

5.1 PROCEDURES FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 The General Assembly will take place every two years.
- 1.1.2 This Standing Order is designed to inform the administrative rules and regulations prior to, and at, the General Assembly.
- 1.1.3 The rules and regulations laid down in the Constitution take precedence over the bylaws and can only be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members (in good standing) present at a General or Extra-Ordinary Assembly.

2 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BID PROCESS

- 2.1.1 At least eighteen (18) months prior to a General Assembly, the Secretary General will open the bid process to host the General Assembly by circulating to Members a call for bids.
- 2.1.2 Member Organisations in good standing with may submit a bid. The bid will be in accordance with the Bid Specification document.
- 2.1.3 No fees may be charged by the organisers to Virtus for hosting the event.
- 2.1.4 The Governing Board will determine the winning bid in accordance with the voting procedures and inform the candidate nation accordingly.
- 2.1.5 In certain situations, Virtus may act as the Organising Committee.

3 NOTICE

- 3.1.1 Notice of a regular General Assembly shall be given by the Secretary-General at least six (6) months prior to the meeting.
- 3.1.2 Notice of an Extraordinary General Assembly shall be given at least one (1) full calendar month prior to the meeting. An Extraordinary General Assembly may be called by the Virtus President, on request of the Governing Board, or on demand by at least 10% of the total number of Members (not more than half of which shall come from a single region) who are eligible to vote. The notice of the Extraordinary General Assembly shall specify the agenda for the meeting.
- 3.1.3 Date as per postmark shall be sufficient proof of a timely service.
- 3.1.4 The notice shall include information on the time, duration and venue for the General Assembly.

4 INVITATION AND REGISTRATIONS

- 4.1.1 Normally within two (2) weeks following the official notice, the Organising Committee shall provide practical information and open entry via the SMS.
- 4.1.2 Any such official information and documents issued by the Organising Committee shall be submitted for approval to Virtus prior to printing and distribution.
- 4.1.3 Registrations shall be completed using the SMS and payments shall be made by the deadline specified by the Organising Committee

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- 4.1.4 Subject to approval by Virtus, the Organising Committee may levy an increased registration or accommodation fee for any late notification from members wishing to attend who do not meet the two (2) months deadline.

5 MOTIONS

- 5.1.1 Six (6) months prior to the General Assembly, Virtus shall invite its members to submit motions.
- 5.1.2 Eligible Members (as defined by 2.2 “Membership Policy and Rights and Obligations of Members”) shall be informed that they have the right to submit motions to the General Assembly through the Governing Board and subject to compliance with the conditions laid down in this Standing Order.
- 5.1.3 Motions shall be submitted to Virtus in writing at least three (3) months prior to the General Assembly. Motions not meeting the three (3) months requirement shall be considered in accordance with Article 17.1.3.
- 5.1.4 The Governing Board may seek legal advice on motions received, and will then provide the General Assembly with recommendations on all motions received

6 MEETING DOCUMENTS

- 6.1.1 The Secretary General shall provide to Virtus Members who have confirmed their attendance at the General Assembly, a specified agenda and relevant meeting documents, including the Biennial Report, at least six (6) weeks prior to a regular General Assembly.
- 6.1.2 All meeting documents shall be made available electronically. Delegates may obtain from Virtus a paper copy of meeting documents upon payment of a fee that covers the additional production costs

7 MANDATES

- 7.1.1 The Secretary General shall include with the official invitation to the General Assembly, mandate forms requesting the identification of a maximum two (2) official delegates per Member
- 7.1.2 The original mandate forms must be signed by the President and Secretary-General or similar official from the Member organisation and must carry the organisation’s official stamp or similar identification.
- 7.1.3 The original mandate forms shall be completed and returned to Virtus by the deadline as specified by the Secretary-General, which shall normally be six (6) weeks prior to the General Assembly.
- 7.1.4 Mandate forms that are not completed in compliance with Virtus requirements will be returned to the Member and must be officially corrected and confirmed two (2) weeks prior to the General Assembly.
- 7.1.5 In the event of any last minute changes occurring within the official delegation, a new mandate form signed by the President, Secretary-General, or similar official of the organisation must be completed and must carry the

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organisation's official stamp. This new mandate form must be sent to Virtus in advance, with an official accompanying letter explaining the changes. The respective delegates shall also bring an official copy of such letter and new mandate form to the General Assembly.

