

Conference of European Churches

Standing Orders

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Part I – The Governing Board

§ 1 General provisions

- (1) *'The Governing Board shall meet no less than twice a year'* (Const. Art. 8 XI).
- (2) Meetings of the Governing Board shall normally take place in Brussels. The Governing Board may decide to hold a meeting in any country where the Conference has Members or applicants for membership.
- (3) Meetings of the Governing Board shall be opened and closed with a prayer and a blessing.
- (4) The members of the Governing Board shall be entitled to claim and be reimbursed for all reasonable expenses. The members of the Governing Board shall not be remunerated.

§ 2 Convening of the Governing Board

- (1) *'The Governing Board shall meet (...) upon convening by the President. If the President is unable or unwilling to convene the Governing Board, it shall be convened by a Vice-President. If the President and the two (2) Vice-Presidents are all unable or unwilling to convene the Governing Board, the General Secretary shall do so or, if he/she is unable, one of the executive staff members of the Secretariat.'* (Const. Art. 8 XI).
- (2) The President shall *'call special meetings of the Governing Board, if necessary'* (Const. Art. 9 I). Such meeting shall follow the convening procedures in paragraph (1).
- (3) The Governing Board should normally decide on a meeting plan specifying the date(s), place and expected duration of the meeting at least three (3) months before the date fixed. The meetings should, if possible, include the Saturday.
- (4) *'The General Secretary shall send the invitation via regular mail or any other means of written communication (including e-mail) at least seven (7) calendar days before the meeting. This invitation shall mention the date, time and place of the meeting. The agenda and the relevant documents necessary for the discussion shall be attached.'* (Const. Art. 8 XI).

§ 3 Agenda

- (1) The President, or the person convening the Governing Board meeting according to § 2 (1), shall announce his or her intention to convene a meeting of the Governing Board at least one (1) month in advance. Each member of the Governing Board shall have the right to request items to be put on the agenda. The request must be sent to the President or the person convening the Governing Board meeting within

- one (1) week after the above announcement. The request must be acceded to if it has the support of at least two (2) other members of the Governing Board.
- (2) *'The agenda of the meetings of the Governing Board shall be prepared by the General Secretary and approved by the President. If the President is unable or unwilling to approve the agenda, it shall be approved by a Vice-President. If the President and the two (2) Vice-Presidents are all unable or unwilling to approve the agenda, the General Secretary shall do so when sending the invitations.'* (Const. Art. 8 XII).
 - (3) The agenda of the meetings of the Governing Board shall normally contain the following items:
 - a) Minutes of the previous meeting;
 - b) Report of the President;
 - c) Report of the General Secretary;
 - d) Report on the programmatic work;
 - e) Report of the Treasurer.
 - (4) The provisions in paragraph (1) and (3) do not apply to special meetings of the Governing Board.

§ 4 Meetings of the Governing Board

- (1) The following quorum is required for the Governing Board: *'Unless otherwise stipulated in this Constitution, the Governing Board shall be validly constituted and have a quorum when at least half of the members of the Governing Board, with a minimum of seven (7), are present or represented.'* (Const. Art. 8 XIII).
- (2) The following majority requirements apply to the decisions of the Governing Board: *'Unless otherwise stipulated in this Constitution, decisions of the Governing Board shall be validly adopted if they obtain the simple majority of the votes cast by the members of the Governing Board present or represented. Each member of the Governing Board shall have one (1) vote. Blank votes, invalid votes and abstentions shall not be counted. In the event of a tie, the President has the casting vote.'* (Const. Art. 8 XII).
- (3) *'The Governing Board shall be chaired by the President. If the President is unable or unwilling to chair the Governing Board, the Governing Board shall be chaired by a Vice-President. If the President and the two (2) Vice-Presidents are all unable or unwilling to chair the Governing Board, the Governing Board shall be chaired by a member of the Governing Board designated for this purpose by the Governing Board.'* (Const. Art. 8 XIV).
- (4) Votes shall normally be cast by show of hands. If at least one (1) member of the Governing Board requests for a secret written ballot, this request must be granted.

