



Commentary to the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference on Weights and Measures



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- The Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the CGPM are drafted with a complementary '**Commentary**'.
- The Commentary explains the **background of and the rationale for each of the provisions** foreseen in the RoP of the CGPM.
- For ease of reading and general comprehension, Member State representatives and Directors of National Metrology Institutes are encouraged to refer to the Commentary.
- For further information on the purpose and main features of RoP of the CGPM, please refer to the '**Note to introduce the RoP of the CGPM**'.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
Introduction		
---	---	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Introduction explains the background of and the reasons of the Rules of Procedure of the CGPM (RoP). It serves to introduce the main ideas and set the context. – The RoP are responsive to, but not intended to unnecessarily restate, the Metre Convention. By way of explanation, the Introduction includes the following wording: <i>‘they are intended to be complementary to the Metre Convention, insofar as any of the Rules proceed therefrom.’</i> The Metre Convention is not changed in any way by the RoP, whose main purpose is to regulate the process of organizing and holding the General Conference. – It is agreed that the RoP are not legally binding as such on the Member States, hence the Introduction expressly includes the following the provision; <i>‘these Rules are not intended to be legally binding’</i>. – Not all of the provisions in the RoP derive directly from the Metre Convention, but those that do must include wording that conveys the sense of <i>‘obligation to act’</i>, thus, the use of the term <i>should</i> is not appropriate. Noting that some Member States consider <i>shall</i> to be treaty-level language, <i>will</i> has been used instead throughout. – For ease of reading and general comprehension, the Introduction includes a short glossary of terms and abbreviations. In addition to the terms that have commonly been used within the Organization until now (e.g. CGPM, CIPM, Member States, Associate States and Economies, etc.), the RoP reflect that in future, <i>Observers</i> will be invited to attend the General Conference. This is in light of the fact that (i) several intergovernmental organizations (UNESCO, WHO, WMO, WTO, IEC, ITU, IAEA, CIE, ESA, IFCC, UNIDO, OIML, ISO) are regularly invited to attend the General Conference (and address it: keynote speeches); and (ii) the Member States intention to create a formal <i>Observer</i> status under the Resolution <i>On Universal adherence to the Metre Convention</i>.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The RoP deliberately avoid a style of drafting whereby each Rule is a single-sentence, leading to a profusion of Rules and a fragmentary quality to the text. Rather, each Rule of the RoP tackles a broad but coherent topic, grouped broadly by chapters, and it is important that this procedural rule-making is read and applied in context.
Chapter 1, Meetings		
1	Frequency	<p>Annexed Regulation art. 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Beginning with the title of Chapter 1 and throughout the RoP, the term ‘<i>meeting</i>’ is used exclusively to refer to the convoked General Conference, consistent with Regulations, Article 7. (Whereas the International Committee holds ‘<i>sessions</i>’ (Regulations, Article 19.)) – The Metre Convention obligates the convening of the General Conference no less often than every six years (Regulations, Article 7). In practice, the General Conference meets every four years. However, this is a <i>practice</i>, not a legal obligation, so the RoP maintain flexibility. – Flexibility is additionally important since the Metre Convention does not allow the concept of a ‘special meeting of the General Conference (between ‘<i>ordinary meetings</i>’, as found at other international organizations, i.e., any meeting of the General Conference is the same as any other—and importantly, triggers the renewal of at least half of the International Committee (Regulations, Article 7).
2	Convocation and Presidency	<p>Metre Convention art. 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This is the first time whereby a reformed governance practice is established and hereafter used throughout the RoP—namely, attributing responsibilities which interconnect with the administrative competencies of the Director. Whereas the International Committee is a governance organ, the Director is the Organization’s instrumentality, acting upon instruction from the International Committee. The formal act of convocation is a non-derogable competence of

