

AFRICA-EU PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rules Of Procedure Of The Joint Parliamentary Assembly

I. COMPOSITION OF THE ASSEMBLY

Rule 1

Membership of the Assembly

1. The Assembly shall comprise, on the one hand, one member of parliament of each State Party in Africa, and an equal number of Members of the European Parliament. Members of the Assembly who cannot attend a meeting may be substituted by members of parliament according to the rules of each house.
2. Members shall be seated in alphabetical order, by surname in the case of representatives of the European Parliament and by the official name of the country in the case of African Members, the starting letter to change to the next consecutive letter of the alphabet for each session. Seating shall be adjusted to allow for alternate seating for Members of the two houses.
3. For the purpose of these rules, the Members from the African countries shall be considered as one house (the Africa House), and the Members of the European Parliament as one house (the EU House).

Rule 2

Observers

1. The following States and organisations, as permanent observers, may send a Member or representative of Parliament to attend sessions of the Assembly:
 - (a) Member States of the EU and African member States of the OACPS that are in the process of ratification of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement;
 - (b) African States which are members of the OACPS, but which are not yet party to the OACPS-EU Agreement
 - (c) Regional and sub-regional organisations, bodies and groupings from the African OACPS regions.

The permanent observers may address the Assembly upon invitation by the Co-Presidents.

2. Other organisations or bodies may participate, as observers, in sessions of the Assembly upon the invitation of the Co-Presidents on an ad-hoc basis.

II. PRESIDENCY AND BUREAU

Rule 3

Powers and duties of the Co-Presidents

1. The Co-Presidents shall represent and lead the work of the Assembly. They shall direct all the activities of the Assembly and its bodies in accordance with these Rules and shall enjoy all powers necessary to preside over the proceedings of the Assembly and to ensure that they are properly conducted. They shall be kept informed of all political, organisational and financial matters pertaining to the Assembly.
2. The Co-Presidents shall arbitrate on any question of concern to the Assembly in between Bureau meetings, committee meetings and plenary sessions, notably in situations of force majeure or in cases where an urgent decision is needed. Any decision shall be added to the following bureau agenda meeting for information.
3. The duties of the Co-Presidents include the opening, suspending and closing of Bureau meetings and plenary sittings.
4. The Co-Presidents shall maintain order, enforce the Rules of Procedure, draw the attention of the Bureau and the Assembly to matters that concern them, open and close debates, call upon speakers, and rule on all procedural matters, including the admissibility of amendments and other texts put to the vote in plenary.
5. If a Co-President is unable to preside or wishes to take part in the debate, one of the Vice-Presidents from the same House shall be asked to take the chair.
6. If for any reason a Co-President is unable to exercise his/her functions during the period of his mandate, a Vice-President shall be appointed as acting Co-President to replace her/him as soon as possible and according to practices and rules of his/her House, until the Co-President can resume her/his office or a new Co-President is nominated.

Rule 4

Composition of the Bureau

1. Each house shall elect and nominate its Members to the Bureau in accordance with its own practice, while striving towards gender parity in those nominations and ensuring that neither of the two houses nominates Members of one gender only.
2. The Bureau shall consist of two Co-Presidents of equal status, and eight Vice-Presidents. Half of the members of the Bureau shall be Members of Parliament from the African States and half from the European Parliament.

3. All Members of the Bureau of the RPA will be ex officio Vice Chairs of the OACPS-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA).

Rule 5

Convening of the Bureau

1. The Bureau shall meet, on the initiative of its Co-Presidents, in principle two times a year in conjunction with the annual sessions of the Assembly and the JPA. In between meetings, the Co-Presidents may put proposals to the Bureau for decision by written procedure.
2. The Co-Presidents may convene additional Bureau meetings, if necessary held remotely.