8 OBSERVERS

- 8.1.1 Any registration/accreditation of observers in addition to the two (2) official delegates is subject to approval by Virtus. Requests for observer status shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Director.
- 8.1.2 Observers shall be seated in a designated area, other than at the official delegates' tables

9 CALL TO ORDER

- 9.1.1 The Chairperson will call the meeting to order by asking for quiet and inviting official delegates (i.e., delegates mandated in writing to represent the Member) to take the seats designated to them.
- 9.1.2 Guests, observers, staff members and other invited individuals must be seated in the area designated for their use.
- 9.1.3 Following housekeeping announcements (i.e., information related to evacuation in the event of fire, location of restrooms, etc) and the testing of the electronic voting system (where such a system exists), the General Assembly meeting will formally be declared open by the Chairperson, normally the President of Virtus.

10 ROLL CALL & SPEAKING/VOTING RIGHTS

- 10.1.1 The roll call is taken by the Secretary General
- 10.1.2 The purpose of this roll call is:
 - a) to record which members are present
 - b) to have officially acknowledged and recorded those members who have sent apologies for absence,
 - c) to ensure that there is no uncertainty regarding who has (and who does not have) speaking and voting rights,
 - d) to announce the number of those present and entitled to vote (ie. are in good standing and have completed official mandate forms).
- 10.1.3 Each officially registered delegate representing a Member Organisation will have speaking rights
- 10.1.4 Member Organisations in good standing (i.e., having paid the membership fee) as recognised under the Constitution are entitled to one vote each.
- 10.1.5 The right to vote is non-transferable. A member cannot transfer its vote to another member if not represented in person at a meeting of the members. An

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individual cannot concurrently represent more than one member, and as such is restricted to one vote at any meeting of the members.

- 10.1.6 Whether an electronic voting system is used or not, a motion will be introduced to approve tellers and/or scrutinizers or any other 'officials' necessary for the efficient conduct of the meeting nominated by the Chairperson.

11 QUORUM

- 11.1.1 A General Assembly shall be competent to pass a resolution if at least one-third (1/3) of the Members with voting rights are present.
- 11.1.2 If there is no quorum at the start of a meeting, the Chairperson should rule that it should not proceed and should advise those present that the meeting is adjourned to a time and place specified by her/him and agreed by the meeting.
- 11.1.3 If the assembly decides to challenge this ruling and proceed despite the lack of a quorum, any decisions taken must be ratified by the next General Assembly where there is a quorum.
- 11.1.4 If the decision is to hold a new Assembly because of a previous in-quorate Assembly, on this occasion it shall be competent to make decisions regardless of the number of members present (however all the regulations concerning notice, timescales, etc shall apply).
- 11.1.5 It is permitted to combine written notice of an Assembly which shall be competent to make decisions in every case with the written notice of an ordinary General Assembly.

12 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

- 12.1.1 The Chairperson will ask for a motion (and a seconder) from the members that the agenda (circulated in advance) be adopted. The order of business will follow the order as outlined in the adopted agenda.
- 12.1.2 Although the agenda may be amended by subsequent resolution of the meeting, no subject should be discussed at the meeting that is not on the agenda as agreed or amended.
- 12.1.3 The agenda can be amended at any time during the meeting given the approval of the appropriate procedural motion of a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote.

13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 13.1.1 The Chairperson will ask for a motion (and a seconder) to accept the draft minutes as an accurate record of the last meeting: minutes are always 'draft' until approved by the membership at which point they become the official record of that meeting. Provided the draft minutes have been circulated in advance, they will be taken as read.

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- 13.1.2 The Secretary General will present any written amendments that may have been submitted in advance with a recommendation from Governing Board that the meeting should either approve or reject the proposal.
- 13.1.3 Only matters arising from the minutes that are not likely to be covered by any other item on the agenda may be discussed at this point in time.

14 RECEIPT OF REPORTS

- 14.1.1 The Biennial Report is circulated in advance with the meeting documents and will be taken as having been read.
- 14.1.2 The Chairperson or the author of the report will summarize in a few sentences the main highlights of the report.
- 14.1.3 The Chairperson will then invite questions from the floor (see 'Speaking Rights').

