

War Resisters' International: proposed changes to our constitution and rules

**Assembly Meeting in Colombia, July 29th – August 3rd
2019**

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Changes to WRI Constitution and Rules

— as proposed

CONSTITUTION

BASIS

1. The basis of the War Resisters' International is the following Declaration (hereinafter termed the Declaration) adopted at the first International Conference at Bilthoven, 1921: *"War is a crime against humanity. I therefore am determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war"*.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- a. Organisations may apply for affiliation either as a Section or as an Associate Organisation. Such applications will be decided by Council, subject to confirmation by the next international [AssemblyConference](#), according to criteria such as the signing of the Declaration and making a commitment to the International.
- b. An organisation that signs the Declaration may be accepted by Council as a Section.
- c. An organisation or publication whose objectives are consistent with the Declaration may be accepted by Council as an Associate Organisation.
- d. All members of Sections shall be Individual Members of the International. In addition, any person who is not a member of any Section may be accepted by the Executive Committee as an Individual Member of the International on signing the Declaration.
- e. The Council shall have the power to disaffiliate any Section or Associate Organisation on stating its reasons. Any Section or Associate Organisation so disaffiliated shall have the right of appeal to the [AssemblyConference](#). The Executive Committee shall have the power to disaffiliate any Individual Member on stating its reasons. Any Individual Member so disaffiliated shall have the right of appeal to the Council.

3. ASSEMBLYCONFERENCE

- a. The [AssemblyConference](#) shall be held within four years of the previous [AssemblyConference](#), on dates determined by the Council.
- b. All representatives of Sections and Associate Organisations have the right to attend, speak and vote at the [AssemblyConference](#). Individual Members who are not representatives may also attend and speak but shall not have a vote.
- c. The [AssemblyConference](#) shall determine the main policy of the International.
- d. ~~The Chairperson shall be decided by consensus in an electronic consultation of the Sections and Associate Organisations, in advance of the AssemblyConference and in accordance with the Rules.~~

Not more than twelve members of the Council ~~and—if no consensus can be reached—the Chairperson~~ shall be elected at the [AssemblyConference](#) in accordance with the Rules. They shall serve until the next [AssemblyConference](#).

- e. The [AssemblyConference](#) shall try to make decisions by consensus. If no consensus can be reached within the time agreed, a vote will be held in which each Section with more than 1000 members has three votes, each other Section two votes and each Associate Organisation one collective vote (except in case of motions to amend the Constitution).

f. A Special AssemblyConference shall be convened at the request of one fifth of the member organisations.

4. COUNCIL

a. The Council shall meet at least once every two years, if not annually. In those years when there is no Council meeting, additional efforts should be made to have other consultations with Council and to hold regional meetings.

b. The following persons shall be members of the Council: ~~all the Chairperson, the Treasurer and the other~~ members of the Executive Committee of the International ex officio; not more than twelve persons elected by the AssemblyConference; and one representative of each Section appointed by that Section.

One member of each Associate Organisation shall have the right to attend and speak, as a non-voting observer, at Council meetings.

~~A Section representative serving on the Executive Committee who ceases to be Section representative may be co-opted to Council.~~

c. Council shall be responsible for carrying out the decisions of the AssemblyConference and shall act in the name of the International between AssembliesConferences.

d. The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Council for the same term as the other members of the Executive Committee. The Council shall elect from its members not more than ~~fivefour~~ other members of the Executive Committee ~~and not more than three Vice-Chairpersons~~, having regard to the desirability of representing different world regions through these appointments. Every Council member is required to sign the Declaration.

e. The Council shall try to make decisions by consensus. If no consensus can be reached, then a vote will be held in which all members shall have one vote. In such cases, decisions may only be taken with a majority of the votes. In between meetings the Council has the right to take decisions by postal ballot or electronic consultation.

f. The Council shall have power, at its discretion, to co-opt at any time not more than three Members of the International, who have signed the Declaration, to fill casual vacancies or assist the Council in its work.

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

There shall be an Executive Committee elected by the Council, composed of the ~~Chairperson, the Treasurer~~, and not more than ~~fivefour~~ other Council members, ~~elected by the Council~~.

Members of the Council not elected to the Executive Committee shall have the right to attend and speak at meetings of the Executive Committee.