Rule 6

Powers and duties of the Bureau

1. The Bureau shall prepare the work of the Assembly, follow up the activities and resolutions of the Assembly and establish all necessary contacts with the Africa-EU Council of Ministers and the Africa-EU Committee of Ambassadors and coordinate the work of the Assembly with that of the JPA.
2. The Bureau shall be responsible for the coordination and planning of the work of the Assembly.
3. The Bureau shall designate Vice-Presidents in charge of specific matters, including for youth, for women and for civil society, in accordance with the principle of parity between members of the parliaments of the African OACPS States and members of the European Parliament.
4. The Bureau shall submit to the Assembly the proposed draft agenda of each plenary session for adoption.
5. The Bureau shall be responsible for matters relating to the composition and the responsibilities of any committees and working groups set up in accordance with Rules 21 and 22.
6. The Bureau shall be responsible for authorising the drawing up and tabling of motions for resolutions.
7. The Bureau shall be responsible for monitoring the follow-up to resolutions and decisions of the Assembly.
8. The meetings of the Bureau shall be held in camera.

9. When responding to crises or situations of force majeure, the Bureau shall strive to safeguard the most critical functions of the Assembly. When taking decisions on how to adapt its activities and procedures to such a situation, the Bureau shall strive to maintain and promote the continued visibility and relevance of the Assembly, the transparency of its actions and its central role in holding the executive bodies to account.

Rule 7

Vacancies and temporary substitutes

1. Each House shall ensure that all Bureau seats are filled at all times and nominate replacements for vacancies as soon as possible or designate a temporary replacement according to their own rules and practices.
2. Failure to nominate all Members of the Bureau shall not prevent the Bureau from meeting, deliberating or from taking decisions.
3. A Bureau member who cannot participate in a meeting or other proceedings of the Bureau may be substituted by another Member from the same RPA according to the rules and practices of each House. The Co-Presidents and the secretariat shall be informed in advance of such replacements.

III. PLENARY SESSIONS

Rule 8

Conduct of sessions

1. An annual session of the Assembly shall be convened by its Co-Presidents, to take place alternately in one of the African OACPS Member states and in the European Union.
2. A second annual plenary session of the Assembly may be organised in conjunction with the JPA plenary at the same venue.
3. The Co-presidents shall seek confirmation of the hosting of the Assembly plenary session at least 9 months ahead of the session.
4. Annual plenary sessions held in Africa shall be hosted by a national or regional parliamentary institution.
5. An extraordinary session of the Assembly may be convened by the Co-Presidents at the request of the Bureau or the Joint Council of Ministers.

6. In case of force majeure preventing the holding of a plenary session under normal conditions, the Bureau may decide by written procedure to convene a remote or partially remote session.
7. The agenda and the procedures for a hybrid or remote plenary session, decided by the Bureau, may be adapted to the exceptional circumstances.

Rule 9

Plenary Agenda

1. The Bureau shall prepare the draft agenda of the plenary session and submit it to the Assembly for approval. Subjects shall relate to cooperation between the European Union and the Members of the OACPS in the framework of the Partnership Agreement.

The draft agenda of each session may include the following categories of topics:

- (i) Exchanges of views with Members of Africa-EU Council of Ministers;
 - (ii) Recommendations to the Council in accordance with Rule 19;
 - (iii) Statements or keynote topics according to Rule 18;
 - (iv) Topics and texts authorised by the Bureau and submitted by working groups or committees, or motions tabled in accordance with Rule 13;
 - (v) Urgent topics.
2. In cases of urgency, the Co-Presidents may update the draft agenda between meetings of the Bureau.

Rule 10

Right to speak

1. Members of the Assembly may speak in plenary sessions once called upon to do so by the President and in keeping with the subject matter identified by the agenda. For each agenda item, the Co-Presidents may draw up a list of speakers from both houses and indicate the speaking time for each speaker. Speaking time that has not been used can be reattributed by the presiding Co-President during the debate.
2. Members of countries named in motions for resolutions of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, in statements, or in debates during the plenary session shall be given the opportunity to explain their position or provide information.