- (5) In accordance with the 'Principle of Confidentiality and the Secrecy of Affairs' of the governing body of an association governed by Belgian law, meetings of the Governing Board shall be held in closed session.
- (6) By way of derogation to the preceding paragraph, the Governing Board may invite one (1) or more third party(ies), i.e. non-Governing Board members, including the executive staff, to attend without voting rights in one or more meeting(s) or part(s) of meeting(s) of the Governing Board.

§ 5 The 'electoral reserve' of the Governing Board

- (1) *'Except for the President and the two (2) Vice-Presidents, each member of the Governing Board - in order to be represented at a Governing Board meeting - shall have the right, via regular mail or any other means of written communication (including e-mail), to give a proxy to a member of the 'electoral reserve', who should be from the same church family and region as the member of the Governing Board conferring his or her voting right. No member of the 'electoral reserve' may hold more than one (1) proxy.'* (Const. Art. 8 VIII).
- (2) The members of the 'electoral reserve' shall be included in the Governing Board's general circulation, information and distribution list, with the exception of confidential documents.
- (3) The member of the Governing Board who cannot attend the meeting, should give its proxy to a member of the 'electoral reserve' from the same church family (Protestant, Orthodox (Eastern, Oriental) or Anglican/Old Catholic) and from the same region as said member, and if possible, taking additionally age and gender balances into account. The proxy must be sent directly to the member of the 'electoral reserve' with a copy to the General Secretary.
- (4) Members of the 'electoral reserve' should at least once in the Governing Board's term be invited to attend a meeting of the Governing Board in addition to the members of the Governing Board.
- (5) *'Except for the President and the two (2) Vice-Presidents, if the mandate of a member of the Governing Board ceases before its term, for whatever reasons, the Governing Board may freely appoint (by co-optation) a new member of the Governing Board from [the] 'electoral reserve' for the remainder of the term, who should be from the same church family and region as the replaced member of the Governing Board.'* (Const. Art. 8 VII).

§ 6 Bodies of the Governing Board

- (1) The Governing Board shall *'take the decisions to establish and delegate tasks to one or more working group(s), committee(s) or any such body, determine rules for their work*

and governance, and oversee their activities' (Const. Art. 8 IX). The Governing Board shall have the following bodies:

- The Presidency;
 - The Nominations Committee;
 - The Budget Committee;
 - The Personnel Committee;
 - The General Assembly Planning Committee, and
 - The General Assembly Nominations Panel.
- (2) The General Secretary shall participate in the meetings of the Governing Board as its secretary in an advisory capacity (Const. Art. 11 I).
- (3) The Presidency shall consist of the President and two (2) Vice-Presidents. The Presidency shall have the following functions:
- Between meetings of the Governing Board, the Presidency shall carry out the decisions of the Governing Board and supervise the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly and the Governing Board.
 - Between meetings of the Governing Board, the Presidency shall be empowered to take decisions and measures which cannot be postponed, and which are not by law, the Constitution of the Conference or these Standing Orders reserved to the Governing Board.
 - The Presidency shall inform and consult the members of the Governing Board on important decisions having fundamental implications for the working of the Conference between meetings of the Governing Board.
 - The President shall report to the Governing Board on the decisions and measures the presidency has taken at each meeting of the Governing Board.
- (4) The Nominations Committee shall be chaired by one (1) of the Vice-Presidents and consist of five (5) other members of the Governing Board. The members shall include at least two (2) women and at least two (2) men. At least two (2) of the members shall come from Orthodox Member Churches. The Nominations Committee shall make recommendations to the Governing Board on the Governing Board's appointments. The Nominations Committee, together with the President, shall be the Search Committee for the appointment of the General Secretary.
- (5) The Budget Committee shall consist of the Treasurer, the Vice-Treasurer, the General Secretary and three (3) other members appointed by the Governing Board. The Treasurer and at least one (1) of the other members must also be members of the Governing Board. Besides the General Secretary, at least two (2) members must be non-Governing Board members. The Budget Committee shall be chaired by the Treasurer. The Budget Committee shall oversee the financial situation of the Conference and make recommendations for decisions and actions of the Governing Board. *'Each year, the Governing Board shall, on a proposal from its Budget Committee, draw up the draft annual accounts of the past financial year, as well*

as the draft budget for the next financial year' (Const. Art. 14 IV). The Budget Committee shall normally meet twice a year.