15 SPEAKING RIGHTS

- 15.1.1 The Chairperson may invite someone to speak who does not have speaking rights or may acknowledge someone wishing to speak who does not have 'rights' and allow them to do so: this is within the authority of the Chairperson, but should be exercised sensitively.
- 15.1.2 Requests to speak from the floor should be indicated by a raised hand. The Chairperson will acknowledge such requests, either by granting an immediate right to address the meeting or, where several people wish to speak at the same time, by indicating the order in which these contributions will be taken.
- 15.1.3 Speakers must always address their remarks to the Chairperson and not conduct a debate with either a member of the 'top table' or a member within the meeting.
- 15.1.4 Speeches are only permitted if they are relevant to the current business, or to a point of order or point of information or a challenge to a ruling from the Chairperson.
- 15.1.5 A person who has spoken once in a debate on a particular subject or motion may not speak again except:
 - a) to speak once on an amendment moved by someone else,
 - b) to exercise the right of reply as mover of the original motion,
 - c) to move a further amendment if the motion has been amended since the person first spoke,
 - d) to move a procedural motion
 - e) to make a personal explanation
- 15.1.6 The Chairperson may indicate time limitations to the speeches and has the final decision in terms of what is considered a relevant speech or a speech that has gone on too long.

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- 15.1.7 Personal explanation. Where a person who has already spoken at the meeting feels her/his views have been grossly misrepresented, she/he shall be granted the right to make a personal explanation. She/he can attract the Chairperson to her/his wish to correct such misrepresentations by raising a point of information. However, this must be limited to the part of the speech that she/he believes has been misrepresented.

16 MOTIONS

- 16.1.1 With the exception of procedural motions, only motions submitted in writing three months prior to the General Assembly, and circulated with the meeting documents six weeks before the General Assembly is due to meet, are valid for discussion.
- 16.1.2 The Governing Board shall discuss all motions in advance and provide the General Assembly with its observations and recommendations.
- 16.1.3 The Governing Board may permit the General Assembly to consider motions not meeting the three months requirement upon submission of a procedural motion.
- 16.1.4 The Chairperson shall rule whether a motion introduced new from a member is an emergency motion and can be followed by a procedural motion to be introduced to the agenda.
- 16.1.5 If this ruling is challenged, the procedures for a challenge shall be invoked.
- 16.1.6 Motions shall not be discussed or debated unless they have been formally 'moved' (or 'proposed') and 'seconded' (supported). Only someone entitled to speak and vote at the meeting can propose and second a motion or an amendment to the motion.
- 16.1.7 The mover (not the seconder) will be allowed to conclude the debate with a brief statement (right of reply).

17 AMENDMENTS

- 17.1.1 The proposer, with the approval of the seconder of the motion, can accept an amendment without further discussion or vote, which has the effect of amending the motion accordingly. The discussion then continues on the motion as amended.
- 17.1.2 Any member, including the proposer and seconder, may propose an amendment to the motion under discussion: the amendment must be seconded.
- 17.1.3 Amendments should be taken in the order they are proposed.
- 17.1.4 An amendment shall be relevant to the motion and may consist of proposals to add or omit words. It must have the intention of modifying the motion and not negating it or proposing something unrelated or different. The Chairperson can rule that the amendment cannot continue to be presented if she/he believes that any of these obstructive actions are the intention of the amendment.

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- 17.1.5 During discussion on an amendment, discussion on the main motion is suspended: eventually the Chairperson will call for a vote on the amendment only.
- 17.1.6 If the amendment is adopted, then the original motion plus the amendment now become the substantive motion and the discussion continues until the Chairperson calls for a vote.
- 17.1.7 If the amendment falls, the discussion continues on the main motion and eventually the Chairperson will call for a vote.