It shall be responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Council and for general administration and finance. In between Council meetings, the Executive Committee may interpret the existing policy of the International. The Executive Committee is also empowered to act for the International with respect to formal legal matters. The Executive Committee shall try to make decisions by consensus. If no consensus can be reached, the procedure for decisions shall be determined by the Rules.

6. STAFF

a. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to appoint and pay staff for the WRI office Seeretariat who must sign the Declaration. The Executive Committee shall have the power to terminate such appointments.

- | b. The role of the [WRI officeSecretariat](#) shall be to carry out tasks of coordination and develop programmes as decided by the Council.

7. FINANCE

Sections, Associate Organisations and Individual Members accepted by the Executive Committee shall pay an annual affiliation fee based upon their membership and income in accordance with such guidelines as may be set out in the Rules.

8. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

This Constitution may be amended by a vote of the Sections either at [an Assemblya Conference](#) or by postal ballot. Amendments may be proposed by the Council, a Section or any five Individual Members. A proposed amendment shall require two-thirds of the votes cast at the [Assemblyeconference](#) or in a postal ballot. The procedure for ballots on proposed amendments shall be determined by the Rules, provided that there shall be an interval of not less than six months between the first formal notification of the wording of a proposed amendment and the first day of the relevant [AssemblyConference](#), or the closure of the ballot, as the case may be.

9. RULES

The Council shall have the power to make rules to implement the Constitution, provided that such Rules, and any subsequent amendments of such Rules, shall be approved by not less than two-thirds of the Council members present. The Rules, together with amendments to the Rules, shall have the same force as the Constitution and shall have immediate effect, but shall be subject to confirmation by not less than two-thirds of the votes cast on a motion or motions for that purpose at the next [AssemblyConference](#).

RULES

— *as proposed*

1. AssemblyConference

(a) The preliminary agenda of an Assembly Conference shall be circulated to all Sections, Associate Organisations and Individual Members not later than two months before the AssemblyConference.

Decisions of an Assembly Conference shall be minuted and sent to all Sections, Associate Organisations as well as elected and appointed Council Members. The Council shall act in accordance with these decisions.

(b) Where there is no consensus on a proposal to the AssemblyConference, a vote will be held on the basis of one voting card for each vote allocated in Article 3. No individual may hold voting cards on behalf of more than one organisation.

(c) Candidates for Chairperson and for Members to the Council individually elected by the AssemblyConference may be nominated by a Section, an Associate Organisation or any five Individual Members. Nominations for Council Members Chairperson must be received by the WRI officeSecretariat not later than six months, for Council Members not later than four months before the first day of the AssemblyConference.

All nominations of candidates must be in writing. The written consent of candidates must be obtained by the nominators or the WRI officeSecretariat. Announcements of nominations shall include the names of the nominators.

The WRI officeSecretariat shall send the nominations for Chairperson and the invitation for an electronic consultation to the Sections and Associate Organisations promptly after the deadline. The consultation shall be finished not later than four months before the first day of the Conference. The Secretariat shall send the report of the consultation and one ballot paper for each vote allocated in Article 3 for the election of Council Members and if necessary Chairperson to the Sections and Associate Organisations not later than two months before the first day of the AssemblyConference. Ballot papers must be returned either to the WRI officeSecretariat not later than one week before the first day of the AssemblyConference or during the AssemblyConference. The Chairperson and the individually elected Council Members shall assume office after the election.

The exact details of the voting system, as decided or amended by Council from time to time, shall be attached as an addendum to the Rules.

(d) The International Assembly shall meet in person, unless Council decides that special circumstances (financial, organisational, or other) make it unfeasible to hold an in-person meeting. In this case, an electronic meeting of the International Assembly will be held instead. Detailed information on the technological means to be used and the precise procedures for participation and voting will be circulated for review to all WRI affiliates and individual members two months before the meeting. Changes to such means and procedures should be announced no later than two weeks before the opening of the International Assembly.

2. Council

(a) Any Section or Associate Organisation may place an item on the Agenda of the Council. Agendas and Minutes of the Executive Committee shall be circulated to all Council Members, Sections, and Associated Organisations.

(b) Council Members should attend Council meetings or consultations and speak with and about WRI.

