

# **OACPS-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

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# RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

## ***TITLE I. COMPOSITION OF THE ASSEMBLY***

### *Rule 1*

#### **Membership of the Assembly**

1. The OACPS-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (“the Assembly”) shall be composed of the Members of the three Regional Parliamentary Assemblies (RPA): Africa-EU, Caribbean-EU and Pacific-EU.
2. For the purpose of these rules, the Members from the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) countries shall be considered to be one house (“the OACPS house”), and the Members of the European Parliament shall be considered to be another house (“the EU house”).
3. In the Assembly, Members of the two houses shall be seated alternately. The representatives of the European Parliament shall be seated in the alphabetical order of their surnames. The representatives of the OACPS countries shall be seated in the alphabetical order of the official names of their countries. At each session of the Assembly, the letter of the alphabet from which the alphabetical order of seating begins will move one letter forward.

### *Rule 2*

#### ***Gender Parity***

The parliaments of the OACPS and the political groups in the European Parliament shall ensure at least 30% representation of women in all bodies established under the Assembly.

### *Rule 3*

#### **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,
  - (b) Member States of the OACPS that are in the process of ratifying the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement,

- (c) Member States of the OACPS that are not yet party to the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement,
- (d) Regional and sub-regional organisations, bodies and groupings from the OACPS regions.

Permanent observers may address the Assembly at the invitation of the Co-Presidents.

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

## ***TITLE II. PRESIDENCY AND BUREAU***

### *Rule 4*

#### **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 relating to the Assembly.
- 2. Between Bureau meetings, committee meetings and plenary sessions, notably in situations of force majeure or in cases where an urgent decision is needed, the Co-Presidents shall arbitrate on any question of concern to the Assembly. Any decision taken by the Co-Presidents in such situation shall be added to the following Bureau agenda meeting for information.
- 3. The duties of the Co-Presidents shall 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 a plenary session.
- 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 or her functions during the period of his mandate, a Vice-President shall be appointed as acting Co-President to replace him or her as soon as possible, in accordance with the practices and rules of his or her house, until the Co-President can resume his or her office or a new Co-President is nominated.

## *Rule 5*

### **Composition of the Bureau**

The Bureau of the Assembly (“the Bureau”) shall consist of:

- two Co-Presidents of equal status, one from the OACPS house and one from the EU house, nominated in accordance with the practices and rules of their respective house;
- the 10 Members of the Bureau of the Africa-EU RPA as Vice-Presidents;
- the 6 Members of the Bureau of the Caribbean-EU RPA as Vice-Presidents;
- the 6 Members of the Bureau of the Pacific-EU RPA as Vice-Presidents.

## *Rule 6*

### **Convening of the Bureau**

1. The Bureau shall meet, on the initiative of its Co-Presidents. One meeting shall take place in situ in conjunction with the annual plenary session of the Assembly. In between meetings, the Co-Presidents may submit proposals to the Bureau for decision by written procedure.
2. The Co-Presidents may convene additional Bureau meetings, which may, if necessary, be held remotely.

## *Rule 7*

### **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 OACPS-EU Council of Ministers and the OACPS-EU Ambassadorial Level Senior Officials Committee (ALSOC).
2. The Bureau shall be responsible for planning the work of the Assembly and for coordinating that work with the work of the RPAs.
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 the Members from the OACPS house and the Members from the EU house.
4. The Bureau shall be accountable to the Assembly.
5. The Bureau shall submit to the Assembly the proposed draft agenda for the plenary sessions.

6. The Bureau shall be responsible for matters relating to the composition and the responsibilities of committees provided for in these Rules.
7. The Bureau shall be responsible for authorising committees provided for in these Rules to draw up reports and urgent motions for resolutions.
8. The Bureau shall be responsible for monitoring the follow-up to resolutions and decisions of the Assembly.
9. The Bureau shall be responsible for authorising fact-finding missions and, when called upon to do so, election observation missions, and shall present the reports of those missions to the Assembly in a plenary session.
10. The Bureau shall be responsible for discussion of individual human rights cases.
11. The meetings of the Bureau shall be held in camera.
12. 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 8*

#### **Vacancies and temporary substitutes**

1. Each house within each RPA shall ensure that all seats in the JPA Bureau as foreseen under Rule 5 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 fill all places or 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 in accordance with the rules and practices of each house. The Co-Presidents and the secretariat shall be informed in advance of such replacements.

