by the assembly, including institutional policies for programme and finance and to secure financial support for the Council;
 - x. to plan for the meetings of the assembly, making provision for the conduct of its business, for worship and study, and for common Christian commitment. The central committee shall determine the number of delegates to the assembly and allocate them among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the Council; the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council; reasonable geographical and cultural balance; the desired distribution among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; among men, women and young people; and participation by persons whose special knowledge and experience will be needed;
 - xi. to delegate specific functions to the executive committee, or to other bodies or persons, and to hold them accountable for that delegation.
- d. The central committee can delegate to the executive committee such authority necessary to ensure fiduciary responsibility and accountability for governance of the Council, including monitoring programmes, finance and personnel matters.

3. Rules

The assembly or the central committee may adopt and amend rules not inconsistent with this constitution for the conduct of the business of the World Council of Churches.

4. By-laws

The assembly or the central committee may adopt and amend by-laws not inconsistent with this constitution for the functioning of its committees, consultative bodies and commissions.

5. Quorum

A quorum for the conduct of any business by the assembly or the central committee shall be one-half of its membership.

VI. Other ecumenical Christian organizations

1. Such world confessional bodies and such international ecumenical organizations as may be designated by the central committee may be invited to send representatives to the assembly and to the central committee, in such numbers as the central committee shall determine; however, these representatives shall not have the right to participate when decisions are taken.
2. Such national councils and regional conferences of churches, other Christian councils and

missionary councils as may be designated by the central committee may be invited to send representatives to the assembly and to the central committee, in such numbers as the central committee shall determine; however, these representatives shall not have the right to participate when decisions are taken.

VII. Amendments

The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates to the assembly present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been reviewed by the central committee, and notice of it sent to the member churches not less than six months before the meeting of the assembly. The central committee itself, as well as the member churches, shall have the right to propose such amendment.

Rules

I. Membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches is comprised of churches which have constituted the Council or which have been admitted into membership and which continue to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches. The term “church” as used in this article could also include an association, convention or federation of autonomous churches. A group of churches within a country or region, or within the same confession, may choose to participate in the World Council of Churches as one member. Churches within the same country or region or within the same confession may apply jointly to belong to the fellowship of the Council, in order to respond to their common calling, to strengthen their joint participation and/or to satisfy the requirement of minimum size (rule I.3.b.iii). Such groupings of churches are encouraged by the World Council of Churches; each individual church within the grouping must satisfy the criteria for membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, except the requirements of size. A church seeking affiliation with a grouping of autonomous churches which is a member of the World Council of Churches must agree with the basis and fulfil the criteria for membership.

The general secretary shall maintain the official lists of member churches that have been accepted to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, noting any special arrangement accepted by the assembly or central committee. Separate lists shall be maintained of member churches belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches that do or do not participate in decision-making.

1. Application

A church that wishes to join the World Council of Churches shall apply in writing to the general secretary.

2. Processing

The general secretary shall submit all such applications through the executive committee to the central committee together with such information as he or she considers necessary to enable the central committee to make a decision on the application.

3. Criteria

Churches applying to join the World Council of Churches (“applicant churches”) are required first to express agreement with the basis on which the Council is founded and confirm their commitment to the purposes and functions of the Council as defined in articles I and III of the constitution. The basis states: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Applicant churches should give an account of how their faith and witness relate to these norms and practices:

a. Theological

- i. In its life and witness, the church professes faith in the triune God according to the scriptures, and as this faith is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
- ii. The church maintains a ministry of proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the sacraments as understood by its doctrines.

- iii. The church baptizes in the name of the one God, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” and acknowledges the need to move towards the recognition of the baptism of other churches.
- iv. The church recognizes the presence and activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside its own boundaries and prays for the gift of God’s wisdom to all in the awareness that other member churches also believe in the Holy Trinity and the saving grace of God.
- v. The church recognizes in the other member churches elements of the true church, even if it does not regard them “as churches in the true and full sense of the word” (Toronto statement).

b. Organizational

- i. The church must produce evidence of sustained autonomous life and organization.
- ii. The church must be able to take the decision to apply for formal membership in the World Council of Churches and continue to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches without obtaining the permission of any other body or person.
- iii. An applicant church must ordinarily have at least fifty thousand members. The central committee, for exceptional reasons, may dispense with this requirement and accept a church that does not fulfil the criteria of size.
- iv. An applicant church with more than 10,000 members but less than 50,000 members that has not been granted membership for exceptional reasons under rule I.3.b.iii, but is otherwise eligible for membership, can be admitted as a member subject to the following conditions: (a) it shall not have the right to participate in decision-making in the assembly, and (b) it may participate with other churches in selecting five representatives to the central committee in accordance with rule IV.4.b.iii. Such church shall be considered as a member church belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches in all other respects.
- v. Churches must recognize the essential interdependence of the member churches belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, particularly those of the same confession, and should make every effort to practise constructive ecumenical relations with other churches within their country or region. This will normally mean that the church is a member of the national council of churches or similar body and of the regional/sub-regional ecumenical organization.

4. Consultation

Before admitting a church to membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, the appropriate world confessional body or bodies and national council or regional ecumenical organization shall be consulted.

5. Decision on acceptance

The Central Committee shall consider applications for membership according to the consensus model of decision making. The application shall be accepted for a specified interim period of participation in the work of the World Council of Churches and for interaction with the local

fellowship of member churches. The member churches of the World Council of Churches shall be consulted during the interim period. The Central Committee shall assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application, in which event the applicant church shall be considered a new member church. If there is no consensus, the Central Committee shall deem the application rejected.

6. Resignation and Suspension

- a. A church which desires to resign its membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches can do so at any time. A church which has resigned but desires to re-join the Council must again apply for membership.
- b. The central committee may suspend the membership of a church: (i) at the church's request; (ii) because the basis of, or the theological criteria for, membership has not been maintained by that church or; (iii) because the church has persistently neglected its responsibilities of membership as described under rule II.
- c. When the central committee suspends the membership of a church the general secretary shall present progress reports to the executive committee until a solution is mutually agreed. Any decision about the membership status of the church shall be taken by the central committee.

II. Responsibilities of membership

Membership in the World Council of Churches signifies faithfulness to the basis of the Council, fellowship in the Council, participation in the life and work of the Council and commitment to the ecumenical movement as integral to the mission of the church. Churches which are members of the World Council of Churches are expected to:

1. appoint delegates to the assembly, the major policy-making body of the Council, and participate in council with other member churches in shaping the ecumenical vision and the ecumenical agenda;
2. inform the Council of their primary concerns, priorities, activities and constructive criticisms as they may relate to its programmes as well as any matters which they feel need expression of ecumenical solidarity or which merit the attention of the Council and/or churches around the world;
3. communicate the meaning of ecumenical commitment, to foster and encourage ecumenical relations and action at all levels of their church life and to pursue ecumenical fellowship locally, nationally, regionally and internationally;
4. interpret both the broader ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, its nature, purpose and programmes throughout their membership as a normal part of their own reporting to their constituency;
5. encourage participation in World Council of Churches programmes, activities and meetings, including:
 - a. proposing persons who could make a particular contribution to and/or participate in the Council's various committees, meetings and consultations, programmes, publications and staff;
 - b. establishing links between their own programme offices and the appropriate World Council of Churches programme offices; and

- c. submitting materials for and promoting Council communications resources: books, periodicals and other publications;
- 6. respond to decisions of the central committee which call for study, action or other follow-up by the member churches as well as respond to requests on matters referred by the central or executive committee or the general secretary for prayer, advice, information or opinion;
- 7. make an annual contribution to the general budget of the Council: the amount of the contribution shall be agreed upon in consultation between the church and the Council and shall be regularly reviewed;
- 8. participate, in ways commensurate with their resources and in consultation with the Council, in assuming responsibility for the costs of the Council's programmes and for expenses related to travel and accommodation of their representatives to Council events.

The implications of not fulfilling such obligations shall be such as the central committee shall decide.

III. Churches in association with the World Council of Churches

A church that agrees with the basis of the Council may request in writing to be received as a church in association with the World Council of Churches, stating its reasons for requesting this mode of relating with the Council. If the reasons are approved by the central committee, such a church may be accepted to be in association with the World Council of Churches.