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<p>the International Committee (Regulations, Article 7). However once this is actioned by the International Committee, the RoP obligate the Director to implement this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Notification of National Metrology Institutes (NMIs) is not mentioned in the RoPs, as there is no role for NMIs in the Metre Convention. Nevertheless, it is common practice to include the NMIs in all communications concerning the General Conference. – Considering that the Organization already possesses a <i>President</i> of the International Committee and that the General Conference involves the <i>President</i> of the French Academy of Sciences (called the Paris Academy of Sciences in the Metre Convention), the RoP confine themselves to the concepts of ‘<i>chairing</i>’ the meeting and a ‘<i>presidency</i>’ (in accordance with Metre Convention, Article 4); this allows for concision and readability throughout the RoP. – Rule 2.2 codifies and confirms the long-standing practice (instituted by and applied uninterruptedly since the 2nd General Conference held in 1889) according to which the President of the CGPM does not have the right to vote. – In order for the General Conference to go ahead even if the President of the French Academy of Sciences is incapacitated or the position is vacant, Rule 2.3 allows the General Conference to appoint a Chair at the start of the meeting—the competence to do this is obtained by necessary intention of the Metre Convention—upon recommendation of the International Committee. This is without prejudice to Rule 10.2 and arrangements for, if necessary, the President of the International Committee to step in and temporarily chair the meeting, then an acting Chair to be appointed by the General Conference for the balance of the meeting. – Rule 2.3 deliberately uses the term ‘<i>appointment</i>’. This is used consistently throughout the RoP to denote a decision of the General Conference to fill positions, except constituting the Election Commission (in accordance with Rule 5) and renewal of the International Committee (in accordance with Chapter 7 of the RoP) which are achieved by ‘<i>election</i>’.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
3	Opening Date, Venue and Duration	<p>Annexed Regulation art. 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The opening date and the venue are fixed by the International Committee with input from the Director and after consulting the President of the French Academy of Sciences.
4	Arrangements for Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule is intended to equip the General Conference with sufficient flexibility to handle all contingencies, through hybrid electronic participation. – The delegates can be present either in-person or through a secure electronic system. – The Rule begins by stating ‘ordinarily’ (as used elsewhere in the Rules to state presumptions) meetings are conducted on a physical basis, but then regulates the alternative online basis, denoted by the expression ‘secure electronic system’. Member States participating through a secure electronic system could carry out all their competencies in accordance with the Metre Convention, Rule 4.2 clarifies that to ‘<i>participate</i>’, either in-person or online, has the same meaning (for the quorum (Rule 14), the voting (Rule 18) and the elections (Rule 18)). – These RoP are intended to be approved at the end of the 28th meeting of the General Conference. Therefore, a special procedure related to online participation at the 28th meeting itself, will have to be approved by the General Conference at that meeting (similarly to what happened at the 27th meeting of the General Conference).
5	Election Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Election Commission addresses a governance vulnerability of the Organization, namely the absence of a neutral body (fully independent from the CIPM) to scrutinize and prepare for the election of members of the International Committee. – The ‘Election Commission’ takes its name, in accordance with best practice in international organizations, to avoid confusion with the International Committee and with the existing Committee for CIPM Election (CEC). – The Election Commission does not possess the governance authority of the General Conference, or any independent governance authority itself but exists between meetings to accomplish its

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<p>only task: to administer the renewal of the International Committee (see Rules 20.3-4). The Election Commission is incapable of usurping the competence of either the General Conference or International Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The first Election Commission would be appointed at the 28th meeting of the General Conference and would supersede and absorb the functions of the existing CEC. The Election Commission elected in 2026 will administer the renewal of the International Committee according to these RoP at the 29th meeting of the CGPM. – Rule 5.2 foresees that the Election Commission is composed of nine elected Member State representatives (respecting representational criteria: different Member States from across all regions and all contribution levels). Vacancies arising will be assumed through provisional appointment by the Member State to which the vacating member of the Election Commission belonged. – Rule 5.3 foresees that the Election Commission will establish its own rules of procedure and will define the criteria for the election of the CIPM members and the related election procedure. This is necessary because when the General Conference adopts these RoP, it will have to revoke Resolution 2 (2014). – If necessary, the Election Commission may seek advice from the President or Secretary of the International Committee.
Chapter 2, Agenda and Documents		
6	Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The preparation (and adoption) of the agenda is central to the governance of the General Conference and the business it turns to in a prepared and orderly way. Here (as with Rule 7, <i>Documents</i> and Rule 17, <i>Decisions</i>) the RoP do not elaborate on what constitutes an agenda item—a matter chiefly for the International Committee and Member States themselves. Although, in accordance with these RoP, some items will necessarily feature on the agenda, e.g. election of the Election Commission (Rule 5), renewal of the International Committee (Rule 19).