3. The chairing Co-President may withdraw the floor from a Member if the Co-President deems that the Member is using the right to speak in a way that is not compatible with the rules of the Assembly, the agenda or the rules of conduct in particular.
4. Speaking time for Members of the European Parliament shall be distributed following the practice of the European Parliament and take account of the proportionate size of political groups following the d'Hondt system.
5. The Co-Presidents may invite representatives of the Joint Council, and representatives of the EU and institutions under the regional protocol, and representatives of African OACPS Member States or other relevant international organisations and permanent observers within the meaning of Rule 2 to address the Assembly or to answer questions from Members.

Rule 11

Points of order

1. A member may raise a point of order or move a procedural motion and shall have a prior right to speak. He may speak on the point of order or procedural motion for not more than two minutes.
2. The Co-President may, on request, give the floor to one speaker against the motion for not more than two minutes. No further speakers shall be heard.
3. The Co-President shall announce his decision on the point of order or procedural motion.

Rule 12

Conduct of Members

In the debates and sessions, members of the Assembly shall conduct themselves in a manner which is in respect of the values expressed in Article 9 of the Agreement. Members shall refrain from displaying banners or posters or disrupting the order of the session in any other manner.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND OTHER TEXTS

Rule 13

Assembly resolutions

1. The assembly may adopt one resolution per year.

2. A motion for a resolution may be tabled by the Co-Presidents on behalf of the Bureau, a political group of the European Parliament or a Member of the OACPS on behalf of the OACPS house or by any group of Members including at least eight members of each house.
3. If an urgency arises within the three weeks preceding the opening of the plenary session or during the session, the Co-Presidents may exceptionally, after consulting the Bureau, table an additional urgent motion and propose its inclusion in the agenda of the session. The text of such motions may not exceed 6000 characters in length (not taking into account spaces), including recitals but excluding citations. Any text tabled this way may be adopted by the Assembly as a resolution notwithstanding the limit mentioned in paragraph 1.
4. The Co-Presidents may invite the authors of any motion for resolutions to draw up and table a compromise motion in English or French no later than by the end of the day on which the Assembly adopts its agenda. If compromise motions are tabled, they shall be voted during the session in accordance with Rules 16 and 17 following a debate and the tabling and voting of amendments on the compromise motions. Once a compromise motion for a resolution has been adopted, all other motions tabled on the same topic shall fall.
5. Resolutions adopted by the Assembly shall be forwarded by the Co-Presidents to the Africa-EU Council and to any other relevant body or actor identified in the resolution. The Co-Presidents shall provide the Assembly with a summary of any feedback received or actions taken in response to the resolution.

Rule 14

Amendments

1. An African Member, a European Parliament political group or any five members may table amendments to texts debated during the session.
2. Amendments shall relate to the text they seek to alter and shall be submitted in writing.
3. Where necessary, the President shall decide on the admissibility of the amendments on the basis of the provisions of these Rules of Procedure.
4. Any amendment only seeking to ensure the linguistic correctness or terminological consistency of the text in the language in which the amendment is tabled shall not be voted and the Co-Presidents shall seek a suitable linguistic remedy together with those concerned.
5. The deadline for the tabling of amendments shall be announced at the beginning of the session.

Rule 15

Right to vote and methods of voting

1. Each member with a right to vote shall have a single, non-transferable vote.
2. The Assembly shall vote by show of hands or electronically. A decision shall be deemed to have been adopted only if it has secured a majority of the votes cast, not taking into account abstentions.
3. If a request has been submitted by 6 p.m. on the day before the vote by no fewer than five members, for a vote by separate houses, a vote shall be taken in which the members of the African parliaments and the members of the European Parliament shall vote by separate houses. In that case, the text in question shall be deemed to be adopted only if it secures a majority of the votes cast within each House, not taking into account abstentions.
4. In the event of a tie, the motion is not adopted. It may be tabled again at the next session of the Assembly.
5. If a request has been submitted by 6 p.m. on the day before the vote by no fewer than five members, parts of the text of a paragraph or an amendment can be split and voted upon individually. Likewise, if a request has been submitted by 6 p.m. on the day before the vote by no fewer than five members, the Assembly shall vote separately on individual paragraphs of the text.
6. If a request has been submitted in writing by 6 p.m. on the day before the vote by no fewer than ten members, the Assembly shall vote by secret ballot.
7. When a vote is being taken, amendments shall have priority over the text to which they relate, and shall be put to the vote before that text.
8. Oral amendments are by leave of the Assembly. An oral amendment shall not be taken if it is objected to by seven members standing.
9. If two or more amendments have been tabled to the same part of the text, the amendment that departs furthest in content from the original text shall be put to the vote first with the exception of oral amendments which shall always be voted first if not objected in accordance with paragraph 8. Where there is doubt as to priority, the President shall decide. If all amendments are rejected, the original text shall be deemed to have been adopted unless a separate vote has been requested within the deadline specified.