Churches in association with the World Council of Churches:

- 1. can send representative(s) to the assembly and the central committee who can speak with permission of the moderator, but have no right to participate in formal decision-making, whether by consensus or by vote;
- 2. can be invited to participate in the work of the commissions, advisory groups and other consultative bodies of the Council as consultants or advisers;
- 3. have the possibility of participating in the work of the World Council of Churches as described, but will not be identified with decisions taken or statements issued by the Council;
- 4. shall make an annual contribution to the general budget of the Council; the amount of the contribution shall be agreed upon in consultation between the church and the Council and shall be regularly reviewed; no financial support will ordinarily be made available from the Council to such churches to facilitate their participation.

The general secretary shall maintain a list of churches in association with the Council.

IV. The assembly

- 1. Composition of the assembly

- a. *Persons with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making*

The assembly shall be composed of official representatives of the member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches, with the right to speak and with the responsibility to participate in decision-making

- i. The central committee shall determine the number of delegates to the assembly well in advance of its meeting.
- ii. The central committee shall determine the percentage of the delegates, not less than 80 percent, who shall be both nominated and elected by the member churches. Each member church shall be entitled to a minimum of one delegate.

The central committee shall allocate the other delegates in this group among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the World Council of Churches, the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council, and reasonable geographical and cultural balance. The central committee shall recommend the proper distribution within delegations among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; and among men, women, young people and Indigenous peoples. The central committee may make provision for the election by the member churches of alternate delegates who shall serve only in place of such delegates who are unable to attend meetings of the assembly.

- iii. The remaining delegates, not more than 20 percent, shall be elected by certain member churches upon nomination of the central committee as follows:
- iv. If the moderator or any vice-moderator of the central committee is not elected a delegate within the provisions of paragraph ii. above, the central committee shall nominate such officer to the member church of which such officer is a member. Paragraphs v. and vi. below apply to such nominees.
- v. The central committee shall determine the categories of additional delegates necessary to achieve balance in respect of:
 - a) the varied sizes of churches and confessions;
 - b) the historical significance, future potential or geographical location and cultural background of particular churches, as well as the special importance of united churches;
 - c) the presence of persons whose special knowledge and experience will be necessary to the assembly;
 - d) proportions of women, youth, lay persons and local pastors;
 - e) participation of Indigenous peoples;
 - f) participation of differently-abled people.
- vi. The central committee shall invite the member churches to propose the names of persons in the categories so determined whom the churches would be willing to elect, if nominated by the central committee.
- vii. From the list so compiled, the central committee shall propose the nomination of particular individuals to their respective member church.
- viii. If that member church elects the said nominee, he or she shall become an additional delegate of that member church.
- ix. The member churches shall not elect alternate delegates for such delegates.

Member churches are encouraged to consult regionally in the selection of the delegates described in paragraphs ii. and iii. above, provided that every delegate is elected by the church of which he or she is a member in accordance with its own procedures

b. Persons with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making

In addition to the delegates, who alone have the right to vote, the following categories of persons may attend meetings of the assembly with the right to speak:

- i. *Presidents and moderator or vice-moderator(s)*: Any president of the Council or moderator or vice- moderator of the central committee who has not been elected delegate by their church.
- ii. *Members of the outgoing central committee*: Any member of the outgoing central committee who has not been elected delegate by his or her church.
- iii. *Representatives of churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons*: Each one of these churches may elect one representative.
- iv. *Advisers*: The central committee may invite a small number of persons who have a special contribution to make to the deliberations of the assembly or who have participated in the activities of the Council. Before an invitation is extended to an adviser who is a member of a member church, that church shall be consulted.
- v. *Delegated representatives*: The central committee may invite persons officially designated as delegated representatives by organizations with which the World Council of Churches maintains relationship.
- vi. *Delegated observers*: The central committee may invite persons officially designated as delegated observers by non-member churches.

c. *Persons without the right to speak or to participate in decision-making*

The central committee may invite to attend the meetings of the assembly without the right to speak or to participate in decision-making:

- i. *Observers*: Persons identified with organizations with which the World Council of Churches maintains relationship which are not represented by delegated representatives or with non-member churches which are not represented by delegated observers.
- ii. *Guests*: Persons named individually.

2. Assembly leadership

- a. At the first decision session of the assembly, the outgoing central committee shall present its report which must include an accounting of its work since the previous assembly and also shall present its proposals for the moderatorship of the assembly and for the membership of the business committee of the assembly and make any other proposals, including the appointment of other committees, their membership and functions, for the conduct of the business of the assembly as it sees fit.
- b. At the first or second decision session, additional nominations for membership of any committee may be made in writing by any six concurring delegates.
- c. Election shall be by ballot unless the assembly shall otherwise determine.

3. Assembly agenda

The agenda of the assembly shall be proposed by the central committee to the first decision session of the assembly. A delegate may propose changes to the agenda in accordance with rule XIX.6.c. New business or any change may be proposed by the business committee under rule IV.5.b.

4. Nominations committee of the assembly

- a. At an early decision session of the assembly, the assembly shall elect a nominations committee from the official church delegates to the assembly. The nominations committee shall include balanced representation of the membership of the assembly and representation of the major interests of the World Council of Churches. No person serving on the nominations committee of the assembly shall be eligible for nomination as president of the World Council of Churches or member of the central committee.
 - b. The nominations committee shall make nominations for the following, consulting as necessary with the business committee of the assembly:
 - i. the president or presidents of the Council;
 - ii. not more than 145 members of the central committee from among the delegates which the member churches have elected to the assembly;
 - iii. not more than 5 members of the central committee from among the representatives elected to the assembly by the churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.
 - c. In making nominations, the nominations committee shall have regard to the following principles:
 - i. the personal qualifications of the individual for the task for which he or she is to be nominated;
 - ii. fair and adequate confessional representation;
 - iii. fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation;
 - iv. fair and adequate representation of the major interests of the Council.
 - d. The nominations committee shall satisfy itself as to the general acceptability of the nominations to the churches to which the nominees belong.
 - e. Not more than seven persons from any one member church shall be nominated as members of the central committee.
 - f. The nominations committee shall secure adequate representation of lay persons, and adequate balance of men, women and young people, so far as the composition of the assembly makes this possible.
 - g. The nominations committee shall present its nominations to the assembly. Alternative nominations may be made in writing by any six delegates from at least three member churches, provided that each such alternative nominee shall be proposed as an alternative to a particular nominee.
 - h. Election shall be by ballot unless the assembly shall otherwise determine.
5. Business committee of the assembly
- a. The business committee of the assembly shall consist of the general secretary, the moderator and vice- moderator or vice-moderators of the outgoing central committee, the presidents of the World Council of Churches, the co-moderators of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration participating as delegates, the moderator or designated member of the assembly planning committee participating as a delegate, the moderators of assembly hearings and committees (who may appoint substitutes), plus ten persons nominated from assembly delegates who are not members of the outgoing

central committee, who shall be elected in accordance with rule IV.2 If a co-moderator of the permanent committee and/or the moderator of the assembly planning committee are not delegate(s), he/she shall be invited as an adviser to the assembly and its business committee with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.

- b. The business committee shall:
 - i. coordinate the day-to-day business of the assembly and may make proposals for rearrangement, modification, addition, deletion or substitution of items included on the agenda. Any such proposal shall be presented to the assembly at the earliest convenient time by a member of the business committee with reasons for the proposed change. After opportunity for discussion on the proposal, the moderator shall put the following question to the assembly: Shall the assembly approve the proposal of the business committee? The assembly shall decide the question by consensus or voting procedures. If decided according to voting procedures, then any proposed change must receive a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present to be adopted;
 - ii. consider any item of business or change in the agenda proposed to the business committee by a delegate under rule XIX.6.c;
 - iii. determine whether the assembly sits in general, hearing or decision session as defined in rule XIX.2;
 - iv. receive information from and review the reports of other committees in order to consider how best the assembly can act on them.