Rule	Caption	Commentary
7	Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Generally, the effect of this Rule is to ensure that no agenda item is unsupported by materials to inform decisions at the General Conference. – Rule 7.1 refers to ‘draft <i>decisions</i>’ since this is the governance action exercised by the General Conference. It is expansive and addresses all matters before the General Conference for decision; it heightens governance clarity as to what matters on the agenda are for information (and discussion, without deciding etc.) and those matters that may be brought to a vote. In other words, even if it appears that a ‘draft resolution’ is before the General Conference, the action it takes is to <i>decide</i> to adopt the resolution (which is encompassed in both ‘supporting materials’ and ‘draft decisions’). – Rules 6.1, 6.2 and 7.2 describe the deadlines for the preparation of the agenda and documents. These Rules provide the following general principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) draft agenda prepared by the CIPM and made available by the Director to Members States six months in advance of the meeting; (ii) Member States can submit supplementary agenda items up to four months in advance of the meeting; (iii) Any and all supporting documentation will be made available as soon as possible following notification of the convocation.
Chapter 3, Attendance and Credentials		
8	Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule restates the composition of delegations to the General Conference. It also allows invited guests and staff members to attend the General Conference, with the agreement of the CIPM and/or the Director. – This Rule also confirms the voting rights of participants, as per the Metre Convention. See article 7 of the Annexed Regulations providing that (i) ‘<i>each Member State has the right to one vote</i>’;

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<p>and (ii) CIPM members have a '<i>seat as of right at meetings of the Conference</i>'; they may, at the same time '<i>be delegates of their Governments</i>'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Rule confirms that no other participant, including Associate Members, Observers, the Director, invited guests or staff members, has voting rights.
9	Credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consistent with the administrative competency of the Director, credentialling is effectively administered by the Organization, with any disputed credentialling being put to the General Conference through the Chair for decision. – Rule 9.1, second sentence, obligates Member States to fix the principal delegate and alternatives through credentialling, in advance and for the good order of the meeting of the General Conference. Rule 18.1 states that it is the principal delegate and alternatives '<i>consistent with their credentials</i>' who are authorized to vote on behalf of a Member State. – Rule 9.3 of the RoP does not set specific requirements regarding how credentials must be submitted. They can be sent by post or email, for example.
Chapter 4, Chairing and Secretariat		
10	Chairing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule assembles all the powers of the Chair to preside over the General Conference, consistent with the implied competence of a 'Chair' and 'presidency' to maintain efficiency and the good order of the meeting. However, since the General Conference itself is the paramount governance organ of the Organization, allowance is made for decision of the General Conference to overrule the Chair in certain matters that go to the participatory rights of Member States. – The second paragraph of this Rule contemplates the unavailability of the Chair (i.e., the President of the French Academy of Sciences, or some other Chair appointed at the start of the meeting, consistent with Rule 2.3) and the ability of the General Conference to carry on in any event—the competence to do this is obtained by necessary intention of the Metre Convention. The President of the International Committee is the immediate <i>ad hoc</i> stand in.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		– If the Chair was absent temporarily, the President of the International Committee would chair; if the Chair was absent longer, the General Conference would, by decision, appoint an acting Chair for the balance of the meeting.
11	Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Secretariat is constituted to assist and advise the Chair in the orderly running of the General Conference. It defers to, but is not obligated by, the tradition of the Secretary of the International Committee acting as the Secretary of the General Conference. – The Rule also responds to the practicalities of the General Conference being administratively facilitated by the Director and staff of the Organization, and recognizes the importance of legal advice to the good governance of the meeting.
Chapter 5, Languages and Records		
12	Languages	– Although constrained to two languages, this Rule ensures the mutual understanding of all attending the General Conference and safeguards the efficient use of the Organization's resources.
13	Records	– Records of each meeting should be published in French and English by the Organization during the year following the General Conference. The official record of the meeting is the French version.
Chapter 6, Proceedings		
14	Quorum	– This Rule sets out the quorum thresholds for the General Conference to (i) deliberate and (ii) to take decisions. Quorum is not regulated by the Metre Convention explicitly, but instead authority to do so is by necessary intention of the Metre Convention. The quorum of an international organization's paramount governance body (such as the General Conference) is a critical component of its good governance. This Rule is intended to achieve a balance between the legitimacy of the Organization to act and its continued effectiveness even in the absence of