3. Executive Committee

- (a) Agendas and Minutes of the Executive Committee shall be circulated to all Council Members.
- (b) The Executive Committee shall establish its own procedure within the framework of the Constitution and Rules.
- If necessary, decisions may be taken in meetings or electronic consultations by two thirds of all members.
- (c) The Executive Committee shall meet at least two times in a year in person.
- (d) Unless a different arrangement is instituted via an explicit Executive Committee decision, the Executive Committee shall be convened by one of its members who holds the function of “Convenor of the Executive Committee”. The Convenor shall be the person responsible for ensuring that the Executive Committee functions properly and carries out its duties for the duration of her term. This function is decided amongst the members of the Executive Committee themselves and is rotated every 6 months between the members.

4. Decision-making

The International has a commitment to try to make decisions, at International Assembly, Council, or Executive Committee, by consensus rather than formal majority voting. The provisions in the Constitution for such voting are therefore to be treated as a last resort to resolve a serious impasse rather than the norm.

54. Staff

In making appointments to the staff, the Executive Committee shall endeavour to maintain an office staffa Secretariat which is both multinational and multilingual, and balanced with regard to gender.

65. Finance

- (a) Sections and Associate Organisations shall pay an annual affiliation fee according to their means.
- (b) Non-payment of affiliation fees by a Section or Associate Organisation during two successive years may be construed by the Council as a ground for disaffiliation.
- (c) The Annual Financial Statement and Balance Sheet shall be submitted by the Treasurer for the approval of the Council.
- (d) Sections and Associate Organisations shall be responsible for the travelling expenses of their representatives attending meetings. Payment of travelling expenses of Council Members individually elected by the AssemblyConference and of Executive Committee Members shall be decided by the Executive Committee.

76. Constitutional Amendments

Any formal proposal for amendment of the Constitution received by the WRI officeSecretariat shall be placed on the agenda of the next relevant AssemblyConference unless either the Executive Committee or the Council determine that it shall be put to a postal ballot.

The WRI officeSecretariat shall circulate the proposal and – if necessary – an argument for its adoption by the proposers to the Sections not later than four months before the first day of

the AssemblyConference or together with one ballot paper for each vote allocated in Article 3 to the Sections not later than four months before the closure of the ballot.

87. Language and interpretation

The Constitution and Rules shall be published in the English, French, German and Spanish languages, provided that in the event of dispute as to interpretation the English text shall prevail.

Supplementary Document A (third proposal): Convenor of the Executive Committee

The position of Convenor

1. The function of Convenor was created to circulate the responsibilities, which in the past used to belong (formally or informally) to the Chairperson of WRI, between the members of the Executive Committee. It is the default arrangement for any newly-elected Executive Committee, but a different system for distributing said responsibilities can be adopted by the Executive Committee as a group, in an explicit decision.
2. The position of convenor rotates between the members of the exec, by default, every 6 months.
3. The identity of the current Convenor should be publicly announced.
4. It is preferable, when possible and when other considerations do not weigh in against this, that the role of Convenor be given to a sufficiently experienced Executive Committee member, having served in this role for a full year or more.
5. The choice of Convenor should also, whenever possible, avoid reproducing imbalances resulting from power relations within society (e.g. gender relations, relations between the Global North and the Global South, etc.).
6. It is also important, when selecting the Convenor, to take into account the internal power dynamics and division of labour within the Executive Committee itself.

The Convenor's responsibilities

1. The Convenor has the responsibility to structure the work of the Executive Committee and has an eye on the international agenda of the WRI.
2. The Convenor is responsible to make sure that Executive Committee meetings and calls happen regularly, that relevant information is gathered prior to such meetings, and that all the other regular functions of the Executive Committee (as designated in the Constitution and Rules and as needed for the regular functioning of the WRI office—see also the next section) are performed.

This does not imply that the Convenor should be performing all the relevant tasks herself. Rather, it is the Convenor's responsibility to have an overview of the situation and alert others if important functions or actions are not being performed.