6. Other committees of the assembly

- a. Any other committee of the assembly shall consist of such members and shall have such authority and responsibilities as are proposed by the central committee in accordance with rule IV.2 or by the business committee after its election and accepted by the assembly.
- b. Any such committee shall, unless the assembly otherwise directs, inform the business committee about its work and shall make its report or recommendations to the assembly.

V. Presidents

1. The assembly shall elect up to eight presidents of the World Council of Churches.
2. The presidents should be persons whose ecumenical experience and standing is widely recognized by the member churches and among the ecumenical partners of the World Council of Churches in their respective regions and ecclesial traditions.
3. By virtue of office, the presidents will be members of the central committee.
4. Presidents may be invited to moderate sessions of the central committee or assembly as provided by the rules.
5. The central committee may invite the presidents to undertake certain tasks or reflections and report back to the central committee.
6. The term of office of a president shall end at the end of the next assembly following his or her election.

7. Should a vacancy occur between assemblies, the central committee may elect a president to fill the unexpired term.
8. A president who has been elected by the assembly or by the central committee to fill a vacancy shall not be eligible for election for a second consecutive term of office.

VI. Central committee

1. Members

- a. The central committee shall consist of the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches together with not more than 150 members elected by the assembly (see constitution, article V.2.b).
- b. If a regularly elected member of the central committee is unable to attend a meeting, the church to which the absent member belongs shall have the right to send a substitute, provided that the substitute is ordinarily resident in the country where the absent member resides. Such a substitute shall have the right to speak and to participate in decision-making. If a member, or his or her substitute, is absent without excuse for two consecutive meetings, the position shall be declared vacant, and the central committee shall fill the vacancy according to the provisions of article V.2.b.iii of the constitution.
- c. Members of the central committee, shall:
 - i. promote the values of the ecumenical movement;
 - ii. advocate for and interpret the work of the World Council of Churches, especially in their respective regions and ecclesial traditions;
 - iii. enhance World Council of Churches contact with the leadership of the churches in their regions; and
 - iv. assist in assuring the financial stability of the World Council of Churches.

2. Participants

- a. Any member church, not already represented, may send one representative to the meetings of the central committee. Such a representative shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- b. Advisers for the central committee may be invited by the executive committee after consultation with the churches of which they are members. They shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- c. Moderators and vice-moderators of committees, commissions and consultative bodies who are not members of the central committee may attend meetings of the central committee and shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- d. Regional ecumenical organizations (rule XIV), Christian world communions (rule XV) and Specialized ministries engaged in witness and service (rule XVI) recognized by the central committee shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee, who shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- e. Associate councils (rule XIII) and international ecumenical organizations (rule XVII) recognized by the central committee may, at the discretion of the central committee, be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee, who shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.

- f. Staff of the World Council of Churches appointed by the central committee as specified under rule XI.3 and 4.a and b. shall have the right to attend the sessions of the central committee unless on any occasion the central committee shall otherwise determine. When present they shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.

3. Leadership of the central committee

- a. The central committee shall elect from among its members a moderator (the "moderator") and a vice-moderator or vice-moderators to serve for such period as it shall determine, normally for terms that coincide with the terms of the central committee from assembly to assembly.
- b. The moderator shall be the chief governance officer of the World Council of Churches and has primary responsibility for assuring the coherence of the work of the central committee and of the executive committee and for assuring that the ethos of consensus characterizes all aspects of the governance of the Council.
- c. The moderator shall have primary responsibility for chairing sessions of the central committee and of the executive committee, sharing this role with the vice-moderator(s). The moderator, in consultation with the vice moderator(s) and the general secretary may delegate responsibility for moderating specific sessions of the central committee and/or executive committee to one of the presidents or to members of the central or executive committee with specific expertise.
- d. The moderator, vice-moderator(s) and general secretary together shall lead the planning of the meetings of the central committee and the executive committee. Together they shall identify issues that belong to the central committee for discernment and decision or further action, or belong to the executive committee. They shall assure that sessions and committees of the central committee have appropriate leadership and resources (information and time) to enter into the process and ethos of consensus discernment, and that the sessions and committees of the executive committee have sufficient resources and expertise to undertake all responsibilities that have been delegated to the executive committee.
- e. The moderator and vice-moderator(s) and session moderators shall: (i) encourage the participants in meetings to challenge one another and the member churches to deepen their fellowship and mutual accountability; (ii) ensure that the meetings foster the common understanding and vision of the World Council of Churches; (iii) cultivate the ethos and facilitate the process of consensus discernment, and (iv) help to foster coherence within the ecumenical movement.
- f. The general secretary of the World Council of Churches shall be secretary of the central committee, and shall have the right to participate in all sessions of the central committee, except when discussing a topic related to him or her, but shall not vote or use indicator cards.

4. Meetings

- a. The central committee shall ordinarily meet during or immediately following the assembly during which it was elected (the "organizing meeting"), approximately one year following the assembly, and thereafter at approximately two year intervals. The general secretary shall convene the organizing meeting. The central committee shall be discharged when its report has been received by the subsequent assembly.

- b. The central committee shall determine the dates and places of its meetings and of the assembly.
- c. The executive committee may call an extraordinary meeting of the central committee whenever it deems such a meeting desirable and shall do so upon the request in writing of one-third or more of the members of the central committee.
- d. The general secretary shall take all possible steps to ensure that there is adequate representation present from each of the main confessions and from the main geographical areas of the membership of the World Council of Churches and of the major interests of the Council.

5. Functions

In exercising the powers set forth in the constitution and delegated to it by the assembly, the central committee, on behalf of the membership of the World Council of Churches, shall have the following specific authority and responsibility to govern the work of the Council:

- a. Set the vision and strategic objectives of the World Council of Churches consistent with policies adopted by the assembly, as well as plan and provide for the subsequent assembly and report to the subsequent assembly the actions it has taken during its period of office;
- b. Address emerging issues affecting the life and witness of the churches, including those identified by the assembly, the central committee, commissions and consultative bodies;
- c. Address matters referred to it by member churches and issue statements on any issue or concern with which the Council or its member churches may be confronted, in accordance with rule XIII;
- d. Decide membership matters;
- e. Set programme strategies and goals;
- f. Ensure the financial stability of the World Council of Churches;
- g. Elect the general secretary of the World Council of Churches;
- h. Receive reports from the general secretary of his or her leadership and management of the Council and hold the general secretary accountable for the work of the staff, that the programmes and activities of the Council have remained consistent with the constitution and the defined self-understanding and ethos of the Council;
- i. Elect the moderator and vice-moderator(s) and executive committee;
- j. Delegate specific governance functions to the executive committee by rule and hold the executive committee accountable;
- k. Provide for the organizational structure to fulfil the responsibilities of the central committee, including committees, sub-committees and working groups as necessary;
- l. Set policy guidelines for all aspects of the Council, including but not limited to, staff, programmes and relationships;
- m. Elect commissions and consultative bodies and approve their bylaws, and incorporate into its life their ongoing work, including but not limited to:
 - i. Commission on Faith and Order;

- ii. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism;
 - iii. Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation;
 - iv. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs;
 - v. ECHOS Commission on Youth and the Ecumenical Movement.
- n. Adopt rules or bylaws consistent with the Constitution to govern its work;
 - o. Delegate to its executive committee such authority necessary to ensure fiduciary responsibility and accountability for governance of the Council, including monitoring programmes, finance and personnel matters;
 - p. Take such other actions or delegate such other specific tasks to other bodies or persons necessary to fulfil the responsibilities and exercise the authority established by the Constitution of the World Council of Churches and to deliver the broad goals and policies set by the assembly;
 - q. Report to the assembly the actions and decisions it has taken during its period of office and; it shall be discharged when its report has been received.
6. Election and term of the Executive Committee
- a. There shall be two election processes for the executive committee between assemblies.
 - b. During the organizing meeting, the central committee shall elect the first executive committee comprising twenty members, which executive committee shall serve for the period of the first four years following the assembly (the “first executive committee”).
 - c. During the meeting of the central committee that immediately precedes the end of the four-year term of the first executive committee, the central committee shall elect an executive committee of twenty members to serve until the report of the central committee has been received by the next assembly (the “second executive committee”).
 - d. No member shall serve more than two terms on the executive committee.
 - e. Vacancies on the executive committee shall be filled by elections during the next meeting of the central committee.
7. Committees of the central committee
- a. The central committee shall elect standing committees as described in rule X.
 - b. The central committee may elect as needed at each meeting and for the duration of the meeting, ad hoc committees to advise the central committee on any questions arising which call for special consideration or action by the central committee.
 - c. Committees of the central committee shall work during the meeting of the central committee, shall be supported by World Council of Churches staff working in related areas, and shall proposed recommendations for decision to the central committee.
 - d. The central committee may form ad hoc committees to undertake specific mandates of remits to be completed within a specific timeline outside of the meeting of the central committee. The composition of such ad hoc committees shall be proposed to the central committee by the governance and nominations committee in consultation with the general secretary.
 - e. Participants in the central committee (rule VI.2) may be assigned to one committee.