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		<p>Member State representation. The purpose is to incentivize Member States to send credentialed delegates to the General Conference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rule 14.1 imposes a minimum of 33 Member States (64/2+1, as of 1 January 2026) present either in-person or through a secure electronic system for the purpose of both deliberations and decisions of the General Conference. The voting takes places according to Rule 18.
15	Speeches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule endows the Chair with the powers to regulate addresses to the General Conference. It also introduces a <i>principle</i> of ‘right of reply’, as regulated by the good judgement of the Chair.
16	Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule is the basis for Member States raising procedural issues to the notice of the Chair (‘points of order’), which must then be ruled on immediately by the Chair. ‘Immediately’ in this context means before proceeding with the meeting substantively, for example the Chair could adjourn to take advice from the Secretariat. – Throughout the RoP and in Rule 16, the term ‘any delegate’ includes alternate delegates. – The Chair’s procedural ruling stands unless a decision of the General Conference overturns it. Again, this decision must take place immediately.
17	Decisions	<p>Annexed Regulation art. 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule deliberately does not prescribe the subject matter, content or formulation of decisions by the General Conference. – Rule 17.1 is intended to confirm current governance practice around how decisions are taken by the General Conference. Many decisions of the General Conference are in practice obtained by consensus (i.e. on the basis of ‘no objection’), for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) appointing a Chair if the French President Academy of Sciences is unavailable (Rule 2); (ii) arrangements for meetings (Rules 3-4);

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<p>(iii) adopting the agenda (Rule 6);</p> <p>(iv) appointing the Secretary of the General Conference (Rule 11).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rule 17.2 is drafted to meet the obligation imposed by article 6, para 5 of the Annexed Regulations, according to which the decision on the dotation (contributions from Member States) will <i>‘be valid only in the case that none of the contracting States has expressed, or will express at the Conference, an opinion against’</i>. In this case, the purpose of the roll-call is to ensure the absence of express objection to the dotation. – All other decisions of the General Conference should be obtained by voting.
18	Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rule 18.1-2 handles the attribution and exercise of voting power by Member States. The balance of the Rule (except Rule 18.4) handles the conduct of voting by roll-call.
Chapter 7, Renewal of the International Committee		
19	Candidacy for the International Committee	<p>Metre Convention art. 14, Annexed Regulations art. 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule handles the procedure for outgoing members of the International Committee whom are provisionally elected between meetings of the General Conference and may be candidates for election at the meeting and those outgoing because of resignation. It facilitates this being known through information included in the final documentation of the meeting. – Since it may be the case that any incumbent member of the International Committee is drawn by lot to stand for election at the meeting of the General Conference, this rule provides for information about all incumbent members to be circulated at the same time as outgoing and resigning members. Even if a drawing by lots was not necessary (if renewal of half of the membership of the International Committee was achieved without it) it would be instructive for Member States when considering new candidates to consider the CVs etc. of both the incumbent and outgoing members.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Since these RoP should enter into operation as soon as they have been adopted by the General Conference at its 28th meeting, the renewal of the International Committee according to the new rules will take place at the 29th meeting of the General Conference.
20	Election of Members	<p>Metre Convention art. 14, Annexed Regulations art. 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule is intended to achieve the renewal of half the membership of the International Committee at the meeting of the General Conference, in accordance with the Metre Convention. – Rule 20.1: the new procedure avoids an indisputably irregular interpretation of the Metre Convention, whereby the CIPM has been renewed as a whole, rather than by half, which concerned the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (the Tribunal) in Judgment No. 4580. The terms of the Metre Convention impose that the International Committee be renewed ‘by half’ at each General Conference (Annexed Regulation art. 7-8)¹. The Tribunal held that ‘half’ meant ‘half’, no more, no less. Therefore, the RoP expressly set there should be ‘nine outgoing members’ at each meeting. This is the default number required. – Rule 20.2 then foresees that if the sum of ‘provisionally elected’ members and ‘resignations’ is less than nine, the Election Commission will stage a drawing by lot. – Inversely, if the sum of ‘provisionally elected’ members and ‘resignations’ exceeded nine, the General Conference would necessarily proceed to elect the number of members required to ‘restore the International Committee to its full complement’. This is in keeping with the ruling of the Tribunal. – Rule 20.3 refers to the fact that the Election Commission is mandated by the General Conference (under Rule 5) to ‘define the criteria for the election of the International Committee and the corresponding process’. It will be incumbent on the Election Commission to decide whether and