### ***TITLE III. PLENARY SESSIONS***

#### *Rule 9*

#### **Conduct of plenary sessions**

1. A plenary session of the Assembly shall be convened annually by its Co-Presidents. It shall take place alternately in one of the Member States of the OACPS and in one of the Member States of the European Union.
2. When deciding the precise venue of annual plenary sessions, consideration shall be given in turn to the regions of the OACPS and the Member States of the European Union. Subject to paragraph 3, sessions held in the European Union shall whenever possible be held in the Member State holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.
3. The Co-Presidents shall seek confirmation of the venue of annual plenary sessions at least 9 months before the beginning of the relevant calendar year and establish the planning in cooperation with the Co-Presidents of the RPAs.<sup>1</sup>
4. Failing timely confirmation, the annual plenary session shall be held at any of the places of work of the European Parliament for the European Union side, and in Ethiopia or any regional assembly for the OACPS side.
5. An extraordinary plenary session of the Assembly may be convened by the Co-Presidents at the request of the Bureau or the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers.
6. Where force majeure prevents a plenary session from being held under normal conditions, the Bureau may decide by written procedure to convene a remote or partially remote plenary session.
7. The agenda and the procedures for a hybrid or remote plenary session that have been decided by the Bureau may be adapted to the exceptional circumstances.

#### *Rule 10*

#### **Plenary Agenda**

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

The items on the draft agenda of each session shall include the following categories of topics:

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<sup>1</sup> This paragraph will enter into force 12 months after the adoption of the Rules of Procedure.

- (i) exchanges of views with Members of the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers;
  - (ii) keynote topics for high-level debates, proposed by the Bureau, not exceeding two per session, with or without a wind-up resolution;
  - (iii) reports on the work of the RPAs;
2. The draft agenda of each session may also include the following categories of topics:
- (i) exchanges of views on a resolution when prepared by the Drafting Committee and tabled by the Co-Presidents in accordance with Rule 14;
  - (ii) an exchange of views on an urgent topic, proposed by the Bureau, on which a motion for a resolution may be tabled in accordance with Rule 14.
3. In cases of urgency, the Co-Presidents may update the draft agenda between meetings of the Bureau.

### *Rule 11*

#### **Right to speak**

1. Members may speak in plenary sessions once called upon to do so by the chairing Co-President and in keeping with the subject matter identified by the agenda. For each agenda item of the agenda, 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 chairing Co-President during the debate.
2. Members from 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 and/or provide information.
3. The Co-Presidents may withdraw permission to address the Assembly from a Member if the Co-President considers 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 from the EU house 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 OACPS-EU Council of Ministers, representatives of the institutions and of the Member States of the EU, representatives of the institutions and of the Member States of the OACPS, representatives of other relevant international organisations and permanent observers within the meaning of Rule 3 to address the Assembly or to answer questions from Members.

## *Rule 12*

### **Points of order and procedural motions**

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-Presidents may, upon request, invite one speaker against the motion to address the Assembly for not more than two minutes. No further speakers shall be heard.
3. The Co-Presidents shall announce their decision on the point of order or procedural motion.

## *Rule 13*

### **Conduct of Members**

During Assembly meetings, Members shall conduct themselves in a manner that respects the values set out in Article 9 of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement. Members shall refrain from displaying banners or posters, or from disrupting the order of the plenary session in any other way.