8. Guiding policies on representation
 - a. The formation of all committees, commissions, working groups and joint consultative bodies shall have regard to the following principles:
 - i. the personal expertise of the individual for the task for which he or she is to be nominated;
 - ii. fair and adequate confessional representation;
 - iii. fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation;
 - iv. fair and adequate representation of the major interests of the World Council of Churches;
 - v. the general acceptability of the nominations to the churches to which the nominees belong;
 - vi. fair and adequate representation of lay persons, indigenous peoples, and differently-abled people, and balance of men, women and young people.
 - b. All nominations will reflect the target balances adopted by central committee for the most recent assembly.
 - c. In addition to the foregoing, with respect to the election of members of committees, commissions and consultative bodies, the central committee shall consider the representative character of the combined membership of all such committees in relation to the member churches, giving due regard to the broadest feasible representation of member churches.

VII. Nominations committee of the organizing meeting of the central committee

1. In its first meeting during or immediately after the assembly (the “organizing meeting”), the central committee shall elect a nominations committee which shall:
 - a. Nominate persons from among the members of the central committee for moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee; and;
 - b. Nominate persons from those elected as members of the central committee to membership of the executive committee.
2. The names of persons to serve on the nominations committee of the organizing meeting shall be proposed by the general secretary, following consultation with the co-moderators of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration, to the first session of the organizing meeting, and shall include, insofar as possible, balanced representation of the membership of the central committee and representation of the major interests of the World Council of Churches.
3. No person serving on the nominations committee of the organizing meeting shall be eligible for nomination to the positions of moderator, vice moderator(s) or to the executive committee.
4. In making nominations, the nominations committee shall have regard to principles set out in rule IV.4 and/or VI.8 and shall consider the specific skills and profiles necessary to undertake the responsibilities of moderator of the central committee, vice moderator and members of the executive committee.
5. The nominations committee shall present its nominations to the next session of the

organizing meeting of the central committee. Any three members of the central committee may make an alternative nomination, provided that each such alternative nominee shall be proposed as an alternative to a particular nominee.

6. Election shall be by ballot unless the central committee shall otherwise determine.
7. Following the election of the moderator and vice moderator(s) and of the executive committee the nominations committee of the organizing meeting shall be discharged.

VIII. Executive committee

1. Governance authority
 - a. The executive committee shall be entrusted with and made accountable for specific governance authority and responsibility of the World Council of Churches as delegated by the central committee, with authority to establish limits and guidelines within which management and staff of the Council shall implement the policies and programs of the Council.
 - b. The executive committee shall be accountable to the central committee, and shall present to each central committee meeting a report of its work. The central committee shall consider such a report and take such action in regard to it as it thinks fit.
2. Composition of executive committee
 - a. The executive committee shall be composed of the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, twenty other members of the central committee and the moderators of programme committee and the finance policy committee of the central committee.
 - b. The moderator, vice moderator(s) and general secretary shall invite to the meetings of the executive committee advisors from among ecumenical partners. The advisors shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - c. The moderator, vice moderator(s) and general secretary are to ensure that the meeting of the executive committee has sufficient resources available to accomplish its work, always having in mind the need for preserving a due balance of the confessions and of the geographical areas and cultural backgrounds, and of the major interests of the World Council of Churches.
 - d. If a member of the executive committee is unable to attend, he/she has the right – provided that the moderator agrees – to send a member of the central committee as a substitute. Such a substitute shall – as far as possible – be of the same region and church family, and shall have the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making.
3. Leadership of the executive committee
 - a. The moderator of the central committee shall also be the moderator of the executive committee.
 - b. The general secretary of the World Council of Churches shall be the secretary of the executive committee and shall participate in all sessions of the executive committee, except those sessions discussing issues relating to him or her, but shall not vote or use indicator cards.
4. Functions

- a. In exercising the powers delegated to it by the central committee, the executive committee assumes fiduciary responsibility for the governance of the World Council of Churches and shall have the following specific authority and responsibility:
- i. Ensure implementation of the strategic objectives set by the central committee;
 - ii. Oversee the finances of the World Council of Churches, ensuring its financial stability, overseeing the investments, encouraging income development, approving the budget, and if necessary, imposing limitations on expenditures; provided that the executive committee upon approval of the annual financial report and accounts, shall send the annual financial report and accounts and budget to members of the central committee and the member churches.
 - iii. Open or close any subsidiary legal entities of the World Council of Churches;
 - iv. Monitor resource management, assuring that the human, physical and financial resources the World Council of Churches needs are available and properly employed;
 - v. Monitor programmes and activities of the World Council of Churches, and, when necessary, direct that activities are initiated or terminated;
 - vi. Issue statements on any issue or concern with which the World Council of Churches or its member churches may be confronted, in accordance with rule XII;
 - vii. Recommend to the central committee the mandate and size of commissions and joint consultative bodies to resource the major areas of work of the World Council of Churches;
 - viii. Appoint staff in accordance with rule XI;
 - ix. Establish and monitor personnel policies and staff rules;
 - x. Ensure the integrity of the operations of the World Council of Churches in compliance with Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches, applicable laws, regulations, and best practices;
 - xi. Manage risk, assessing risks to the institution (including financial risk) and ensure that strategies are in place to handle risk;
 - xii. Organize itself into committees, sub-committees and working groups;
 - xiii. In between meetings of the central committee, nominate persons for committees, commissions, joint consultative bodies and working groups;
 - xiv. Delegate authority for specific time-bound matters to the moderator and vice moderator(s) and general secretary.
- b. If twenty members of the central committee have concerns arising out of either the financial statements, or the budget, they shall make known their concerns to the General Secretary and the Executive Committee in writing, within 45 days of the sending of the financial statements and the budget. In that event, with regard to any concern related to the financial statements, the executive committee shall be required to respond to that concern. With regard to any concern related to the budget, the executive committee shall reconsider that item. The executive committee's decision on reconsideration shall

be final.

5. Committees of the executive committee

a. The executive committee shall appoint sub-committees, which shall meet during meetings of the executive committee, and which shall advise the executive committee in exercising its authority and responsibility. Unless otherwise specified, the executive committee shall designate a moderator for each sub-committee. The sub-committee/s may include one or more advisors, who shall advise but not participate in decision-making. The sub-committees shall include the following:

i. Programme sub-committee, which shall be moderated by the moderator of the central committee's programme committee and shall assist the executive committee in

- a) ensuring implementation of the strategic programmatic objectives set by the central committee;
- b) initiating and terminating projects and activities;
- c) monitoring and overseeing the ongoing programs, projects and activities, including the task of the allocation of resources;
- d) providing for and making recommendations for regular evaluation of programmes, projects and activities in light of strategic objectives set by the central committee.

ii. Finance sub-committee, which shall be moderated by the moderator of the central committee's finance policy committee and shall assist the executive committee by

- a) recommending the annual appointment of the auditor;
- b) recommending for approval the annual budget for the following financial year, and the capital expenditure budget;
- c) recommending for approval the framework budget for the year after the following financial year;
- d) monitoring the implementation of the income and fund-raising strategy;
- e) monitoring adherence to the approved budget, and recommending corrective actions if necessary;
- f) making proposals for long-term financial goals and strategy for consideration by the finance policy committee;
- g) considering and recommending accounting policies for adoption;
- h) monitoring adherence to policies issued by central committee, including those governing general reserves and investments;
- i) ensuring the proposed loans, guarantees, pledges and any other unusual transactions are presented for approval by executive committee;
- j) ensuring compliance with laws and regulations concerning financial transactions, including the requirement to maintain a documented

system of internal controls; and

- k) receive the report of the statutory auditor and recommend approval of the financial statements.