¹ Annexed Regulations art. 7 ‘La Conférence générale [...] procède, au scrutin secret, au renouvellement par moitié du Comité international’ ; art. 8 ‘Lors du renouvellement, par moitié, du Comité international, les membres sortants seront d’abord ceux qui, en cas de vacances, auront été élus provisoirement dans l’intervalle entre deux sessions de la Conférence ; les autres seront désignés par le sort’.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<p>to what extent it will take on board or adapt the criteria and procedure currently outlined in the document established by the CEC and the CIPM entitled '<i>Criteria and Process for Election of CIPM Members</i>' (published on the website bipm.org). In any event, the criteria and procedure to be decided by the future Election Commission must be established '<i>in accordance with an open, transparent and merit-based process</i>'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rule 20.5 confirms that membership of the International Committee takes effect as soon as the General Conference has voted in the renewed CIPM. In other words, once a member of the International Committee exits the International Committee, through exercise of the Metre Convention—'at the time of renewal', Regulations, Article 8—they are instantly dispossessed of their office and accordingly their governance competence regarding the Organization. There is no basis in the Metre Convention for a concept of a transition or delay between re-compositions of the International Committee by the General Conference. Members elected to the International Committee by the General Conference should assume their office at the first meeting of the elected International Committee.
Chapter 8, Modification, Suspension and Entry into Operation		
21	Modification and Suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This Rule allows for the modification and suspension of the RoP; except to maintain the good order of the meeting, and to safeguard against abuses, a modification or suspension decision must be included in the revised agenda, i.e., before the meeting opens.
22	Entry into Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – These RoP would enter into operation as soon as they have been adopted by the General Conference at its 28th meeting. They would not have any retroactive effect, therefore the provisions regarding the convocation and preparations etc. for the meeting would only apply to the organization of the 29th General Conference. Likewise, the CIPM will only be renewed in application of the RoP at the 29th meeting of the CGPM. – The RoP will be presented for adoption by the General Conference at its 28th meeting as Draft Resolution F. The timeline of events at the 28th meeting of the CGPM is planned as follows.

Rule	Caption	Commentary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prior to voting on Draft Resolution F, the CGPM will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) take all of its other decisions; (ii) elect the members of the International Committee in accordance with currently applicable procedures, i.e. CGPM Resolution 2 (2014); (iii) proceed to voting on Draft Resolution F. – If Draft Resolution F is adopted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) CGPM Resolution 2 (2014) will be revoked; (ii) the RoP of the CGPM will enter into operation; (iii) the CGPM may proceed with electing the nine Member State representatives to the Election Commission, in accordance with Rule 5 of the RoP of the CGPM.

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