18 PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

- 18.1.1 The most common form of procedural motions are points of information and points of order.
- 18.1.2 Points of information seek clarification by the speaker and may be raised at any time if the speaker holding the floor is prepared to accept the question.
- 18.1.3 A point of order can be raised by anyone entitled to speak and vote in case s/he believes that there has been a material breach of a constitutional requirement, bylaw or standing order. S/he may at any time other than during the process of voting specify the alleged breach, with a clear reference to the clause, rule or bylaw allegedly being breached, whereupon the Chairperson will rule as s/he sees fit.
- 18.1.4 The other forms of procedural motions that may be put are as follows
 - a) to table a motion, (The Chairperson will put that motion immediately to the vote unless s/he feels that insufficient discussion has been allowed. If the motion to 'table the motion' is carried, no further discussion on the motion or any amendments will be permitted. A 'tabled motion' will appear automatically on the agenda of the next Virtus General Assembly unless withdrawn by the proposer).
 - b) to adjourn the meeting or the debate until a certain time,
 - c) to put the motion to the vote immediately,
 - d) to proceed to the next agenda item or to modify the agenda,
 - e) to challenge the ruling of the Chairperson,
 - f) that a member be not further heard,
 - g) that a member must leave the meeting,
 - h) to suspend article 4.1.1 to allow a motion (not submitted in time or an emergency motion to be included on the agenda).
- 18.1.5 The nature of procedural motions, points of order and information and a challenge to the ruling of the Chairperson inevitably requires the current proceedings to be stopped: those proposing such actions should do so in a respectful tone of voice, indicating by hand and speech that they wish to for example, make a point of order, propose a procedural motion.

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- 18.1.6 Provided such requests are in accord with this Standing Order, then the Chairperson is obliged to immediately suspend the current discussion no matter how close the discussion is to a vote.

19 VOTING PROCEDURES

- 19.1.1 All motions require a simple majority of the votes cast for or against the motion) to be successful, except for motions that would amend the Virtus Constitution or motions for the revocation of a member which require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast for and against the motion.
- 19.1.2 An amendment to a constitutional motion requires only a simple majority for the amendment to be adopted. However the substantive constitutional motion which includes any approved amendments requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast for and against the motion.
- 19.1.3 For the purpose of calculating whether an appropriate majority has been obtained in any vote, an abstention or a vote which is not exercised (the member entitled to exercise the vote has left the room) shall not be treated as a vote.
- 19.1.4 An equality of votes shall be considered as a refusal.

20 RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR

- 20.1.1 The Chairperson can rule on any matter relating to the conduct of the meeting, points of order, personal explanations and the construction or interpretation of the Virtus Constitution, bylaws or standing orders governing the meeting and her/his ruling shall be final and accepted without debate.
- 20.1.2 Any person present and entitled to speak at the meeting may formally challenge the ruling of the Chairperson by the procedure outlined below.

21 CHALLENGE A RULING

- 21.1.1 When a member challenges a ruling of the Chairperson, the Chairperson will ask if there is a member who will second the challenge. If the challenge is seconded, the meeting will be temporarily suspended.
- 21.1.2 The Chairperson will hand over the chair to the most senior member of the Governing Board present at that time to continue as Chairperson of the meeting.
- 21.1.3 The temporary Chairperson will allow the member proposing the challenge to give specific reasons including quoting, 'Standing Order article #', etc and will then allow a limited debate, two or three speakers: in this situation the proposer may not conclude the discussion.
- 21.1.4 The temporary Chairperson will then call for the vote for or against the challenge, to be determined by simple majority.
- 21.1.5 The chair will then be handed back to the original Chairperson who will act upon the wishes of the membership, either to continue with the meeting as

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s/he had formerly ruled or issue a new ruling, which of course could be subject to another challenge.

22 UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

- 22.1.1 When the conduct of any speaker risks disrupting the proper and efficient conduct of the meeting, any member may move that this person 'be no longer heard'. If carried, the person is not allowed to take any further part in that particular debate.
- 22.1.2 If the behaviour of the individual so cited continues to be disruptive, any member may move that this person 'must leave the meeting'. If carried, the person in question must immediately leave the meeting.

23 ADJOURNING & RECONVENING THE MEETING

- 23.1.1 It will be necessary for a meeting to be adjourned when:
 - a) the meeting occupies more than one sitting,
 - b) it is ascertained that there is no longer a quorum,
 - c) a procedural motion 'to adjourn the meeting' has been put to a vote and carried.
- 23.1.2 In all three cases the Chairperson must suspend the business under discussion and indicate when and where the meeting will be re-convened.
- 23.1.3 When a meeting is re-convened following adjournment, the Chairperson must undertake all the duties normally associated with opening a meeting and then direct the meeting to resume its business at that point in the agenda where the meeting had previously been adjourned.

24 CLOSING THE MEETING

- 24.1.1 At Virtus General Assemblies there is no agenda item 'any other business'.
- 24.1.2 The Chairperson will declare the meeting closed, having ascertained that all agenda items have been concluded.