The executive committee may delegate to the leadership of the finance sub-committee, composed of the moderator and two additional sub-committee members, the authority to authorise and approve for issue the financial statements. The leadership of the finance sub-committee may act on financial matters as specifically authorised by the executive committee between meetings, reporting back to the executive committee.

- iii. Personnel, Staffing and Nominations sub-committee, which shall assist the executive committee in:

- a) As to personnel matters, undertaking oversight of human resources policy and strategy, ensuring the World Council of Churches follows best practice in its treatment, development and deployment of all staff, with specific attention to the following:

1. Recruitment and retention policy including years of service, policy for redundancy and redeployment
2. The code of ethics
3. Staff appraisal and continuing professional development
4. Whistle-blowing policy
5. Grievance and disciplinary policies
6. Support for staff in implementing changes in staffing policy, particular when significant structural change is envisioned
7. Staff rules.

- b) As to staffing matters, preparing decisions for the appointment of staff according to rule XI;

- c) As to nominations matters:

1. Recording and processing changes in the membership of the central committee and its committees;
2. Preparing the recommendations of the executive committee to the central committee with regard to the mandate and size of commissions and joint consultative bodies.

- d) As to governance matters, recording and processing proposals for the amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches made in accordance with article VII of the constitution and rule XX.

- iv. Public Issues sub-committee shall assist the executive committee in preparing statements and/or minutes.

- b. Audit Committee. Its terms of reference are approved by the central committee. Elected by the executive committee, it reports directly to the executive committee.

IX. Permanent committee on consensus and collaboration

1. At its first full meeting after an assembly, the central committee shall elect from among its members the membership of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (the “permanent committee”), consisting of fourteen members, of whom half shall be Orthodox.
 2. The Orthodox members of the nominations committee of the central committee, in consultation with all Orthodox members of the central committee, shall nominate the seven Orthodox members, and the other members of the nominations committee of the central committee shall nominate the remaining seven. The central committee as a whole shall elect the permanent committee. For election of the permanent committee, the provisions of rule VII.5. shall not apply: no counter nominations shall be accepted from the floor.
 3. Of the overall membership at least half shall be members of the executive committee. Proxies may substitute for absent members. Advisers may be invited from member churches. Observers may be invited from non-member churches, or on occasion from churches in association with the World Council of Churches.
 4. Two co-moderators shall be elected by the membership of the permanent committee, one by its Orthodox members, and one by the other members. Any vacancy in the permanent committee will be filled through the same process as the election of its members.
 5. The term of the members of the outgoing permanent committee shall conclude upon election of replacement members following an assembly. The permanent committee shall be considered a committee of the assembly and shall advise the business committee of the assembly.
 6. The permanent committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. continuing the authority, mandate, concerns and dynamic of the Special Commission (mandated by the eighth assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998);
 - b. giving advice and making recommendations to governing bodies during and between assemblies in order to contribute to the formation of consensus on matters proposed for the agenda;
 - c. facilitating improved participation of the Orthodox in the entire life and work of the Council;
 - d. offering counsel and providing opportunity for action in matters of common interest;
 - e. giving attention to matters of ecclesiology.
 7. The permanent committee will report to the central committee and to the executive committee.
- X. Standing committees of the central committee**
1. Standing committees shall be understood to be those permanent committees defined in this rule. Standing committees are to accomplish the work required of their mandates during meetings of the central committee.
 2. At the first decision session of the second meeting of the central committee, the central committee shall receive from the executive committee a proposal for appointments to standing committees of the central committee.
 - a. The committees shall include, but not be limited to:

- i. Governance and Nominations Committee
- ii. Programme Committee
- iii. Finance Policy Committee
- iv. Policy Reference Committee
- v. Public Issues Committee
- vi. Communications Committee

- b. Members of the central committee shall each be proposed for one standing committee of the central committee, with due regard being paid to the specific expertise and interests of the member and overall balances within the committee.
- c. Participants in the central committee (rule VI.2) may also be assigned to participate in the work of one standing committee.

3. The Governance and Nominations Committee will have responsibility for:

- a. Assisting the central committee to monitor the organisational structure, including committees, sub- committees, commissions, consultative bodies and working groups in accordance with the Constitution and Rules;
- b. preparing nominations for the election of the committees of the central committee, commissions and consultative bodies;
- c. monitoring the adoption of rules and bylaws consistent with the Constitution to govern the work of the Council;
- d. receiving and processing any proposals for the amendments of the Constitution and Rules;
- e. receiving and processing replacements or substitutions in the membership of the central and the executive committees for action by the central committee.

4. Programme Committee

- a. The central committee shall elect from among its members the moderator and the twenty-three members of the programme committee together with up to eight advisors.
- b. The programme committee will have responsibility for:
 - i. Considering in particular the theological inter-relationship of World Council of Churches' programmes and the implication of programmes and activities for the relationships among member churches and with ecumenical partners;
 - ii. Assisting the central committee, by considering various inputs, clarifying options and devising a process to determine and develop the strategies that will deliver the broad outcomes set by the assembly. At the second meeting of central committee this will involve helping central committee engage with proposals for the eight-year strategy;
 - iii. Assisting the central committee to hear, with respect to programmatic work, the views and hopes of the churches, respond to key issues identified by commissions, and review, reshape and develop the goals of program work in the light of changing circumstances and needs;
 - iv. Reviewing the executive committee's report on program work, and bringing to

the central committee recommendations for action;

- v. Ensuring adequate plans are in place for the mid-term and pre-assembly program evaluation.

5. Finance Policy Committee will have responsibility for recommending policies related to:
 - a. The membership contributions scheme and campaign, general reserves and investments;
 - b. Long term financial goals and the income and fund-raising strategy to achieve them, consistent with the vision and strategic objectives of the World Council of Churches;
 - c. Significant issues concerning financial reporting, internal controls, accountability and compliance with laws and regulations, based upon reports from the finance sub-committee of the executive committee.
6. The Policy Reference Committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. Assessing relationships among member churches and with ecumenical partners, and suggesting appropriate actions to the central committee;
 - b. Assisting the central committee to take note of and analyse ecclesial and ecumenical developments;
 - c. Assisting the central committee in the preparation of policy guidelines for relationships;
 - d. Considering membership matters and bringing to the central committee recommendations for action.
7. The Public Issues Committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. Assisting the central committee in the preparation of policy guidelines for international affairs;
 - b. Analysing emerging issues in international affairs affecting the life and witness of the member churches, including those identified by the assembly, commissions and consultative bodies;
 - c. Proposing public statements and/ or minutes for action by the central committee;
 - d. Receiving and analysing proposals from members of the central committee for public statements and/or minutes;
 - e. preparing public statements and/or minutes for action by the central committee (according to established procedures).
8. The Communications Committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. Making recommendations toward the long term strategic goals of communicating the World Council of Churches, giving direction on what themes and storylines best serve the Council and its member churches and what should be the thematic focus of communications;
 - b. Exploring how programmes, the general secretariat, central committee and executive committee all contribute to the work of communicating the Council and what goals and plans should be set;
 - c. Exploring how member churches contribute to communicating the Council;

- d. Ensuring that the Council is developing strategic collaboration with other communications agencies, such as the World Association for Christian Communication, and regional networks, particularly in communications for justice and peace throughout the worldwide ecumenical movement in society.
- e. Assisting the central committee to consider, approve, and evaluate the general direction of the Council's communication strategic plan.