- (6) The Personnel Committee shall consist of the President, the Treasurer, the General Secretary and two (2) other members of the Governing Board. The Governing Board appoints the Chair of the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee shall oversee the general procedures for appointments of staff positions salaried by the Conference, the working regulations and rules for the staff and policies for remunerations and conditions for staff.
- (7) The Governing Board shall *'make appropriate preparations for the General Assemblies'* (Const. Art. 8 IX). To that end, the Governing Board should appoint a General Assembly Planning Committee at least two years in advance of a physical meeting of the General Assembly. The General Assembly Planning Committee shall consist of
 - a member of the Governing Board as Chair;
 - at least seven (7) other members appointed by the Governing Board,
 - the General Secretary,
 - as well as, in an advisory capacity,
 - the coordinator of the General Assembly;
 - the head of the local planning committee for the General Assembly in the host country;
 - the legal advisors of the General Assembly.
- (8) The Governing Board shall appoint a General Assembly Nominations Panel consisting of nine members to prepare the elections by the General Assembly. The appointment should be done at least eighteen (18) months prior to the physical meeting of the General Assembly in which the elections shall take place. The Chair of the General Assembly Nominations Panel should be an outgoing member of the Governing Board. The General Assembly Nominations Panel shall:
 - Propose candidates for Moderator and two (2) Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly to the Governing Board;
 - Propose, through the Governing Board, candidates for the General Assembly's Nominations Committee to the General Assembly;
 - Draft a first proposal of candidates for the President, the two (2) Vice-Presidents, the members of the Governing Board and the members of the 'electoral reserve' to the General Assembly's Nominations Committee.Members of the General Assembly Nominations Panel shall not be eligible for any election or appointment by the General Assembly. Further details, including a clear time-frame for the preparations of the elections, shall be laid down by the Governing Board in the committee's terms of reference.
- (9) The Governing Board may also appoint and delegate tasks to other committees.
- (10) The Governing Board can appoint non-Governing Board members to serve on its bodies, with the exception of the bodies mentioned in paragraph 3, 4 and 6.

§ 7 Conflict of interest

- (1) If a member of the Governing Board has, directly or indirectly, a real or apparent conflict of interest relevant to a decision or an operation within the competence of the Governing Board, he or she must inform the other members of the Governing Board accordingly before the deliberation of the Governing Board. The same applies to any other participants in meetings of the Governing Board. In case of financial, comparable material, or personal conflict of interest, the person may be heard, but must not take part in the deliberations and decisions concerning the issue. In all other cases, the person may, at the discretion of the Governing Board, also be required to leave the meeting during the deliberations and vote. His/her declaration, the reasons of the conflict of interest and whether the member was present, must appear in the minutes of the Governing Board. When there is a doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, the matter shall be resolved by a vote of the Governing Board, excluding the member concerning whose situation the doubt has arisen.
- (2) The preceding paragraph applies accordingly to other bodies of the Conference.

§ 8 Minutes and information from the meetings of the Governing Board

- (1) Minutes shall be drawn up at each Governing Board meeting. The draft minutes shall be sent via regular mail or via any other means of written communication (including e-mail) by the General Secretary to the members of the Governing Board and, with the exception of confidential items, to the members of the 'electoral reserve' within six (6) weeks of the meeting of the Governing Board. The minutes shall be approved by the Governing Board at its next meeting, signed by the President and kept in a register of minutes. Copies of the minutes shall be sent via regular mail or via any other means of written communication (including e-mail) by the General Secretary to the members of the Governing Board and, with the exception of confidential items, to the members of the 'electoral reserve'.
- (2) The register of minutes shall be kept at the registered office of the Conference where all members of the Governing Board may consult it, without, however, displacing it.
- (3) The General Secretary shall, within two (2) weeks of the meeting of the Governing Board, send a summary of the decisions taken to the members of the Governing Board and, with the exception of confidential items, to the members of the 'electoral reserve'. The summary of the decisions shall be sent via regular mail or via any other means of written communication (including e-mail).
- (4) The Governing Board shall communicate its decisions in appropriate ways to the Member Churches, Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches after each meeting of the Governing Board.