Rule 16

Quorum

1. A quorum of the Assembly shall be attained when at least one third of the members from each house are present.

2. All votes shall be valid whatever the number of voters, unless the Co-President, at the request made before voting has begun by at least 7 members present, establishes at the time of voting that the quorum is not present. If the counting shows that the quorum is not present, the Bureau, at its next meeting, in preparation for the next session, shall determine, if necessary, when the vote shall take place.
3. If less than 7 members are present, the President of the sitting may declare that the quorum is not present.

Rule 17

Explanation of vote

Any member who has taken part in the vote, may give an oral explanation on the final vote for no longer than one minute and a half, or give a written explanation of no more than 200 words. Written explanations shall be archived in their original language.

V. SCRUTINY AND RELATIONS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES

Rule 18

Statements

1. Following a proposal of the Co-Presidents or by a political group or an OACPS Member on behalf of the OACPS house, when adopting the draft agenda of the plenary session, the Bureau may decide to include a statement on a key issue by the Africa-EU Council of Ministers, and/or any other relevant institution or body, including the European Commission and the Secretary General of the OACPS.
2. The Co-Presidents shall agree the scope and topic of such statements in cooperation with the other institutions.
3. Any such statement shall be followed by a keynote debate.

Rule 19

Recommendations

1. In view of the convening of a meeting of the Africa-EU Council, the Co-Presidents shall seek to coordinate the planning of the RPA sessions with the meetings of the Council.
2. Taking into account the agenda of the Africa-EU Council where available, the Co-Presidents may table a proposal for Recommendations to the Council for consideration by the Bureau and adoption by the plenary in accordance with Rules 13 to 17.

3. The proposal for Recommendations to the Council shall be based, to the extent possible, on previously adopted positions of the Assembly or the Joint Parliamentary Assembly OACPS-EU.
4. If no plenary session of the Assembly can be held before the meeting of the Council, the Bureau may exceptionally adopt the Recommendations to the Council by written procedure, following a Bureau meeting which shall be open to all Members in derogation from Rule 6(10).

Rule 20

Scrutiny

1. The Bureau may decide to set up a working group, in accordance with Rule 22, to monitor the implementation of the regional protocol and in particular the implementation of development cooperation between the EU and countries of the region.
2. If such a working group is set up, it shall seek to prepare reports in close cooperation with national parliaments and with the European Parliament, national authorities, stakeholders as well as development practitioners and experts to review the functioning of cooperation in specific countries of the region. The working group may nominate one rapporteur from each House to prepare a report over a period of up to one year.
3. In order to enhance exchange of good parliamentary practice and to contribute to capacity building to promote accountability for development cooperation projects or budget support towards parliaments, the Bureau may decide to organise workshops or seminars on related topics at the margins of the regular RPA sessions or remotely.

VI. COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

Rule 21

Committees

1. The Bureau may, at any time, decide to set up one or several committees, which it can charge with the preparation of draft resolutions and draft recommendations pertaining to issues covered by the Regional Protocol.
2. The Bureau may decide to limit the mandate for a specific period of time and/ or define a specific thematic remit.
3. Within the two months following a Bureau decision to set up one or several committees, each house shall nominate its committee members, as well as Co-Chairs and two Vice Chairs from each house in accordance with its own practice. Each house shall strive for gender parity in those nominations and ensure that neither of the two houses nominates committee members of one gender only.