3. In the event, that urgent action is necessary, the Convenor organises the Executive Committee to answer promptly. If none of the other Executive Committee members can intervene, the convenor has the responsibility to coordinate the issue at hand. Urgent action situations may include (among others):
 - a. A political crisis-situation
 - b. Problems with staff members
 - c. International alerts from the movement
4. The convenor can be approached by every member of the International on issues of urgency. The convenor hands these issues to her colleagues and decides how to handle the initial request.

Regular Executive Committee tasks and responsibilities

These tasks and responsibilities (listed in random order) are part of the regular functioning of the Executive Committee and are usually distributed among its members. They are, among others:

- Legal representation (e.g. signing contracts in WRI's name)
- Responsibility for staff issues: hires, dealing with conflicts among staff or staff and other bodies of WRI, dismissals (currently mostly the role of the Personnel Committee)
- Representing the WRI in advocacy or public events (or identifying other WRI members to do so)
- Convening Executive Committee meetings
- Making sure that minutes are being kept and read before adoption by all Executive Committee members
- Participating in Programme committees and other working groups as liaison to the Executive Committee
- Preparing Council meetings and International Assemblies (together with staff and volunteers), and making sure they are scheduled according to the requirements set out in the Constitution and Rules (including such preliminary steps as sending out ballot papers, calls for nominations, etc.)
- Facilitating Executive Committee meetings
- Editing and contributing to Exec and Office Reports delivered annually to Council and every four years to the Assembly
- Overseeing WRI's finances (currently the task of the Treasurer)
- Coordinating fundraising and supporting staff in working on it
- Making painful decisions if money is scarce
- Being the contact person for staff in ongoing work (also including things like website design, publications etc.—everything where staff members feel they cannot decide on their own or need advice and supervision)

*Supplementary Document B (fourth proposal):
Addendum to the Rules regarding ranked ballots in Council elections*

Voting and vote counting in Council elections

Voting for Council will be conducted using a single-round ranked-choice system.

On each ballot paper, the voter will rank up to 12 candidates using numbers, in order of preference. The highest-preference candidate will be marked with the number ‘1’, the second-highest with the number ‘2’, and so on.

When counting the votes, each higher preference received by a candidate is worth more points than a lower preference. So, if someone votes for 12 candidates, the candidate ranked first on the ballot paper gets 12 votes, the 2nd candidate gets 11 votes, and so on, until the 12th candidate gets 1 vote. If a ballot contains fewer than 12 votes, the highest number of votes is reduced accordingly, so that the lowest-preference candidate always receives 1 vote.

The totals are added up, and the 12 candidates with the highest totals are declared elected. If the total number of candidates standing for Council is fewer than 12, all candidates are declared elected. In any case, the vote count is announced to the Assembly.

A ballot paper is declared invalid if:

- more than 12 votes have been cast
- the same rank number has been given to two or more candidates
- candidates’ names have been marked with an X or some other mark, instead of numbers (unless only one candidate’s name is thus marked)
- names of candidates have been written on the ballot paper manually
- the ballot paper has been ripped or otherwise destroyed before the ballot
- a ballot is received after the day of the International Assembly or after the formal deadline for postal ballots

Ballot papers will carry instructions explaining the voting system, and another set of instructions will be given to the group of people in charge of counting the votes. Both sets of instructions are included below.

Instructions to be included with or on the ballot papers

PLEASE READ THESE NOTES CAREFULLY BEFORE CASTING YOUR VOTE

You may vote for up to 12 candidates. You do not need to use all 12 votes, but your views will carry more weight if you do.

Mark your **most preferred** candidate with the number ‘1’, mark your next most preferred candidate with the number ‘2’, mark your next most preferred candidate with the number ‘3’, and so on, up to a maximum of 12 candidates.

Do **not** mark your choices with an X.

If you vote for more than 12 candidates, the ballot paper will be invalid.

If you give the same ranking number to more than one candidate, the ballot paper will be invalid.

Instructions to be given to those counting the votes

- 1.** Prepare a large sheet of paper (or electronic spreadsheet) with a column for every candidate.
- 2.** Check each completed ballot paper to ensure that the voter has used numbers (not Xs) to put their preferences in order, that they have not given the same number to more than one candidate, and that they have not voted for more than 12 candidates.

If a ballot paper has more than 12 votes on it, or if the candidates voted for don't all have different ranking numbers given to them, the paper is invalid and should be discarded.