Part II – The life of CEC

§ 9 Membership

- (1) When considering a Church for membership, the Governing Board shall first ascertain, based on the information provided in the application according to Const. Art. 4 I that the requirements for membership according to Const. Art. 3 II are met. The applicant shall
 - a) *'Be a Church or a Federation of Churches;*
 - b) *Have its registered office in Europe;*
 - c) *Be duly constituted in accordance with the laws and practices of its country of origin, whether it has legal personality or not; and*
 - d) *Accept and respect the basis of the Conference in accordance with the preamble to this Constitution and the aims of the Conference as set out in Article 2 of this Constitution.'*
- (2) *'The decisions of the Governing Board regarding the admission shall obtain a two-third (2/3) majority of the votes cast by the members of the Governing Board present or represented. The decisions of the Governing Board regarding membership admissions are final and binding, and the Governing Board shall give reasons for its decisions. A positive decision by the Governing Board shall be notified by the General Secretary to all Members.'* (Const. Art. 4 I).
- (3) The admission will only come into effect after six months after this notification, as *'at the written request of at least one quarter (1/4) of the Members'* during this period *'the decision of admission to membership of the Governing Board shall not take effect'*. In such a case, the Governing Board will put the decision to the next physical General Assembly (Const. Art. 4 I).
- (4) Members can resign any time by notifying the General Secretary, who shall inform the Governing Board without delay. The resignation will take effect only on the first day of the sixth (6) full month after such notification (Const. Art. 4 II). In general, *'a Member that has resigned from the Conference and wishes to rejoin the Conference as a Member shall be considered as an applicant for membership'*, however, if the Member wishes to rejoin the Conference *'within six (6) months as from the date of its resignation, it shall be readmitted as a Member upon decision of the President'*. (Const. Art. 4 III). The latter provision cannot be applied, if membership has been terminated by exclusion.
- (5) If a Member *'persistently and seriously fails to comply with its obligations as a Member'*, this can lead to suspension of membership rights (Const. Art. 4 IV) up to exclusion from membership (Const. Art. 4 V). Exclusion is mandatory, if a Member does no longer fulfil the requirements of membership. The procedures of Art. 4 IV and V shall be followed. In case doubts are raised about the conduct of a Member, the Governing Board must establish criteria to define relevant violations of membership

obligations and the time and magnitude needed to meet the conditions to enter into a procedure to suspend or terminate membership.

§ 10 Finances

- (1) The Governing Board shall appoint a Treasurer and a Vice-Treasurer. The Treasurer must be a member of the Governing Board (§ 6 V of these Standing Orders). These two shall execute, in conjunction with the Budget Committee, the tasks laid down in Const. Art. 14 and § 6 V of these Standing Orders.
- (2) Based on the financial strategy according to Const. Art. 7 III, the Governing Board shall work out short term, midterm and long term financial plans for the Conference;
- (3) The Governing Board shall, on the proposal of the Budget Committee, adopt financial regulation for the Conference, which should, *inter alia*, include the following:
 - Budget headings for the different work areas, including provisions which of them and to which extent should be mutually coverable;
 - Investment criteria (security, ethics, sustainability) for the assets of the Conference;
 - Rules for which sums may be spent by the General Secretary, the Presidency and staff in the exercise of their general duties without prior decision of the Governing Board in one sum and/or altogether per financial year;
 - Rules for expenses and other expenditure of staff, including travel costs, hosting of guests etc.;
 - Rules for subsidies for Members to participate in the life of the Conference, including travel costs, expenses and other reimbursements.
 - Rules for secondary employment and comparable activities of staff.
- (4) The Governing Board shall adopt a donations, partnerships and sponsorships scheme, including the allocation of responsibility, negative criteria for third party involvement etc.

§ 11 Preparation of the General Assembly

- (1) The Governing Board shall '*make appropriate preparations for the General Assemblies*' (Const. Art. 8 IX). To this end, the Governing Board shall in particular
 - appoint an Assembly Coordinator, either from the existing staff or as a temporary position on the staff;
 - determine terms of reference for the General Assembly Planning Committee according to § 6 VII of these Standing Orders, including provisions on delegated powers and a time-frame.

