

## **Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly**

### **General Provisions**

#### **Rule 1**

The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly was established in accordance with the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, signed in 2000 in Bucharest, the Memorandum of Understanding for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE, signed in 2008 in Sofia and the Final Declarations of the Conferences of Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP Participating States, which express the mutual will for continuous development and further promotion of the SEECP parliamentary dimension into SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

At the Conference of Presidents of the Parliaments of the SEECP Participating States held in Ohrid in 2013, it was decided that the SEECP parliamentary dimension shall be transformed and further institutionalized as SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, a permanent parliamentary forum for exchange of experience, dialogue and cooperation.

### **Goals and Aims**

#### **Rule 2**

The primary goal of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly is strengthening the cooperation and coordination efforts of parliaments of all Participating States, with the aim to promote and further ensure peace, security, stability, solidarity and good-neighbourly cooperation in the region, in the interest of their citizens and countries, as well as of Europe in general.

Having regard to the principles of regional ownership and having in mind the fact that the future of all SEE countries is in the European Union, the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall act towards:

- Initiation of different forms of exchange of experiences in the field of legislation and its harmonization with the EU acquis, developing and coordinating practices for interaction with the SEECP Governmental dimension, and strengthening of the dialogue with the civil society in the region;
- Assuming the role of umbrella for achieving synergy of the activities of the regional initiatives and forms of cooperation regarding the economic and social development, development of the infrastructure and energy, internal affairs and justice, cooperation in the field of security, and development of the human capital;

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<sup>1</sup> Is including the addition adopted on the same day at Rule 11 (no. 3 / 10 May 2014 / Bucharest)

- Encouraging, following and monitoring the realization of the goals and priorities defined by the rotating SEECP Presidency and the Regional Cooperation Council, as an institutional structure for transposition of the political declarations and decisions into specific projects and programmes;
- Intensification of the parliamentary diplomatic activities and establishing links with the regional, European and international organizations, institutions and foundations.

### **Membership and Composition** **Rule 3**

Members of the Assembly are the parliaments of the SEECP Participating States.

The delegations of the parliaments are headed by the speakers of the parliament/parliamentary chamber and have 3 to 5 representatives.

If a speaker is prevented from participating in the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly meetings, he/she shall designate another member of that national parliament to participate as Acting Head of that parliament delegation, under speaker's obligation of informing in due time the President of the Assembly.

In this case, a speaker can decide to designate the Acting Head among the members of that parliament who are not necessarily members of the respective national delegation.

Each delegation should be composed of at least 30% of the less represented gender, and should reflect fair political representation of the respective parliament.

On the occasion of a new term of a parliament, the list with the members of the parliamentary delegations, signed by the speaker of the parliament / parliamentary chamber, shall be sent to the President of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. The same procedure applies when changes in a designated delegation occur during a term.

Each member of a national delegation should have a substitute member who will replace him/her when he/she is prevented from participating.

In case of termination of membership in the national parliament, the membership in the Parliamentary Assembly ceases. The membership may continue until a successor in the delegation has been designated, for a maximum of six months.

Every delegation shall have national parliamentary coordinators who shall perform the function of secretary. In coordination of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly Secretariat, the national coordinators shall constitute the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly logistics support network.

### **Organizational Structure** **Rule 4**

The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall have:

- President;
- Bureau of the Assembly;
- Standing Committee;
- General Committees;
- Ad hoc Working Groups;
- Secretariat.

The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly President shall be the Speaker of the parliament/parliamentary chamber of the country holding the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office for a one year term. He/she shall convene and chair the Sessions, ensure respect of the Rules of Procedure and act as the main representative of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly at the international level.

The Bureau of the Assembly shall be established according to the principle of Troika (the Speakers of Parliament of the countries holding the current, previous and upcoming SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office, acting as Vice-Presidents) and shall have the role of coordinating the activities of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. Upon agreement with the President, the role of the Chair of the Bureau of the Assembly can be assumed by other members of the Troika.