(If a voter has voted for only 1 candidate, then the paper can be valid even if marked with an X: this is counted as though they had put the number 1 against that candidate).

- 3.** Take each valid ballot paper one at a time.

Look for the lowest ranked candidate who has been voted for (i.e. the one with the highest number, which will usually be 12). On the results sheet, give that candidate 1 point. Then look for the candidate with the next lowest ranking (i.e. the next highest number) and give that candidate 2 points on the results sheet—e.g. after the 12th ranked candidate gets 1 point, the 11th ranked candidate gets 2 points, and so on.

Note that the number of points is not equal to the number written on the ballot paper, and that the orders of numbers in the counting table and on the ballot paper itself are reversed.

Continue until you have allocated points for every candidate who was voted for on that ballot paper. You will usually (i.e. when all 12 votes have been used) end up giving 12 points to the candidate given the number 1.

You must always start with the lowest ranked candidate and give them 1 point. For example, if someone only voted for 5 candidates, then the one numbered 5 gets 1 point, number 4 gets 2 points, up to number 1 who gets 5 points (not 12 points).

- 4.** When all the valid ballot papers have had points allocated according to the voting preferences, carefully add up the allocated points for each of the candidates on the results sheet and note which 12 candidates have the highest number of points.

- 5.** You should then publish an announcement giving:

The total number of valid ballot papers counted; and a list of the total points scored by each candidate, highlighting the 12 who are declared elected.

Proposals for amending the WRI Constitution and Rules

First proposal: Terminological changes

The following terms shall be replaced as indicated:

1. All occurrences of the phrase “the Secretariat” shall be replaced by the phrase “the WRI office”.
2. The phrase “a Secretariat” (Rules, §4) shall be replaced with “an office staff”.
3. All occurrences of the word “Conference” (except in §1 of the Constitution, where the founding conference is mentioned) shall be replaced by the word “Assembly” (with the necessary grammatical modifications: “Assemblies” instead of “Conferences” and “an Assembly” instead of “a Conference”)

Rationale

These changes reflect our current practice in referring to the bodies in question and help make the Constitution and Rules easier for all WRI members to understand.

Second proposal: Possibility of holding Assemblies online

The following paragraph shall be added to the end of §1 of the Rules (it will be Rule §1d, if no other additions are made). The wording assumes the First Proposal has been accepted, and would be modified accordingly if it is not:

The International Assembly shall meet in person, unless Council decides that special circumstances (financial, organisational, or other) make it unfeasible to hold an in-person meeting. In this case, an electronic meeting of the International Assembly will be held instead. Detailed information on the technological means to be used and the precise procedures for participation and voting will be circulated for review to all WRI affiliates and individual members two months before the meeting. Changes to such means and procedures should be announced no later than two weeks before the opening of the International Assembly

Rationale

While it is very important for WRI to conduct its Assemblies as in-person meetings, there can be scenarios in which this is not possible (for example, if plans to hold one fall through due to lack of funding or for some other reason at the last moment). In such a situation, scheduling another in-person meeting may be impractical and beyond our financial means, but not having an Assembly at all, or delaying it by years, would be detrimental as well. A scaled-down online meeting (a kind of expanded eCouncil) can be held in such a case as a fallback option.

Note that conducting an online Assembly meeting requires a Council decision, though this decision, if necessary, can be made by Council in a special electronic consultation.

Third proposal: Abolishing the position of Chair

All mention of the Chairperson (also, Vice-Chairpersons) and specific provisions related to the Chairperson shall be removed from the Constitution and Rules. Namely:

1. Article 3, §d of the Constitution will now read:

Not more than twelve members of the Council shall be elected at the Assembly in accordance with the Rules. They shall serve until the next Assembly.

2. In Article 4, §b of the Constitution, the words “the Chairperson, the Treasurer and other members of the Executive Committee” will be replaced by the words “all members of the Executive Committee”.
3. In Article 4, §d of the Constitution, the words “and not more than three Vice-Chairpersons” will be deleted.
4. Rule §1c will now read (this is identical to the old text, except that all references to the Chair have been eliminated):

Candidates for Members to the Council individually elected by the Assembly may be nominated by a Section, an Associate Organisation or any five Individual Members. Nominations for Council Members must be received by the WRI office not later than four months before the first day of the Assembly.