- (2) In its work, the General Assembly Planning Committee shall draw upon expertise from staff and be empowered to establish subcommittees and other internal bodies, such as a worship committee.
- (3) The General Assembly Planning Committee shall regularly report to the Governing Board, both in its meetings and, where necessary, in writing.
- (4) The Governing Board shall, in consultation with and upon proposal of, its Members in the country where the next physical General Assembly will take place, appoint a local planning committee to support the General Assembly Planning Committee with local expertise and contacts.
- (5) *'The Governing Board shall call the meetings at least three (3) months in advance and at such time and place as stated in the invitation. The invitation shall include the agenda ...'* (Const. Art. 7a). However *'information about the date of the next physical General Assembly shall be sent out to the Members at least eighteen (18) months in advance'* (RoP, B1.1). The General Assembly Planning Committee must therefore provide the Governing Board with its proposed agenda for the business sessions at such a time that the three (3) months limit can be met. The agenda will normally take the form of a timetable for the General Assembly, already including a tentative schedule also for general sessions, services and events. It will be adopted by the Governing Board by way of a formal proposal to the General Assembly.
- (6) Based on the agenda for the business sessions, the Secretary of the General Assembly shall prepare all material and briefing necessary for the General Assembly's committees to commence with their work immediately after being elected. Every committee must also be provided with appropriate tools for electronically communicating with each other and the Delegates.

§ 12 Written procedure for the General Assembly

- (1) At the last meeting of each year, the Governing Board shall, upon proposal by the General Secretary, adopt a time frame for the written procedure to be held in the following year – unless a physical General Assembly shall be held. The time frame, based on the provisions of Const. Art. 7b shall be communicated to Member Churches in a separate Mail from the general information about the decisions of the Governing Board, usually at the beginning of the year for which the written procedure is scheduled.
- (2) Further details are laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

§ 13 Secretariat and Collegium

- (1) The Secretariat is headed by the General Secretary. Nevertheless, the General Secretary and executive staff work in a collegial form. They constitute the Collegium, which normally meets once a month, but not less than six (6) times a

year to discuss the thematic work and take decisions relevant to the overall management of the Conference.

- (2) The Collegium shall adopt its own Standing Orders.

§ 14 Appointment of the General Secretary

- (1) The President shall '*oversee the recruitment of the General Secretary*' (Const. Art. 9 I). The Nominations Committee, together with the President, shall be the Search Committee for the recruitment of the General Secretary.
- (2) Candidates shall be invited to submit their candidature for the position of General Secretary; such applications shall be submitted in writing with curricula vitae to the Search Committee. An appropriate reference shall normally be sought from the applicant's Church. The Search Committee shall submit its recommendation in the form of a prioritised list of at least two candidates to the Governing Board, together with the applications and curricula vitae of the recommended candidates. The Search Committee shall provide all necessary information about the recommended candidates to the Governing Board. The names of shortlisted candidates contacted for interviews (reduced from the list of all the people who applied) shall be communicated to the Governing Board.
- (3) '*The Governing Board shall appoint a natural person, who is not a member of the Governing Board, as General Secretary. His or her office may be remunerated. The General Secretary's mandate may be of a definite duration. The terms and conditions of his or her office shall be determined by the Governing Board.*' (Const. Art. 8 VII). The General Secretary shall have theological competence and ecumenical experience. He or she shall normally be appointed for a six-year term of office. The term of office may be extended by the Governing Board. The total term of office may not exceed twelve years.
- (4) In negotiating the designated General Secretary's 'Service Agreement' (special contract of employment for management positions), the Governing Board must consult a Belgian lawyer to make sure that the Conference's interests are ensured and that the 'Service Agreement' complies with Belgian labour law.

§ 15 Dismissing the General Secretary

- (1) If the Governing Board so decides, it may at any point prior to the termination of the term of office of the General Secretary decide to dismiss him or her, '*possibly with immediate effect, (i) without having to justify its decision, (ii) without any compensation or cost becoming payable by the Conference, and (iii) without prejudice to mandatory labour law provisions, if applicable.*' (Const. Art. 11 IV).

- (2) In negotiating his or her 'Service Agreement' (special contract of employment for management positions) with the designated General Secretary, the Governing Board must consult a Belgian lawyer to make sure that such a dismissal is possible within the limits of Belgian law and that in the case of a premature dismissal no more compensation becomes due than Belgian law requires.