The Standing Committee shall be composed of the members of the Troika, the Chairpersons of the General Committees of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and one member of each national delegation. If a speaker of the Troika is prevented from participating in a Standing Committee meeting, he/she can designate an Acting Head to participate according with the provisions of the present Rules of Procedure. The Secretary General can also participate in the work of the Standing Committee without the right to vote. The Standing Committee shall ensure the continuity of the work and the efficient functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly between the sessions. To that aim, the Standing Committee shall hold biannual meetings and shall adopt the draft programme, the draft agenda for the Plenary Sessions, and shall appoint Rapporteurs who shall prepare the draft documents.

The General Committees on 1) Economy, Infrastructure and Energy, 2) Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation, and 3) Social Development, Education, Research and Science shall be composed of members of the national delegations. The reports of the General Committees and the draft documents submitted by the Rapporteurs shall be considered at the Plenary Sessions. The General Committees shall hold meetings during the annual Sessions in the country holding the Chairmanship-in-Office or in one of the SEECP Participating States.

The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly is assisted in its activities by its Secretariat, which is headed by a Secretary General. The Secretariat is the executive and technical body of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

The Secretary General shall be elected by the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

The Secretary General shall perform his/her duties under the authority of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and shall be responsible and accountable to the Bureau of the Assembly and to the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

All procedural aspects of the elections of the Secretary General and other officials, the functions, composition and budget of the Secretariat shall be closely specified by the Rules of the Secretariat adopted with special Decision by consensus.

### **Plenary Sessions**

#### **Rule 5**

The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall meet once a year for a regular Plenary Session in the country holding the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office.

The Speaker of the parliament/parliamentary chamber of the country holding the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office shall chair the Session.

The Chair can propose and, upon reaching a consensus, can convene an extraordinary Session.

The presence of at least two thirds of the national delegations shall constitute the quorum for the Sessions.

The Sessions shall begin with adoption of the Agenda. Every member of a national delegation can propose additional issues on the Agenda.

#### **Rule 6**

Draft documents adopted by the relevant working bodies shall be put forth for the consideration and adoption at the Plenary Session.

The Rapporteurs on the draft documents shall start the debate on the issues that are on the Agenda of the Plenary Session.

The Rapporteurs shall have a total of ten minutes during the debate.

The members of national delegations who want to take part in the debate shall register with the Secretariat before the beginning of the Session referring to the concrete topic of the Agenda.

The list of registered speakers shall be published and distributed and the President shall give the floor according to this list.

The members of the national delegations of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall have the individual right to take part in the debate at the working meetings, meetings of the working bodies and the Plenary Session.

The members of the national delegations of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall have the right to take part in the debate for a maximum of five minutes.

#### **Rule 7**

Upon invitation of the Chair and after consultation with the members of the Bureau of the Assembly, high representatives of the governments of the Participating States, international organizations, the business community and the civil society organizations can address the Plenary Session.

After their address the members of the national delegations of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly will have two minutes for questions, if time allows.

### **Rule 8**

During the Plenary Session, the members of the national delegations, supported by at least two delegations, can submit amendments in a written form to the draft documents of the General Committees.

The members of the national delegations shall have the right to an one minute explanation for the proposed amendment.

## **Documents**

### **Rule 9**

After consideration of the items on the agenda, the Assembly shall decide on the adoption of:

- Resolutions,
- Recommendations,
- Decisions,
- Reports,
- Opinions and other advisory instruments.

The Plenary Session shall adopt an annual Work Programme and Budget and an Annual Report on the activities of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly.

The adopted resolutions and the reports shall be transmitted to the parliaments of the member countries and to the parliaments of the regional and international organizations. The recommendations and opinions shall be transmitted to the member countries governments and to the regional and international governmental organizations except when the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly decides otherwise. The decisions of the working bodies shall be transmitted to the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly.

In addition to the aforementioned documents, the Agenda, the list of participants, the reports and the amendments that are subject to discussion shall be deemed official documents.

The official documents shall contain only the names of the capitals of the countries in the headline and the personal names of the participants. The countries shall be designated only with their national flag.

The official documents shall be marked with a special number, place and date of adoption. The Secretariat shall be responsible for their archiving and distribution to the delegations.

The sessions shall be open to the public except when the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly decides otherwise.

### **Decision Making Rule 10**

Each delegation has a single vote.