XI. Staff

1. A general secretary shall be elected by the central committee in accordance with rule XIX.10.a.ii and the procedures adopted by the central committee for the search for and election of the general secretary. When the position of general secretary becomes vacant, the executive committee shall appoint an acting general secretary and initiate the search process for a new general secretary.
2. The general secretary shall lead the work of the World Council of Churches and shall serve as its chief executive officer, including final responsibility for work of the Council and its staff.
3. In addition to the general secretary, the central committee shall elect one or more deputy general secretaries. The general secretary shall nominate his or her candidate(s) for the open position(s) and the central committee shall vote to elect the nomination in accordance with rule XIX.10.a.ii.
4. The general secretary shall provide for the appointment of or appoint staff to conduct the continuing operations of the Council.
 - a. For staff positions of direct responsibility for major programme or management areas of the Council, and those to whom are directly delegated responsibilities of the general secretary, the general secretary shall propose persons to fill such positions, and the executive committee shall make the appointment(s). At the beginning of the tenure of a new general secretary and at the time of any significant programmatic or structural reorganization, the general secretary and the executive committee together shall determine which specific staff positions come under this provision. Appointments to these positions shall be reported to the central committee.
 - b. The general secretary shall appoint other programme executive staff, and report those staff appointments to the executive committee.
 - c. The general secretary shall appoint specialized, administrative and house staff.
5. The normal terms of appointment for the general secretary and for the deputy general secretary or secretaries shall be five years, unless some other period is stated in the resolution making the appointment.
6. Retirement shall normally be that designated by Swiss law, but in no case shall it be later than the end of the year in which a staff member reaches the age of sixty-eight.
7. The general secretary shall ensure that the following policies regarding the staff of the World Council of Churches are implemented for all staff levels:
 - a. The primary consideration in the recruitment and appointment of staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.
 - b. Due account shall be taken of the importance of recruiting staff on as broad and fair a confessional and geographical basis as possible.

- c. All posts shall be open equally to men and women and selection of personnel shall be made without distinction as to race and gender.
- d. Commitment to the aims and spirit of the World Council of Churches.
- e. Applicants from member churches shall demonstrate support of their application from the leadership of the member church.
- f. Every effort shall be taken to have staff and leadership inclusive of both men and women and balanced according to region and confession.

XII. Public statements

1. In the performance of its functions, the World Council of Churches through its assembly or through its central committee may issue statements on any situation or concern with which the Council or its constituent churches may be confronted.
2. While such statements may have great significance and influence as the expression of the judgment or concern of so widely representative a Christian body, yet their authority will consist only in the weight which they carry by their own truth and wisdom, and the publishing of such statements shall not be held to imply that the Council as such has, or can have, any constitutional authority over the constituent churches or right to speak for them.
3. Any commission may recommend statements to the assembly or to the central committee for its consideration and action.
4. When, in the judgment of a commission, a statement should be issued before approval of the assembly or central committee can be obtained, the commission may do so provided the statement relates to matters within its own field of concern and action, has the approval of the moderator of the central committee and the general secretary, and the commission makes clear that neither the World Council of Churches nor any of its member churches is committed by the statement.
5. Between meetings of the central committee, when in their judgment the situation requires, a statement may be issued, provided that such statements are not contrary to the established policy of the Council, by:
 - a. the executive committee when meeting apart from the sessions of the central committee; or
 - b. the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee and the general secretary acting together; or
 - c. the moderator of the central committee or the general secretary on his or her own authority respectively.

XIII. Associate councils

1. Any national Christian council, national council of churches or national ecumenical council, established for purposes of ecumenical fellowship and activity, may be recognized by the central committee as an associate council, provided:
 - a. the applicant council, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its desire to cooperate with the Council towards the achievement of one or more of the functions and purposes of this Council; and
 - b. the member churches of the World Council of Churches in the area have been consulted

prior to the action.

2. Each associate council:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b. may, at the discretion of the central committee, be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the Council shall inform each associate council regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed Council programmes in its country.
4. In consultation with the associate councils, the central committee shall establish and review from time to time guidelines regarding the relationships between the World Council of Churches and national councils of churches.

XIV. Regional ecumenical organizations

1. The World Council of Churches recognizes regional ecumenical organizations as essential partners in the ecumenical enterprise.
2. Such regional ecumenical organizations as may be designated by the central committee:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the Council shall inform each of these regional ecumenical organizations regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed World Council of Churches programmes in its region.
4. The central committee, together with the regional ecumenical organizations, shall establish and review as appropriate guiding principles for relationships and cooperation between the World Council of Churches and regional ecumenical organizations, including the means whereby programmatic responsibilities could be shared among them.

XV. Christian world communions

1. The World Council of Churches recognizes the role of Christian world communions or world confessional bodies in the ecumenical movement.
2. Such Christian world communions as may be designated by the central committee and which express their desire to this effect:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly; and
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. The central committee shall establish and review as appropriate guidelines for relationships

and cooperation with Christian world communions.

XVI. Specialized ministries engaged in witness and service

1. Specialized ministries are those church-based, church-related or ecumenical offices and organizations and alliances or associations thereof within the family of World Council of Churches member churches, serving the ecumenical movement particularly in the areas of mission, diakonia, relief, development and advocacy.

Any specialized ministry committed to ecumenical witness and service may be recognized by the central committee as an ecumenical organization with which the World Council of Churches has working relationship, provided:

- a. the organization, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its willingness to relate to and cooperate with it on those terms; and
 - b. the member church or churches with whom the specialized ministry is related do not formally oppose this form of relationship.
2. Each specialized ministry thus recognised:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
 3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the Council may inform each of these specialized ministries regarding important ecumenical developments and consult with it regarding proposed World Council of Churches programmes in its area of commitment and expertise.
 4. In consultation with specialized ministries, the central committee shall establish and review from time to time guidelines regarding the relationships between the World Council of Churches and specialized ministries.

XVII. International ecumenical organizations

1. Ecumenical organizations other than those mentioned under rules XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI may be recognized by the central committee as organizations with which the World Council of Churches has working relationships, provided:
 - a. the organization is international in nature (global, regional or sub-regional) and its objectives are consistent with the functions and purposes of the Council; and
 - b. the organization, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its desire to relate to and cooperate with it.
2. On the basis of reciprocity, each international ecumenical organization:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly; and
 - b. shall be provided with copies of general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.

XVIII. Legal provisions

1. The duration of the World Council of Churches is unlimited.

2. The legal headquarters of the Council shall be at Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland. It is registered in Geneva as an association according to art. 60ff. of the Swiss civil code. Regional offices may be organized in different parts of the world by decision of the central committee.
3. The World Council of Churches is legally represented by its executive committee or by such persons as may be empowered by the executive committee to represent it.
4. The World Council of Churches shall be legally bound by the joint signatures of two of the following persons: the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, the general secretary, the deputy general secretary or secretaries. The moderator of the central committee (or a vice-moderator acting together with the general secretary or a deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches) shall have power to authorise other persons, chosen by them, as registered signatories to act on behalf of the World Council of Churches in fields circumscribed in the power of attorney.
5. The Council shall obtain the means necessary for the pursuance of its work from the contributions of its member churches and from donations or bequests.
6. The Council shall not pursue commercial functions but it shall have the right to act as an agency of interchurch aid and to publish literature in connection with its aims. It is not entitled to distribute any surplus income by way of profit or bonus among its members.
7. Members of the governing bodies of the Council or of the assembly shall have no personal liability with regard to the obligations or commitments of the Council. The commitments entered upon by the Council are guaranteed solely by its own assets.
8. Electronic communications—including e-mail, teleconference, video-conference and similar technologies— may be used for purposes of consultation and decision making by the general secretary, moderator and vice-moderator(s) of the central committee, leadership of committees and commissions, and committees of the World Council of Churches. The meeting shall be considered valid when all participants in the meeting have access to the designated form of communication and notice of the meeting and its process have been duly provided. Decisions by these methods can be taken when at least two-thirds of those who have a right to participate in decision making have participated in the meeting.
9. Decisions that can be taken by vote according to rule XIX can also be taken by postal or electronic vote provided that (1) information upon which the decision could be taken has been provided, (2) a notice period has been provided of at least forty-five days between the date of the notice of the vote and due date for the response, and (3) the thresholds for approval indicated in rule XIX are reached by votes cast as against the possible number of votes that could be cast in response to the postal request. The election of a general secretary shall not take place by postal vote. A copy of the communication shall be sent by post and electronically.