All nominations of candidates must be in writing. The written consent of candidates must be obtained by the nominators or the WRI office. Announcements of nominations shall include the names of the nominators.

The WRI office shall send one ballot paper for each vote allocated in Article 3 for the election of Council Members to the Sections and Associate Organisations not later than two months before the first day of the Assembly. Ballot papers must be returned either to the WRI office not later than one week before the first day of the Assembly or during the Assembly. The individually elected Council Members shall assume office after the election.

The (maximum) number of Executive Committee members shall be increased by one to compensate for the abolished position of Chair:

5. In Article 4, §d of the Constitution, the words “not more than four other members of the Executive Committee” will be replaced by the words “not more than five other members of the Executive Committee”.
6. In Article 5 of the Constitution (Executive Committee), the first paragraph will now read:

There shall be an Executive Committee elected by the Council, composed of the Treasurer and not more than five other Council members, elected by the Council.

A rotating Convenor role for the Executive Committee shall be stipulated in the Rules, while maintaining the freedom of the Exec to institute a different sort of internal division of labour. This will take the form of a new paragraph added to §3 of the Rules (Rule §3d):

Unless a different arrangement is instituted via an explicit Executive Committee decision, the Executive Committee shall be convened by one of its members who holds the function of “Convenor of the Executive Committee”. The Convenor shall be the person responsible for ensuring that the Executive Committee functions properly and carries out its duties for the duration of her term. This function is decided amongst the members of the Executive Committee themselves and is rotated every 6 months between the members.

A document detailing and discussing the responsibilities of the Convenor will be attached to the Rules (and be open to change by Council). The proposed document is included as Supplementary Document A.

Finally, it is proposed we agree to the following transitional provisions:

1. If a Chairperson is selected by electronic consultation in advance of the 2019 International Assembly:
 - That Chairperson shall continue serving in this role, as defined in the Constitution and Rules prior to the present amendment, until the following International Assembly.
 - The Chairperson shall be a member of the International Council and Executive Committee *ex officio*
 - No more than four members of the Executive Committee, in addition to the Chairperson and the Treasurer, shall be elected by the Council following the 2019 International Assembly
2. If no Chairperson is selected in advance of the 2019 International Assembly, all proposed changes to the Constitution and rules become effective immediately.

Rationale and discussion

The proposal to abolish the position of Chair has been made by WRI's current Chair, Christine Schweitzer, at the 2016 eCouncil. Following some discussion, a more detailed proposal was presented to the Council meeting in London in 2017 (but was not discussed due to lack of time). A preparatory committee reviewed it in advance of the eCouncil in 2018, and it was agreed that the idea of abolishing the Chair position requires further discussion. The current proposal grew out of all these deliberation processes, as well as further discussion by the Exec.

WRI sees itself as a network based on very flat hierarchies and widely operating by consensus. The position of Chair was introduced almost one hundred years ago when it was unthinkable to have an organisation that does not have a Chair. It would be a good start for the next 100 years of WRI to organize leadership in WRI in a way that is more consistent with our values and ideas of how society at large should function.

On the practical level, it has become increasingly difficult in recent years to find a person with sufficient experience of activism within the WRI network, who would be willing to stand for election as Chair. This is even more of a problem given our justified reluctance to select predominantly men and people from the Global North to this role (as was the case in the past).

Our own experience, and that of many other organisations (including many WRI affiliates) tells us that functioning without a Chairperson is possible. Indeed, in WRI's own history, there have been times when the Chairperson viewed his role as mostly titular and was not actively involved in WRI's day-to-day work (which is, in practical respects, not much different from a situation where the Chair position does not exist at all) and we managed.

In our discussions of the subject at Council meetings, while the general sentiment was clearly supportive of the proposal, several concerns were raised as issues to address:

- Stakeholders, especially donors, want to know who is in charge and can sign for the organisation (though no legal formal signatory is required). This was often the natural task of the Chair (though the Treasurer and staff members have also signed for WRI).
- The office needs a counterpart among Exec members if decisions are to be made that cannot wait for the whole Exec, or which are too sensitive. In such cases in the past, the Chair was often the one contacted, but other Exec members (e.g., those serving on the Personnel Committee), have also taken this role.