All documents mentioned in Rule 9 referring to the realization of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly aims and goals, shall be adopted by consensus.

The decisions on the organizational, technical, procedural matters related to the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly functioning shall be adopted by a simple majority vote of the present delegations. All other decisions shall be adopted by consensus.

It shall be considered that the consensus is reached if there are no objections from any of the national delegations.

### **General Committees and Ad hoc Working Groups Rule 11**

The composition of the General Committees and their Chairpersons shall be determined at the annual sessions.

Every national delegation shall have at least one member in each of the General Committees.

Each national parliament shall nominate at least one deputy member in each of the General Committees. The presence of at least two thirds of the members nominated by the national delegations shall constitute the quorum for the General Committee sessions.

The Chairperson of a General Committee shall be elected from among its members, for a one year term, by a simple majority of votes cast in a secret ballot.

If no candidate has obtained a majority, a second ballot shall be held between the two candidates having obtained the highest number of votes in the first ballot. If there is only one candidate running, the candidate shall be declared elected by acclamation.

Ad hoc Working Groups can be established based on a decision from the Plenary Session and on proposal of the Standing Committee for the purpose of assessment of the situation in a certain area or establishment of facts on certain events. The Ad hoc Working Groups shall work until they submit a report on the issue for which they were established.

The General Committees shall propose to the Standing Committee Rapporteurs for every issue under consideration.

The procedures set out for the Plenary Session shall also apply with regard to the work of the General Committees and Ad hoc Working Groups.

The working meetings of the General Committees and their documents shall not be open to the public.

### **Observer Status Rule 12**

Observer status in the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly shall be open, upon request, to parliaments and to international or regional organizations, upon a decision adopted by the Plenary Session of the Assembly.

The application for observer status should be submitted to the President of the Assembly at least two months before the holding of the Plenary Session.

The Secretariat shall forward at least 30 days prior to the Session this application to all national delegations to the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly.

### **Invitation of Guests Rule 13**

Special guests shall attend the session upon the invitation of the Bureau of the Assembly, and the Bureau of the Assembly will inform the member Parliaments thereof.

The governmental dimension of the SEECF shall be invited to participate, through its Chair in Office, in the Sessions of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly.

### **Cooperation with Third Parties Rule 14**

The SEECF Parliamentary Assembly shall promote cooperation with Third Parties such as international organizations, institutions, regional initiatives interested to cooperate with it.

The cooperation with Third Parties shall be based on agreements for cooperation or upon invitation on an ad hoc basis.

In the composition of official delegations of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly that should take part in the work of other international assemblies, priority shall be given to the representatives of the Troika.

### **Working language Rule 15**

The official language for the sessions and meetings, as well as for the documents is English.

The language of the host country can be used as a working language with simultaneous translation into English.

Interventions in language other than the official or working language can be made only with prior announcement and with secured interpretation provided into English.

### **Security Rule 16**

The security measures during the Plenary Sessions, the meetings of the working bodies, and the stay of the delegations shall be responsibility of the host country.

The persons present at these events are required to wear name tags.

### **Transitional provisions Rule 17**

These Rules of Procedure shall enter into force at the moment of their approval by the Plenary Session of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly.

Amendments to the Rules of Procedure shall be proposed by the Standing Committee or by at least two national delegations. The proposal shall be discussed and adopted at the Plenary Session.

Until the Secretariat is set up:

- the parliament / parliamentary chamber of the country holding the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office shall ensure the office work for the Plenary Session, the Standing Committee, the President and the Bureau of the Assembly;
- the parliament/parliamentary chamber of the representative of the country holding the Chairmanship of a General Committee or of an Ad hoc Working Group shall ensure the office work for the respective body.

The parliament/parliamentary chamber of the country holding the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office shall provide all necessary arrangements for the organization of the Plenary Sessions and Standing Committee meetings.

The parliament/parliamentary chamber of whose representative is holding the Chairmanship of a General Committee or an Ad hoc Working Group shall provide all necessary arrangements for the organization of the meetings of these bodies.

These Rules of Procedure will be revised not later than 2015 including the provisions concerning the Secretariat.