XIX. Conduct of meetings

1. General
 - a. These provisions for conduct of meetings shall apply to meetings of the assembly, the central committee, the executive committee and all other bodies of the World Council of Churches. During an assembly, the titles “president, moderator and vice-moderators of the central committee” shall refer to the persons holding those offices in the outgoing central committee. During the term of a central committee such titles shall refer to the current presidents and leadership of that central committee.

- b. "Delegate" shall mean an official representative of a member church to an assembly with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making (rule IV.1.a). For meetings of the central committee, "delegate" shall mean a member of the central committee or that member's substitute (rule VI.1.b), with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making.
- c. "Participant" shall include delegates as well as persons invited to the assembly or a meeting of the central committee as persons with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making (rule IV.1.b and VI.2).

2. Categories of sessions

The assembly shall sit in one of the following categories of sessions: general, hearing or decision. The business committee shall determine the category of session appropriate for different parts of the agenda.

a. General session

General sessions shall be reserved for ceremonial occasions, public acts of witness and formal addresses. Only matters proposed by the central committee or by the business committee shall be included in general sessions. No decisions shall be made during general sessions.

b. Hearing session

Hearing sessions shall be designated for plenary presentations, discussion, dialogue, and exchange of ideas as a resource for developing understanding, deepening fellowship among member churches and coming to a common mind on matters on the agenda. A wide range of perspectives shall be encouraged during hearing sessions. No decisions shall be made during hearing sessions, other than to move to a decision session, if deemed necessary or to deal with a point of order or procedural proposals.

c. Decision session

Decision sessions shall be designated for matters requiring a decision, including:

- i. adoption of the agenda;
- ii. proposal for change in the agenda;
- iii. appointments and elections;
- iv. reception or adoption of reports or recommendations;
- v. actions to be taken on recommendations or proposals of committees or commissions, or arising out of hearing sessions;
- vi. adoption of accounts and financial audits; and
- vii. amendment of constitution or rules.

3. Moderating sessions

- a. A moderator for each session of the assembly shall be designated before an assembly by the outgoing central committee, and during an assembly by the business committee, as follows:
 - i. in general sessions one of the presidents or the moderator of the central committee shall preside;

- ii. in hearing sessions one of the presidents, the moderator or a vice-moderator of the central committee, or a delegate with specific expertise in the subject matter of the hearing, shall preside;
 - iii. in decision sessions the moderator or a vice-moderator of the central committee or delegate to the assembly who was a member of the outgoing central committee shall preside.
- b. The role of session moderators shall be:
 - i. to convene the session, including announcing the category of session;
 - ii. to facilitate and encourage discussion and dialogue, for the exchange and development of ideas, and to assist the meeting to come to a common mind;
 - iii. during decision sessions, to test any emerging agreement on a particular point and whether the meeting is ready to move to a decision by consensus;
 - iv. in the event the category of session is to change during a session, to announce the change in category, providing a break in the session to mark the change in category; and
 - v. to close the session.
- c. The moderator shall consult with the recorder for the session to ensure that the developing consensus is accurately noted and any changed wording promptly made available to the meeting.
- d. All moderators shall undertake specific training in conducting meetings based upon the consensus model of decision-making, as described in these rules and the accompanying guidelines.

4. Moderator of the assembly

The moderator of the assembly shall announce the opening, suspension and the adjournment of the assembly.

5. Official minutes, records and reports

- a. The business committee shall appoint recorders from among delegates for each decision session. Their role shall be to follow the discussion of a decision session, to record the language of the emerging consensus, including final language of decisions taken, and to assist the moderator of the session in discerning an emerging consensus. Recorders shall also assist the moderator in ensuring that the final agreed wording of a proposal is translated and available to delegates before a decision is made.
- b. The business committee shall appoint rapporteurs for each hearing session and for committee meetings for which official minutes are not maintained, to prepare a report of the meeting including major themes and specific proposals. A rapporteur appointed for a committee meeting shall function as a recorder of that meeting.
- c. The business committee shall appoint minute-takers to record the official minutes of general, hearing and decision sessions of an assembly or any meeting for which formal minutes must be kept, and shall include a record of the discussion, motions and decisions. The minutes will normally incorporate by reference any report of the meeting. The minutes shall be signed by the moderator and the minute-taker for the session and shall be sent to the participants of the meeting. For all minutes other than minutes of an

assembly, if there is no objection within six months from the sending of the minutes, the minutes shall be considered to be accepted. The first full central committee meeting following an assembly shall confirm the minutes of the assembly.

- d. Decision sessions shall produce official minutes, a record and/or report.
- e. If, after the close of a meeting, a member church declares that it cannot support a decision of the meeting, the member church may submit its objection in writing and have its position recorded in the minutes or report of a subsequent meeting. The decision itself shall not be rescinded by this action.

6. Agenda

- a. Matters may be included on the agenda of a meeting according to rule IV.3 and procedures established by the business and programme committees, and any other committee established by central committee for that purpose. Normally, matters included on an agenda will be based upon reports, recommendations or proposals that previously have been fully considered and have the consensus support of the proposing group or committee.
- b. The business committee shall ensure that the moderator is advised before each session, and if appropriate during breaks within a session, as to the conduct of the business and the priority of various agenda items.
- c. A delegate may propose to the business committee an item of business to be included on, or any change in, the agenda. If after consideration the business committee has not agreed to the proposal, the delegate may appeal the decision to the moderator of the assembly in writing. The moderator shall at a convenient time inform the assembly of the proposal, and a member of the business committee shall explain the reasons for this refusal. The delegate may give reasons for proposing it. The moderator shall then without further debate put the following question: Shall the assembly accept this proposal? If the assembly agrees to accept the proposal, the business committee as soon as possible shall bring proposals for the inclusion of the matter or the change in the agenda.
- d. Matters concerning ecclesiological self-understanding: Where a matter being raised is considered by a delegate to go against the ecclesiological self-understanding of his or her church, the delegate may request that it not be submitted for decision. The moderator shall seek the advice of the business committee in consultation with this delegate and other members of the same church or confession present at the session. If agreed that the matter does in fact go against the ecclesiological self-understanding of the delegate's church, the moderator shall announce that the matter will be removed from the agenda of the decision session and may be considered in a hearing session. The materials and minutes of the discussion shall be sent to the member churches for their study and comment.
- e. Subject to the provisions of this rule, the agenda shall be proposed, amended and/or adopted in accordance with rule IV.3, IV.5, and VI.3.d.

7. Speaking

- a. In hearing sessions, participants wishing to speak either may submit to the moderator a written request or may queue at the microphones when the moderator so invites, but may speak only when called by the moderator.

- b. In decision sessions of the assembly or central committee, only delegates may speak. Delegates wishing to speak either may submit to the moderator a written request or may queue at the microphones when the moderator so invites, but may speak only when called by the moderator.
 - c. In sessions of committees and advisory bodies where both hearing and decision may take place, participants who are not delegates have the right to speak but not to take part in decision-making.
 - d. The moderator shall decide who shall speak, ensuring that a fair distribution of opinions is heard, and may take advice on the order of speakers from a small sub-committee of the business committee. If time allows and others are not left unheard, the moderator may permit speakers to intervene more than once.
 - e. When called by the moderator, a speaker shall speak from a microphone, first stating his or her name, church, country, and role at the meeting, and shall address all remarks to the moderator.
 - f. Remarks will normally be limited to three minutes; however, the moderator may use discretion in allowing extra time if there is a difficulty in language or interpretation or if the issues being discussed are unusually complex.
 - g. Procedural proposals – hearing or decision sessions: Provided that a speaker is not interrupted, a delegate may ask for clarification of the pending matter or may raise suggestions about procedure. The moderator immediately shall provide clarification or respond to the suggestion for change of procedure.
 - h. Points of order – hearing or decision sessions: This provision is available to question whether procedures being followed are in accordance with these rules, to object to offensive language, to make a point of personal explanation, or to request that a meeting move to closed session. Points of order may be raised by a participant at any time, even by interrupting another speaker. A participant gains the attention of the moderator by standing and calling, “point of order!” The moderator shall ask the participant to state the point of order and then (without discussion) shall rule on it immediately.
 - i. If any delegate disagrees with the moderator’s decision on a procedural proposal or point of order, the delegate may appeal against it. In this case the moderator will put this question, without discussion, to the meeting: “Does the meeting concur with the decision of the moderator?” The delegates present shall decide the question according to the decision-making procedures then being employed.
8. Reaching consensus: seeking the common mind of the meeting
- a. Consensus shall be understood as seeking the common mind of the meeting without resort to a formal vote, in a process of genuine dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and empowering, whilst prayerfully seeking to discern God’s will.
 - b. Decisions will normally be by consensus, unless otherwise specified by the rules.
 - c. A consensus decision on a particular matter shall be recorded when one of the following occurs:
 - i. all delegates are in agreement (unanimity); or
 - ii. most are in agreement and those who disagree are satisfied that the discussion has been both full and fair and do not object that the proposal expresses the

general mind of the meeting.