- There is a need for someone to have the big picture in mind, to make sure things are not falling between the cracks, to work with staff and other Exec members to prepare Exec and Council meetings and International Assemblies.
- There is the danger of a “tyranny of structurelessness”—when everybody is responsible in theory, there is a danger on occasions that no one actually takes responsibility.
- The abolition of Chair position may mean that (even) more power is given to office staff and/or to the Treasurer.
- If there is a serious problem with staff (especially when difficult decisions need to be made, including contract termination), there is a need for someone to assume ultimate responsibility, to be the place where the buck stops. In the past, the Chair has been the one to step in (even if the full Exec made the final decisions).
- If there are problems or conflicts within the Exec, or if Exec members for one reason or another become passive and do less work over the period for which they are elected, there is need for someone to have an overview of the situation, and to ensure the Exec continues functioning at least on a level sufficient for its basic functions to be performed. The Chairperson has been the one who carries this responsibility.
- Finally, the Chairperson has often been a particularly hard-working member of the Exec, actively involved in much of its work.

The current proposal includes provisions aimed to address these concerns. These include the provision for increasing the number of Executive Committee members, as well as the introduction of a rotating position of Convenor of the Executive Committee. Regarding the latter point, there was a discussion at the 2018 eCouncil around whether it is advisable to dictate to an Executive Committee in advance how to conduct its affairs and organise its internal division of labour. The current proposal addresses such concerns by making the Convenor position a default arrangement, which, however, an Executive Committee is free to change or modify by an explicit decision that institutes a different internal division of labour and responsibilities.

Fourth proposal: Single-round ranked preference voting for Council

The following sentence will be added at the end of Rule §1c:

The exact details of the voting system, as decided or amended by Council from time to time, shall be attached as an addendum to the Rules.

The proposed addendum, including detailed instructions for voting and vote counting, is included as Supplementary Document B.

Rationale and discussion

Current rules allow for fair participation in the election of Council members by all WRI member organisations by distributing ballot papers in advance, so they can be returned prior to the international meeting if organisations are not represented there. But the current system of voting (12 Xs on each ballot paper, which are simply added up and the 12 candidates with the most votes are elected), can end up with an unbalanced and unrepresentative Council membership. A small working group was asked by Council to find a different way to elect Council members. The group decided to try a voting system which allows preferential voting, so as to improve the perceived balance of Council membership. The details of the proposed system are included in a supplementary document.

Since the basic system for sending out ballot papers in advance and holding the vote during the Assembly (adding in any ballots returned in advance) would be the same as now, and since the Rules do not specify the details of the voting and counting system anyway, none of the current specific instructions in the Rules regarding voting for Council need changing.

Fifth proposal: Restoring the co-optation power of Council

A new paragraph (§f) shall be added to Article 4 (Council) of the Constitution:

The Council shall have power, at its discretion, to co-opt at any time not more than three Members of the International, who have signed the Declaration, to fill casual vacancies or assist the Council in its work.

The last sentence of the current Article 4, §b ("A Section representative serving on the Executive Committee who ceases to be Section representative may be co-opted to Council") shall be deleted, as it now becomes redundant.

Rationale

Assuming the proposal to abolish the Chair position is accepted, and a fifth member is added to the Exec instead, the already difficult task of selecting members for Exec is likely to become even more daunting. By allowing Council to co-opt members, a broader pool of potential candidates for Exec becomes available (also including representatives of Associates, or members of Sections who are not official Section Reps): if a proposed future Exec member is not currently a member of Council, that person can be co-opted, thus making them eligible to join the Exec.

Note also that this co-optation power was in the Constitution in the past.

Sixth proposal: Adding a Decision-making section to the Rules

A new Rule §4 shall be added to the Rules (with subsequent Rules renumbered accordingly):

4. Decision-making

The International has a commitment to try to make decisions, at International Assembly, Council, or Executive Committee, by consensus rather than formal majority voting. The provisions in the Constitution for such voting are therefore to be treated as a last resort to resolve a serious impasse rather than the norm.

Rationale

While we have references to consensus decision-making in other places in the Constitution and Rules, it could be a good idea to give consensus decision-making more prominence.