## ***TITLE IV. PROCEDURES FOR ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND OTHER TEXTS***

## *Rule 14*

### **Assembly resolutions**

1. At each plenary session, the Assembly may adopt one resolution prepared by the Drafting Committee referred to in Rule 24, one urgent resolution and one resolution to wind up a keynote debate following a statement, as referred to in Rule 21.
2. A motion for a resolution may be tabled by the Co-Presidents on behalf of the drafting committee, by a political group from the EU house, by a Member on behalf of the OACPS house or by any group of Members including at least eight members of each house.
3. Motions for resolutions to wind up a keynote debate following a statement, referred to in Rule 21, and urgent motions for resolutions shall be tabled in English or French and limited in topic to the items on the draft agenda for the plenary session. Such motions for resolutions must be tabled no later than three weeks before the opening of the plenary session at which they are to be adopted. The text of such motions shall not exceed 6.000 characters in length (not taking into account spaces), including recitals but excluding citations.
4. If an urgent situation arises within the three weeks preceding the opening of the plenary session or during the plenary session, the Co-Presidents may, exceptionally and after

consulting the Bureau, table an additional urgent motion for a resolution and propose its inclusion in the draft agenda of the plenary session. Any text tabled this way may be adopted by the Assembly as a resolution notwithstanding the limits mentioned in paragraph 1.

5. The Co-Presidents shall invite the authors of any motions for resolution not prepared by the Drafting Committee to draw up and table a compromise motion for a resolution in English or French no later than the end of the day on which the Assembly adopts its agenda. If compromise motions for resolutions are tabled, they shall be put to the vote during the plenary session in accordance with Rules 15 to 18 following a debate and the tabling and putting to the vote of amendments on the compromise motions for resolutions. Once a compromise motion for a resolution has been adopted, all other motions tabled on the same topic shall fall.
6. The Drafting Committee may submit one motion for a resolution, no later than one month prior to the Bureau meeting which adopts the draft agenda of the plenary session. Such a motion for a resolution may be accompanied by an explanatory statement, which shall not exceed 6.000 characters in length (not taking into account spaces). Such a motion for a resolution shall be translated in accordance with Rule 36 before the beginning of the plenary session and shall be adopted in accordance with Rules 15 to 18.
7. Resolutions adopted by the Assembly shall be forwarded by the Co-Presidents to the OACPS-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 15*

#### **Amendments**

1. A Member from the OACPS house, a political group from the EU house or any group of five Members may table amendments to texts debated during the plenary session.
2. Amendments shall relate to the text that they seek to alter and shall be submitted in writing.
3. Where necessary, the Co-Presidents shall decide on the admissibility of the amendments on the basis of these Rules of Procedure.
4. Any amendment that merely seeks to ensure the linguistic correctness or terminological consistency of the text in the language in which the amendment is tabled shall not be put to the vote. Instead, the Co-Presidents together with those concerned shall seek a suitable linguistic solution.
5. The deadline for the tabling of amendments shall be announced at the beginning of the plenary session.

## *Rule 16*

### **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 considered 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 at least five Members, for a vote by separate houses, a vote shall be taken in which the Members from the OACPS house and the Members from the EU house shall vote in their separate houses. In that case, the text in question shall be considered to be adopted only if it secures a majority of the votes cast in each house, not taking into account abstentions.
4. In the event of a tie, the motion or amendment shall not be considered to have been adopted. It may be tabled again at the next plenary 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., local time in the host country, on the day before the vote by at least 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., local time in the host country, on the day before the vote by at least 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 ten 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 which amendment has priority, the Co-Presidents shall decide the order in which the amendments shall be put to the vote. If all amendments are rejected, the original text shall be considered to have been adopted unless a separate vote has been requested within the deadline specified.

## *Rule 17*

### **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-Presidents, following a request made before the start of voting by at least 10 Members present, establish that, at the time of voting, there is no quorum. If the counting shows that there is no quorum, 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 10 Members are present, the Co-Presidents may declare that there is no quorum.

#### *Rule 18*

#### **Explanation of vote**

Any Member who has taken part in the vote, may give an oral explanation of 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.