4. Following a proposal of the Bureau or a motion tabled by at least on fifth of Members from each house, the Assembly may decide by a majority of Members of both houses to dissolve any existing Committee.
5. Between plenary sessions, committee meetings shall be held remotely.
6. Any member of a Committee who is unable to attend a meeting may be replaced by another JPA Member, belonging to the same house. The Co-Chairs of the Committee shall be informed of this replacement.

Rule 22

Working Groups

1. The Bureau may set up working groups whose organisation and responsibilities it shall determine. The working groups shall be composed by an equal number of Members from the two houses. Each house shall be invited to strive towards gender parity when nominating Members and in no case may a working group be made up by one gender only.
2. The number of working groups shall not exceed two.

The decision shall include the remit and the time frame for such working groups. The working groups may be instructed to elaborate texts on specific topics of interest to the Assembly and to propose and prepare hearings, seminars and workshops on such topics.
3. The first meeting of a Working Group shall elect two Co-Chairs, one from the European Parliament members and one from the African members.
4. Between plenary sessions, working group meetings shall be held remotely.
5. Any member of a Working Group who is unable to attend a meeting may be replaced by another Assembly Member, belonging to the same political group of the European Parliament or to the same African region respectively. The Co-Chairs of the Working Group shall be informed of this change accordingly.

VII. OUTREACH

Rule 23

Women's Forum

1. At each plenary session held in Europe or in Africa, the Bureau may, in cooperation with the host country, convene an Africa-EU Women's Forum. It shall advocate for women's rights and gender equality in accordance with Article 40 of the Africa Regional Protocol to the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.
2. Participation in the Women's Forum shall be broad, independent, balanced and pluralistic, including individuals from academia, private sector, the government and from civil society groups, as appropriate, in consultation with the host country.
3. The themes and topics addressed by the Women's Forum shall reflect those of the Assembly's session, as well as related topical global matters and general gender related issues relevant to competences of the Assembly.
4. The draft programme of the Forum shall be informed by the interests of women in the country hosting the Forum and shall be adopted by the Bureau upon a proposal by the two Vice Co-Presidents in charge of gender equality issues.
5. The two Vice Co-Presidents shall jointly report to the plenary session of the Assembly on the discussions, deliberations and possible recommendations of the Women's Forum.

Rule 24

Youth Forum

1. At each plenary session held in Europe or in Africa, the Bureau may, in cooperation with the host country, convene a Youth Forum, to which young people are invited by the responsible Vice Co-Presidents in order to deepen the people-to-people dimension of the partnership and to promote youth empowerment and active participation of young people in accordance with Article 41 of the Africa-Regional Protocol..
2. The Bureau shall define the number of participants to be invited, primarily from the country hosting the plenary session. Local students' and youth organisations should also be invited to the Forum.
3. The themes and topics addressed by the Youth Forum shall reflect those of the plenary sessions as well as topical issues of interest to young people.
4. The draft programme shall be adopted by the Bureau upon a proposal by the responsible Vice Co-Presidents.
5. The responsible Vice Co-Presidents and a participant of the youth forum shall jointly report to the plenary session of the Assembly on the discussions and deliberations of the Youth Forum.

Rule 25

Civil Society

1. In accordance with the commitment to inclusive, pluralistic democracy and the multi-stakeholder approach enshrined in the Partnership Agreement the Assembly shall seek to facilitate dialogue with and input from civil society through and in its work.
2. The Bureau may decide to designate, in accordance with rule 6(3), Vice-Presidents from each House, responsible for:
 - maintaining, enhancing and developing the outreach of the Assembly to civil society organisations in African and EU countries and to facilitate their contribution to the partnership and its parliamentary dimension;
 - proposing activities and longer-term strategies to contribute to the objectives of the Agreement mentioned in paragraph 1.
3. The Bureau may decide to designate civil society organisations or personalities representing civil society on a case-by-case basis as observers, according to a common set of agreed criteria.
4. When deciding on the draft agenda of the Assembly in accordance with Rules 6 and 9, the Bureau may identify topics for which to seek contributions and consult civil society ahead of or during the session.

