

## **Decision-making and procedural issues on the virtual system**

### **A practical guide**

Decision-making at the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly is governed by the Rules of Procedure as modified by the Special Procedures to regulate the conduct of virtual meetings of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly. Paragraphs 7 to 10 of the Special Procedures provide as follows:

- 7. All decisions of the Health Assembly should as far as possible be taken by consensus. In any event, no decision shall be taken by show of hands or secret ballot.*
- 8. In the event that a vote is required, voting shall take place by roll call conducted through the virtual system.*
- 9. During a roll-call vote, should any delegate fail to cast a vote for any reason during the roll call, that delegate shall be called upon a second time after the conclusion of the initial roll call. Should the delegate fail to cast a vote on the second call, the delegation concerned shall be recorded as absent.*
- 10. The procedures set out above are adopted for the purpose of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly only as exceptional measures to enable the work of the Organization to continue during the extraordinary situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and they should not be considered as setting a precedent for future Health Assemblies.*

Accordingly, decisions will primarily be made by consensus. If a vote becomes necessary, it will be conducted by means of a roll call on the virtual system. This note provides practical guidance and information on how the voting by roll call on the virtual system would be conducted and gives information about how procedural issues can be raised during the meeting.

#### **Voting – Who can vote?**

In Plenary and in Committees A and B, all Member States have one vote, except for those Member States that have had their voting privileges suspended under Article 7 of the WHO Constitution. In the General Committee and Committee on Credentials, voting is restricted to members of the Committee.

Within each delegation, the Chief Delegate is entitled to vote. He or she may designate another Delegate or Alternate to vote. Advisers may not vote.

As part of the registration process, the Chief Delegate will be identified as such by the letter “C” in the title that appears on screen in the Zoom system. Delegates and Alternates will likewise be identified by the letters “D” and “A” respectively.

Those identified in the system as a Chief Delegate, Delegate or Alternate may cast the vote on behalf of the delegation. As in a physical meeting, the matter of internal authorization within the delegation is a matter for the delegation itself; if for example an Alternate presents themselves to cast a vote, internal authorization within the delegation is presumed.

Before the vote begins, delegations are asked to identify which member of the delegation will cast the vote for the delegation; in a Committee, this person will be regarded as the “member” of the Committee. This person should then signal this to the Secretariat by using the “raise hand” function in Zoom to identify themselves as soon as voting is opened.

All other delegates and participants are requested not to raise their hand for any reason during voting so that only those actually casting votes will have their hands raised. The moderator will use the raise hand function to identify to whom to give the floor when each delegation is called to cast the vote.

Please ensure that the person who is going to cast the vote is a Chief Delegate, Delegate or Alternate. Please also ensure that they are connected to the Zoom system by the time the vote begins. They must have both audio and video<sup>1</sup> enabled, such that they can clearly be seen on camera as well as be heard when they cast the vote. (In some cases, the video function may need to be enabled centrally, in which case this will be done after the person casting the vote raises their hand in the system).

## **Voting procedure**

The voting procedure will be outlined by the Legal Counsel before voting opens.

Member States entitled to vote will be called one by one to vote. They will be called in alphabetical order, starting with a letter to be drawn by lot.

If more than one member of a delegation has raised their hand, the delegation concerned should take action to ensure the hands of all but one member of the delegation are lowered. If, when the floor is to be given to the delegation, more than one member of the delegation’s hand remains raised, the floor will be given to the member of the delegation with the highest ranking on the credentials submitted.

The Secretariat will call the name of delegations to vote in turn. When the name of a delegation is called, the person casting the vote should unmute themselves and, if they have not already done so, activate their video camera. They should pause to ensure that they can be both seen and heard. They should then clearly state the name of their delegation.

The Secretariat will ask for the delegation’s vote and the person casting the vote should again state the name of the delegation and add their vote (YES/NO/ABSTENTION). The Secretariat will repeat this information and the vote will be recorded.

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<sup>1</sup> If it becomes clear during the session that there are substantial problems with video connections of multiple delegations, the Chair may propose before voting begins that votes cast through the audio connection only on the virtual system be accepted.

Example:

Secretariat: *Country X,*

Delegation member: *This is Country X,*

Secretariat: *May we have your vote please, Country X?*

Delegation member: *Country X, abstention,*

Secretariat: *Country X, abstention.*

If the person casting the vote cannot be clearly seen<sup>1</sup> and heard, the Secretariat will call the name of the delegation a second time. Unless there are obvious audio or video problems that can be immediately resolved, the name of the delegation will usually be called only twice on the first round before the roll call progresses to the next Member State.

When all Member States entitled to vote have been called on the first round, a second round will be called. Those Member States whose votes were not cast on the first round will be called, in the same order, on the second round.

Those delegations that, for whatever reason, do not cast a vote in the first or second round of the roll call, will be recorded as absent.

### **What will happen if a voter cannot be reached?**

If a voter has raised their hand in the system but cannot be reached when the floor is given to them or if the connection is not sufficient to allow the vote to be cast, the delegation is invited to consider identifying a different member of the delegation to cast the vote on the second call. If on the second call, the person cannot be reached, the delegation will be given an opportunity to have an alternative member of the delegation raise their hand in the system and be given the floor to cast the vote.

Delegations are invited to follow carefully the guidance provided separately on maximizing connectivity in order to avoid problems arising.

Technical support can be obtained as follows:

**Email:** [GBS-IT-Support@who.int](mailto:GBS-IT-Support@who.int)

**Phone:** +41 22 791 21 11

Because visual identification is being used as an additional safeguard to promote confidence in the integrity of the vote, a vote may not be cast if there is no video connection on which the person voting can be clearly seen.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason, a vote cannot be accepted by chat or by a telephone connection. In extremis a vote may be cast over a video connection with inadequate or no audio by writing the vote on a piece of paper and holding it to the camera.

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## **What steps are taken to make the vote secure?**

Every registered delegation member will be provided with personal links to attend the virtual rooms. The personal links for each delegation member will be sent to the unique email address provided during the registration process.

Delegation members are advised to ensure the security of the personal links that they receive. They should not share their personal links with anyone else.

They should also secure their personal mailbox with a strong password and two-factor authentication. Links for enabling two-factor authentication on common email services will be included in the guidance provided.

It is important that each participant follows these instructions carefully in order to ensure the greatest possible security of the system.

The requirement for those voting to be seen on video when casting their votes, combined with the open and transparent nature of the vote, provides an additional safeguard for the security of the vote.<sup>1</sup>

## **PROCEDURAL ISSUES**

In order to raise a point of order, request a right of reply or make a procedural motion, a delegation member should send a message to the following telephone number by SMS text or by WhatsApp:

**+41 79 467 28 70**

This number is staffed during meetings and may be used for points of order, requests for rights of reply or other procedural motions only. It may not be used for any other matter. The message will be relayed to the presiding officer promptly. Further information may be requested as necessary.

Once the beginning of voting has been announced, no delegate may interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the vote. Any concerns relating to the conduct of a vote should be raised, through a point of order, before the results of the vote are announced.

Subject to the discretion of the presiding officer, it is envisaged that rights of reply will be taken at the end of proceedings of each day.

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