### ***TITLE V. SCRUTINY AND RELATIONS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES***

#### *Rule 19*

#### **Questions to the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers and to the European Commission in plenary sessions**

1. Members may submit questions addressed to the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers or to the European Commission relating to the implementation of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement for oral answers during a plenary session. Those questions shall be submitted to the Bureau at least four weeks before the start of the session concerned.
2. The Bureau shall ensure that the questions referred to in paragraph 1 are admissible as per criteria set by the Rules and Scrutiny Committee. In addition, all admissible questions shall be answered and debated during the plenary session within the amount of time available for such questions during the session concerned.
3. The Bureau shall ensure a balance of questions from both houses and to both institutions. The Bureau may decide that questions which cannot be taken at plenary question time are submitted for written answer. The Bureau may take such decisions using the written procedure. The Bureau may decide to group the questions for oral answers into thematic blocks.
4. After the representatives of the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers and the Commission have given their answers, Members shall be given the opportunity to ask short follow-up questions or to make comments. Priority shall be given to the Members who submitted the initial questions.

5. The answers provided orally and in writing shall be annexed to the minutes of the plenary session.
6. In urgent cases, at the initiative of at least two Members, and with the agreement of the institution to which the question is addressed, the Co-Presidents may decide to allow a question for oral answer that was not submitted in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraphs 1 and 2.

#### *Rule 20*

##### **Questions to the OACPS-EU ALSOC outside plenary sessions**

1. Between sessions, Members may submit questions to the Bureau addressed to the OACPS-EU ALSOC relating to the implementation of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.
2. The Co-Presidents shall ensure that the questions are admissible and decide on the most appropriate way for them to be answered. Upon request, the Co-Presidents may decide to treat questions as urgent questions for written answers and invite the OACPS-EU ALSOC to provide a written answer within a reasonable period.
3. The Co-Presidents may decide to refer specific questions to one or more of the RPAs or to the Scrutiny and Rules Committee.
4. The Co-Presidents may recommend to the Bureau or to the Scrutiny and Rules Committee that it convene a remote meeting open to all Members with OACPS-EU ALSOC representatives to answer the questions received. If such a meeting is held, Rule 19, paragraphs 3, 4 and 5, shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

#### *Rule 21*

##### **Statements**

1. Following a proposal of the Co-Presidents, by a political group from the EU house or by a Member from 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 OACPS-EU Council of Ministers, 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 of such statements and the topic that they deal with in cooperation with the other institutions.
3. Any such statement shall be followed by a keynote debate which may be wound up by a resolution adopted in accordance with Rules 14 to 18.

## Rule 22

### Recommendations

1. If a meeting of the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers is convened and in view of the role of the Assembly as defined in Articles 88(5) and 90(2) of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement, the Co-Presidents shall seek to coordinate the planning of the annual plenary session of the Assembly with the meetings of the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers.
2. The Co-Presidents may table a proposal for Recommendations to the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers for consideration by the Bureau.
3. The proposal for Recommendations to the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers shall be based, as far as possible, on previously adopted positions of the Assembly. The proposal may also, where relevant, draw on positions adopted by the RPAs.
4. Where possible, the Bureau shall hold an exchange of views on such a proposal for Recommendations. By way of derogation from Rule 7(11), that exchange of views shall be open to all Members.
5. If the annual plenary session of the Assembly, planned in accordance with Rule 8, is to be held in the three months preceding but no later than ten days before the meeting of the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers, the Bureau shall table the proposal for recommendations for adoption by the Assembly and Rules 14 to 18 apply *mutatis mutandis* as for resolutions prepared by the Drafting Committee.
6. If no annual plenary session of the Assembly is planned to take place in the three months preceding the meeting of the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers, the Bureau may adopt the Recommendations to the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers either in the meeting as referred to in paragraph 4 or by written procedure.

## Rule 23

### Scrutiny

1. At the latest four years after the coming into force of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement and subsequently at similar, regular intervals, the Bureau shall review and report to the Assembly on the implementation of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement, including on progress made towards achieving the objectives referred to in Article 1 thereof, and on the contribution and functioning of its parliamentary dimension.
2. In doing so, the Bureau may endeavour to draw on external expertise and, where available external evaluations, civil society contributions, reports from the Co-Presidents of the RPAs, previous Assembly resolutions and a report prepared by the Rules and Scrutiny committee in accordance with Rule 25.
3. The Bureau may decide to put that report for adoption by the Assembly in accordance with Title IV.