§ 16 Appointment of the staff of the Secretariat

- (1) *'The Governing Board shall devise the annual (...) staffing plan for the Secretariat on the basis of the financial plan agreed by the General Assembly (...). (Const. Art. 14 III). 'Secretariat staff should be representative of the constituency of the Conference' (Const. Art. 13 VI).*
- (2) The General Secretary shall have the power of *'hiring (...) the staff of the Secretariat, according to the procedure laid down in the Standing Orders of the Conference'* (Const. Art. 11 II).
- a. The General Secretary shall appoint executive staff members after consultation with the Personnel Committee, with the approval of the Presidency, and according to procedures fixed by the Governing Board on the proposal of the Personnel Committee.
 - b. The General Secretary shall appoint the other staff of the Secretariat according to procedures fixed by Governing Board on the proposal of the Personnel Committee.
 - c. The General Secretary shall have the power to approve paid internships, substitutions or similar temporary staff, with contracts limited for up to six months, after consultation with the Chair of the Personnel Committee and within the approved budget.

§ 17 Dismissing staff of the Secretariat

- (1) The General Secretary shall have the power of *'dismissing the staff of the Secretariat, according to the procedure laid down in the Standing Orders of the Conference'* (Const. Art. 11 II). Generally, the dismissal of staff is the ultima ratio and shall be used only if (1) a position cannot be financially supported any longer or (2) a bond of trust with the employee is no longer possible.
- (2) In the case of § 17 I (1), a termination of the contract according to Belgium labour law is to be sought immediately.
- (3) In the case of § 17 I (2), the General Secretary shall first seek an amiable settlement of any dispute that might exist. This having failed, the Personnel Committee of the Governing Board shall hear both sides and issue a recommendation on how best to settle the issue amiably. This having failed, the Governing Board shall *'act as the internal appeal tribunal in cases of labour conflict within the Secretariat'* (Const. Art. 8 IX), meaning that the final decision on a possible termination of the work contract must be taken by the Governing Board after both sides have been heard and the

Governing Board has had the opportunity to investigate the case as it deemed necessary.

§ 18 Working mechanisms

- (1) The Conference shall pursue its work in thematic areas drawn from the aims and objectives of the Conference as laid down in the Constitution and elaborated in the strategic objectives and planning adopted by the General Assembly.
- (2) The Governing Board shall operationalise the strategic objectives adopted by the General Assembly and integrate them into a work plan for the Conference.
- (3) Generally, each of the thematic areas shall be assigned to a member of the Collegium or several of them jointly.
- (4) In order to facilitate the closest possible cooperation with its Members and a meaningful cooperation with Organisations in Partnership, as expressed in the partnership agreements, and with National Councils of Churches, executive staff shall be supported in these areas by consultative bodies and/or working groups. In order to attend to the main thematic areas, permanent working groups will normally be the most appropriate instrument. For other purposes, ad hoc groups may be set up.
- (5) In order to deliver the best possible support in any group, the Governing Board shall, upon proposal by the Members, appoint experts from the Member Churches to such bodies and/or groups. Such groups should have between five (5) and ten (10) members. Funding permitting, they can draw on external expertise. They are encouraged to build wider networks, in consultation with the executive staff responsible for their area of work.
- (6) Such networks can be recognised officially by the Conference and also become part of the working mechanisms of the Conference. The decision to recognise a network shall be taken by the Governing Board.
- (7) The Conference cooperates with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) on the subject of asylum and migration in accordance with the commitments and obligations established in the Agreement of Cooperation between the two associations.
- (8) The General Secretary may, in consultation with the Budget Committee, establish working groups for limited periods of time to organise one-off conferences, seminars or dialogue sessions.
- (9) In all appointments of bodies and working groups, the Governing Board shall ensure a reasonable geographical and confessional balance; the desired distribution among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; among men, women and young people; minority and majority churches; and participation by persons whose special expertise and experience will be needed in its appointments.

- (10) In drawing upon external expertise for its committees, groups and events, the Conference must seek close contact with the Member Churches to which experts are attached, in order to ensure a permanent and intensive flow of information.
- (11) The General Secretary shall be entitled to participate in an advisory capacity in all meetings of the bodies set up by the Governing Board, with the exception of the General Assembly Nominations Panel, to which he or she may be invited at the discretion of the Panel.
- (12) The mandate of all bodies established by the Governing Board terminates six months after the election of the new Governing Board, unless this Governing Board decides to prolong their mandate. For the permanent working groups, the Governing Board shall decide within one year after its election to prolong or terminate the mandate of individual members or to appoint new or additional members to the group, or to terminate or change the mandate of the group as such.