Rule 26

Media

1. In order to inform the media and the public and in order to enhance the outreach of the work of the Assembly, the Co-Presidents may issue a joint press statement and/or publish statements on social media, which summarise and highlight the positions of the Assembly.
2. Following each session, the Co-Presidents may also invite media representatives to a press point or a press conference or give media interviews in order to answer questions from journalists. When organising official press conferences, the Co-Presidents shall speak for the Assembly and represent its views and positions as adopted.
3. The Co-Presidents may invite Vice-Presidents to replace them or ask rapporteurs to answer questions or give interviews to represent the Assembly's views vis-a-vis the media.

VIII. FINAL PROVISIONS

Rule 27

Co-Secretariat, Support and Resources

1. The Secretary-General of the European Parliament and the Secretary-General of the OACPS Secretariat shall take all necessary steps to assist the Assembly and to ensure that

it functions smoothly. They may designate a senior official of their respective Secretariats to represent them as Co-Secretary-General of the Assembly. They shall be answerable to the Bureau.

2. Under the responsibility of the co-Presidents, a co-secretariat shall provide assistance to the Parliamentary Assembly, to the Bureau and any working group set up.
3. In order to guarantee professional and impartial assistance of a high quality, the two secretariats shall facilitate close cooperation and capacity building, as well as mutual exchange of professional experience between each other. In addition, where there is need for strengthening the staff component of the Secretariat, particularly for the OACPS, the Bureau shall propose possible funding possibilities for additional staff.

Rule 28

Costs

1. When meeting outside of the European Parliament, the hosting country of a plenary session of the Assembly shall be responsible for the practical arrangements relating to the organisation of the session or meeting.
2. The costs of organisation shall be met by the country hosting a plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly, with the provisions set out in the paragraphs below.
3. Travel and subsistence expenses of participants shall not be covered by the host country.
4. The European Parliament shall assume responsibility for interpretation and translation of documents adopted by the Assembly in accordance with Rule 30 and the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism of the European Parliament.

Rule 29

Interpretation of Rules

The Co-Presidents - or, at their request, the Bureau - shall rule on questions relating to the interpretation of these Rules of Procedure.

Rule 30

Languages

1. The working languages of the Assembly used for all meetings and purposes, unless otherwise specified, shall be English and French.

2. The official languages of the Assembly shall be: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.
3. Interpretation during meetings shall be provided in the working languages. Interpretation for other official languages shall be provided to the extent possible, according to the resources available and in line with Rule 28(4) under the condition that they are needed and have been requested in advance.
4. If a meeting takes place outside the places of work of the European Parliament, priority for the provision of interpretation shall be given according to the number of Members requiring interpretation for a language and take into account the official language of the hosting country to the extent that the language is an official language within the meaning of paragraph 2 and can be covered by the available resources.
5. Official information to Members shall be provided in the working languages.
6. Before the sessions and other meetings, Members may table draft and preparatory texts, including amendments, in one of the two working languages or, if translation can be ensured in time before the relevant meeting, in one of the other official languages.
7. During the sessions and other meetings of the Assembly, tabled texts shall be made available in the two working languages and Members may table amendments in either of the two working languages.
8. Documents adopted by the Assembly shall be published in the two working languages. In duly justified cases, the Co-Presidents may decide that publication in other official languages is required.

Rule 31

Revision of Rules

1. Amendments to the Rules of Procedure shall be decided on by the Assembly following a proposal from the Bureau, taking into account recommendations from the Bureau of the JPA or its Rules and Scrutiny committee.
2. Amendments to these Rules shall be adopted only if they secure the majority of votes cast of both houses of the Assembly.
3. Unless otherwise specified when the vote is taken, amendments to these Rules shall enter into force on the first day of the session following their adoption.