4. In order to enhance the 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, in consultation and in coordination with the Co-Presidents of the RPAs, to organise workshops or short seminars on related topics at the margins of the Assembly sessions, or remotely.

## ***TITLE VI. COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS***

### *Rule 24*

#### **Drafting committee**

1. The Bureau may decide to set up a Drafting Committee to prepare draft reports, draft resolutions and draft recommendations addressed to the OACPS-EU Council of Ministers or to the Summit of Heads of State or Government. The members of the Drafting Committee shall be designated by each of the two houses of the Assembly in accordance with its own practices and rules; it shall comprise at least eight Members from the EU house and eight Members from the OACPS house. The Bureau shall invite the two houses to strive towards gender parity in those nominations. It shall not be possible for the Drafting Committee to be made up by one gender only.
2. The Bureau decision shall inter alia determine the remit of the Drafting Committee and the time frame in which it will operate. As a general principle, the work of the Drafting Committee shall be completed in time for the following Assembly session.
3. The first meeting of a Drafting Committee shall elect two Co-Chairs, one from the EU house and one from the OACPS house.
4. Between plenary sessions, drafting committee meetings shall be held remotely.
5. Any member of a Drafting Committee from the EU house who is unable to attend a meeting may be replaced by another member from the EU house from the same political group within the European Parliament. Any member of a Drafting Committee from the OACPS house who is unable to attend a meeting may be replaced by another member from the OACPS house from the same OACPS region. The Co-Chairs of the Drafting Committee shall be informed of any such replacements.

### *Rule 25*

#### **Rules and Scrutiny Committee**

1. The Bureau may decide to set up a Rules and Scrutiny Committee supporting the Bureau with a view to:

- enhancing scrutiny of the implementation of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement, in particular relating to the active involvement of parliaments and their members at all the levels as provided for in the Agreement;
  - ensuring proper follow-up to Assembly resolutions and recommendations;
  - reviewing the Assembly's own Rules in order to making its work as effective as possible and to ensure its active contribution to the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.
2. At least every three years, starting from the Bureau decision that set it up, the Committee shall present a report to the Bureau, prepared by rapporteurs from the two houses, on the implementation of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement and in particular its parliamentary dimension. The Bureau may decide to submit the report to the Assembly for adoption in accordance with Title IV.
  3. The members of the Rules and Scrutiny committee shall be designated by each of the two houses of the Assembly in accordance with its own practices and rules. The committee shall comprise at least eight Members from the EU house and eight Members from the OACPS house. The Bureau shall invite the two houses to strive towards gender parity in those nominations. It shall not be possible for the committee to be made up by one gender only.
  4. The first meeting of a Rules and Scrutiny Committee shall elect two Co-Chairs, one from the EU house and one from the OACPS house. The Rules and Scrutiny Committee may also appoint co-rapporteurs for specific questions related to the present rules and their review, as well as the rapporteurs provided for under paragraph 2.

### *Rule 26*

#### **Working Groups**

1. The Bureau may decide to set up working groups. Those working groups shall have an equal number of Members from each of the two houses. Each house shall be invited to strive towards gender parity when nominating members. A working group shall not be made up by one gender only.

The Bureau decision to set up a working group shall inter alia determine the organisation and responsibilities, the remit of the working group and the time frame in which it will operate. The working group 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.

2. The number of working groups shall not exceed two per year.
3. The first meeting of a working group shall elect two Co-Chairs, one from the EU house and one from the OACPS house.

4. Between plenary sessions, working group meetings shall be held remotely.
5. Any member of a working group from the EU house who is unable to attend a meeting may be replaced by another Member from the EU house, from the same political group within the European Parliament. Any member of a Working Group from the OACPS house who is unable to attend a meeting may be replaced by another Member from the OACPS house, from the same OACPS region. The Co-Chairs of the working group shall be informed of any such replacements.

## ***TITLE VII. OUTREACH***

### *Rule 27*

#### **Women's Forum**

1. At each plenary session of the Assembly, the Bureau shall convene an OACPS-EU Women's Forum. That Forum shall advocate for women's rights and gender equality in accordance with Article 36 of 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 annual plenary session of the Assembly, as well as related topical global matters and general gender related issues relevant to powers 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-Presidents in charge of gender equality issues.
5. The two Vice-Presidents shall jointly report to the plenary session of the Assembly on the discussions, deliberations and any recommendations of the Women's Forum.