§ 19 Communications, public statements etc.

- (1) The Conference aims to bring its Member Churches together to make a Christian voice be heard in Europe, and to speak with one voice wherever possible. The Conference is an instrument of its Members to liaise with the European Union and the other European institutions in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg as well as with the agencies and less institutionalised fora attached to them.
- (2) While the General Assembly is the most representative and authoritative voice of the Conference, the Conference uses different ways and means of communicating its work and messages vis-à-vis said institutions and the general public.
- (3) If there is a wish to publish communiqués or statement on behalf of the Conference, procedural and qualitative standards have to be met. In general, no such public statement can be issued without prior consultation in the Governing Board. This applies in particular to all statements disseminated via any form of media and publications, both in printing or digital.
- (4) If a person or body within the Conference wishes to issue such a statement or publication, a proposal shall be made to the Governing Board, which will then decide on the wording and the means of communication
- (5) The President of the Conference shall '*speak on behalf of the Governing Board on strategic issues*' (Const. Art. 9 I), meaning that he or she may – without further consultation – freely explicate, expand and elaborate on strategic decisions already taken by either the General Assembly or the Governing Board. Normally, he or she shall have broad discretion in judging how this might best be done, including where it is appropriate or expedient to take the initiative.

- (6) The General Secretary shall act *'as a spokesperson of the Conference on operational issues in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Conference'* (Const. Art. 11 II), meaning that he or she may – without further consultation – freely explain the way the Conference implements the strategic decisions of its governing bodies. He or she shall consult closely with the Presidency on how best to advocate for the aims and objectives of the Conference and inform the public about its work.
- (7) All executive staff shall generally be expected to speak on the work of Conference in their area(s) of responsibility at closed and public events and to enhance the public reception and understanding of this work.
- (8) Thematic groups appointed by the Governing Board shall be encouraged to prepare public statements and publications, which will usually be introduced and recommended to the Governing Board by the executive staff responsible for such a group.
- (9) In case a conference/meeting/symposium organised or hosted by the Conference wishes to publish results of its work immediately, the participants can do so only in the name of those present, not of the Conference. If a reference to the Conference shall be included in such a public statement, participants must consult with the executive staff responsible for that event and, as appropriate, with the executive staff responsible for public relations, on how best to make such results available to the public.

§ 20 Organisations in Partnership

- (1) The Conference can enter into partnership agreements with specialised Church and ecumenical organisations that fulfil the criteria of Const. Art. 5 I. The initiative can come either from such an organisation itself or from the Conference.
- (2) *As 'the rights and obligations of the Organisations in Partnership shall be determined by the Governing Board in mutual consultation with the Organisations in Partnership'* (Const. Art. 5 I), the Governing Board shall negotiate partnership agreements with each Organisation in Partnership, outlining the nature of the relationship and details of concrete cooperation and financial obligations, if any. Such agreements should be regularly reviewed and adapted to the current situation, at least, however, every eight (8) years.
- (3) The Governing Board shall commission one of its internal bodies or the General Secretary to negotiate the partnership agreement, which will then be adopted by the Governing Board and the governing body of the respective organisation. To facilitate the process, the Governing Board can adopt a template agreement to be adapted individually.
- (4) Having successfully completed the process, these organisations shall be entered into an official register.

§ 21 National Councils of Churches

A register of National Councils of Churches shall be maintained at the Secretariat for the purpose of inviting them to the General Assembly and being able to liaise with them in general.

§ 22 Special Provisions

- (1) The official languages of the Conference are English, French, German, and Russian. English shall be the working language in the life of CEC. If a Governing Board member wishes to speak in another language, he or she can do so if another person present at the meeting is able to provide qualified interpretation. Upon request of the Governing Board, translations of relevant documents shall be provided in any of the official languages. Simultaneous interpretation is provided at General Assemblies.
- (2) The Governing Board can temporarily suspend these Standing Orders in cases of emergency, but only on the advice of the Presidency and only for one item at a time.
- (3) These Standing Orders enter into force immediately after approval by the Governing Board and remain in force until revised or replaced by the Governing Board.