- d. A consensus decision shall mean that there is agreement about the outcome of a discussion. This may mean agreement to accept a proposal or a variation of a proposal; it also may mean agreement about another outcome, including agreement to reject a proposal, to postpone a matter, that no decision can be reached, or that there are various opinions that may be held. When consensus has been reached that various opinions can be held concerning a matter, those various opinions shall be recorded in the final wording of the minutes and the report and the record of the meeting.

9. Decision-making by consensus

- a. A proposal or recommendation considered in a decision session may be affirmed, modified or rejected. Delegates may suggest modifications, and the moderator may allow discussion on more than one modification at a time. Reaching a common mind may require a series of steps, if there is a variety of opinions being expressed. As discussion proceeds, the moderator may ask the meeting to affirm what is held in common before encouraging discussion on those aspects of a proposal about which more diverse opinions have been voiced.
- b. To assist the moderator in discerning the mind of the meeting and to move efficiently towards consensus, the recorder of the session shall maintain a record of the discussion. Delegates may be provided with indicator cards to facilitate participation.
- c. A delegate or the moderator may suggest that the matter under discussion be referred for further work to an appropriate group holding a range of points of view. This suggestion itself shall be tested to discern the mind of the meeting. If agreed, the business committee shall schedule consideration of the matter for a later session.
- d. When it seems that the meeting is close to agreement on an outcome, the moderator shall ensure that the wording of the proposal (or the proposal as varied during the course of the discussion) is clear to all delegates, and then test whether there is consensus on that outcome. If all are agreed consistent with rule XIX.8.c.i, the moderator shall declare that consensus has been reached and the decision made. If the meeting is not unanimous, the moderator shall invite those who hold a minority view to explain their reasons if they wish and to indicate whether they can agree with a decision pursuant to rule XIX.8.c.ii. If so, consensus shall be declared.
- e. If, after every effort has been made to reach consensus, agreement cannot be reached and it is the opinion of an officer or the business committee that a decision must be made before the meeting concludes, the moderator shall ask the business committee to formulate a proposal for how the matter may be considered again in a new form. At the later decision session where this new approach is considered, the meeting itself shall decide whether a decision must be made at this meeting, and, if so, shall proceed on any one of the following courses, which may be followed sequentially:
 - i. to work further towards consensus on the proposal in its new form;
 - ii. to work to reach agreement among most delegates with some delegates recording an objection, in which event a meeting shall record acceptance of the proposal, providing that each delegate who does not agree is satisfied with that outcome and has the right to have his or her viewpoint recorded in the minutes, in the report, and in the record of the meeting; or

iii. to move into voting procedures to decide the matter (rule XIX.10).

f. When a meeting discusses by consensus procedures a matter for which decision must be reached at that meeting and there is no ready agreement in accordance with rule XIX.9.e.i or ii, the moderator may offer a procedural proposal: "That the meeting resolve the proposal now by vote". Except for matters described in rule XIX.6.d, "matters concerning ecclesiological self-understanding", the moderator shall announce that a vote to decide this change of procedure shall be taken. Delegates shall indicate by voting whether they agree that the matter shall be decided by a vote. If 85 percent of delegates present vote in favour of moving the matter to a voting process, the matter shall so move. If fewer than 85 percent of delegates present vote in favour of moving the matter to a voting process, the matter shall not so move, and the meeting shall decide, again by vote of 85 percent of delegates present, whether discussion should continue to achieve consensus or whether discussion should be discontinued.

10. Decision-making by vote

a. Some matters require decision by vote, rather than by consensus. These include:

- i. constitutional changes (two-thirds majority);
- ii. elections (simple majority with specific procedures for election of the general secretary);
- iii. selection of assembly venue (simple majority);
- iv. adoption of yearly accounts, financial audit reports and appointment of the auditors (simple majority).

b. For matters that have been moved from consensus procedures to decision-making by vote in accordance with rule XIX.9.e.iii or rule XIX.9.f, and for matters reserved to a voting procedure according to subsection a. of this section, the following procedures shall be followed:

- i. All motions must be moved and seconded by a delegate, and the mover has the right to speak first.
- ii. In discussion following the seconding of a motion, no delegate may speak more than once, except that the delegate who moved the motion may answer objections at the end of the discussion.
- iii. Any delegate may move an amendment, and if a seconder supports it, the amendment shall be considered simultaneously with the original proposal.
- iv. When discussion is concluded, including the right of the mover to reply (XIX.10.b.ii.), the moderator shall call for the vote and shall put any amendment first. If approved, it will be incorporated in the original proposal, which will then be put to the vote without further discussion.
- v. If the mover seeks to withdraw a motion or amendment during the discussion, the moderator will seek the consent of the meeting for the withdrawal.

c. A delegate may move to close the discussion, but in doing so shall not interrupt a speaker. If seconded, the moderator shall call for a vote on this motion immediately without discussion. If two-thirds of the meeting agree, the voting process will then begin. If the motion fails, discussion will proceed, but the same motion to close discussion may

be moved again as the discussion continues, but not by the delegate who moved it the first time.

- d. Voting shall be by show of hands or indicator cards and the moderator shall ask first for those in favour, then for those against, and finally for those who wish to abstain from voting. The moderator shall announce the result of the vote immediately.
- e. If the moderator is in doubt, or for any other reason decides to do so, or if a delegate requests it, a vote on the matter shall be taken immediately by count of a show of hands or indicator cards. The moderator may call tellers to count those voting and abstaining. A delegate may ask that voting be by secret written ballot, and if seconded and if a majority of delegates present and voting agree, a secret written ballot shall be taken. The moderator shall announce the result of any count or secret written ballot.
- f. A majority of the delegates present, including those who choose to abstain from voting, shall determine a matter being decided by vote unless a higher proportion is required by the constitution or these rules. If the vote results in a tie, the matter shall be regarded as defeated.
- g. If the moderator wishes to participate in the discussion, he or she shall relinquish the position of moderator of the session to another presiding officer until the matter has been resolved.
- h. A moderator entitled to vote as a delegate may do so, but may not cast the decisive vote in the event of a tie.
- i. Any two delegates who voted with the majority for a previously approved matter may request that the business committee propose reconsideration of the matter. The business committee shall bring the proposal to the next decision session and may express an opinion as to whether the matter should be reconsidered. Reconsideration shall take place only if two-thirds of delegates present agree.
- j. Anyone voting with a minority or abstaining from voting may have his or her opinion recorded in the minutes, in the report, and/or the record of the meeting.

11. Languages

The working languages in use in the World Council of Churches are English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. The general secretary shall make reasonable effort to provide interpretation for any one of those languages into the others and shall endeavour to provide written translation of the specific wording of proposals. A participant may speak in another language only if he or she provides for interpretation into one of the working languages. The general secretary shall provide all possible assistance to any participant requiring an interpreter.

XX. Amendments

Amendments to these rules may be proposed at any session of the assembly or at any session of the central committee by any member and shall be decided according to the procedures in rule XIX.9; if the meeting shifts from consensus to voting, then the procedures in rule XIX.10 will apply. In this case, the proposed change must receive a two-thirds majority of those present to be adopted. No alteration in rules I, VI and XX shall come into effect until it has been confirmed by the assembly. Notice of a proposal to make any amendment shall be given in writing at least twenty-four hours before the session of the assembly or central committee at which it is to be considered.