### *Rule 28*

#### **Youth Forum**

1. At each plenary session of the Assembly, the Bureau shall convene an OACPS-EU Youth Forum, in which young people are invited by the responsible Vice-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 35 of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.
2. At least half of the participants invited should be from the country hosting the Assembly when the plenary session is held somewhere other than the seat or working place of the European Parliament. 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 annual plenary session of the Assembly, as well as topical global issues of interest to young people.
4. The Youth Forum shall present an oral opinion to the three Regional Assembly Reports during the annual JPA ACP-EU Youth Forum.
5. The draft programme shall be adopted by the Bureau upon a proposal by the Vice-Presidents.
6. The Vice 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 29*

#### **Civil Society**

1. In accordance with the commitment to inclusive, pluralistic democracy and the multi-stakeholder approach enshrined in the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement, namely in Articles 2(8), 3(4), 5(3), 11(4), 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 7(3), Vice Presidents from each house, responsible for:
  - maintaining, enhancing and developing outreach, by the Assembly, to civil society organisations in OACPS and EU countries and to facilitate the contribution of those organisations to the OACPS-EU Partnership and to its parliamentary dimension;
  - proposing activities and longer-term strategies to contribute to the objectives of the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement.
3. The Bureau may decide to designate civil society organisations or personalities representing civil society on a case by case basis as observers, in accordance with a common set of agreed criteria.
4. When deciding on the draft agenda of the Assembly in accordance with Rules 7 and 10, the Bureau may identify topics on which to consult civil society, and on which to seek its contributions, ahead of or during the plenary session.

### *Rule 30*

#### **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 or publish statements on social media that summarise and highlight the positions of the Assembly.
2. Following each session, the Co-Presidents may also invite media representatives to a press briefing 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 the views and positions that it has 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.

### ***TITLE VIII. FINAL PROVISIONS***

### *Rule 31*

#### **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-Secretaries-General of the Assembly. They shall be answerable to the Bureau.
2. A co-secretariat, answerable to the Co-Presidents, shall provide assistance to the Assembly, to the Bureau and any working group that has been 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 the mutual exchange of professional experience between one another. 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 32*

#### ***Honorary Presidents***

On a proposal from the Bureau, the Assembly may confer the title of Honorary President to some of its former Co-Presidents. This honour shall be a mark of recognition by the Assembly of the distinguished service rendered by the persons concerned, during his/her membership of the Assembly, to the cause of the Assembly. Their role could, be amongst others, to support the work of the regional assemblies to which they belong to.

### *Rule 33*

#### **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 plenary session or meeting.
2. The costs of organisation shall be met by the country hosting a plenary session of the Assembly, subject to paragraphs 3 and 4.
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 36 and the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism of the European Parliament.

### *Rule 34*

#### **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 35*

#### ***Cooperation with other Regional and international Parliamentary Assemblies***

The Bureau shall develop mechanisms for cooperation among various regional and international parliamentary assemblies.

### *Rule 36*

#### **Languages**

1. The working languages of the Assembly used for all meetings and purposes, shall, unless otherwise specified, 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, Swedish.
3. Interpretation during meetings shall be provided in the working languages. Interpretation for other official languages shall be provided to the extent possible if there are sufficient resources available, in line with Rule 33(4), under the condition that the interpretation in those languages is needed, and it has been requested in advance.
4. If a meeting takes place outside the places of work of the European Parliament, priority in the provision of interpretation services shall be given according to those languages which are required by the greatest number of Members, as well as to the official language of the hosting country, provided that that 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 plenary 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 session or meeting, in one of the other official languages.
7. During the plenary 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 37*

**Revision of Rules**

1. Amendments to the Rules of Procedure shall be decided by the Assembly following a proposal from the Bureau, taking into account recommendations from the Rules and Scrutiny committee.
2. Amendments to these Rules shall be adopted only if they secure the majority of votes cast in 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.