



**STANDING RULES OF THE CONFERENCE OF
THE COMMONWEALTH SPEAKERS AND PRESIDING
OFFICERS (AFRICA REGION)**

**AS AMENDED ON 27TH JULY, 2017
ABUJA, NIGERIA**

STANDING RULES OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE COMMONWEALTH SPEAKERS AND PRESIDING OFFICERS (AFRICA REGION)

1. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the Conference are the maintenance, fostering and encouragement of impartiality and fairness of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments; the promotion of knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in various forms and the development of parliamentary institutions.

2. Title

The Conference shall be called “Conference of the Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers, Africa Region” *which shall:*

- (a) be numbered successively; and
- (b) as far as practicable, be convened biennially.

3. Interpretation

Unless otherwise provided or used in the Standing Rules of the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (African Region), the terms used in these Rules mean:

“Chairperson” means the Chairperson of the Region elected by the Conference under these rules;

“CPA” means the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;

“CSPOC - A” means the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth - Africa Region;

“Region” Means the geographical divisions into which Africa is divided for CSPOC – A administrative purposes;

“Secretariat” means the Regional Secretariat established under article 17 of the Constitution of the Africa Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;

“Secretary” means the Regional Secretary of the CPA - African Region;

“Speaker” means a person as provided for under Rule 13 (a) and shall include a presiding officer, deputy speaker or deputy presiding officer;

“Presiding Officer” means a person who presides over a second chamber in the case of a bicameral Parliament and includes chairpersons of National Councils and Presidents of Senates;

“Vice Chairperson” means the Vice Chairperson elected by the Conference under these rules.

4. **Membership**

- (1) Membership shall be open only to Speakers and Presiding Officers of National Parliaments of all independent sovereign states of the Commonwealth of Nations in the Africa Region;
- (2) A Deputy Speaker or Deputy Presiding Officer may, by prior notification to the Secretariat attend the Conference as a substitute for a Speaker or a Presiding Officer of his or her Parliament, and any such substitute shall enjoy the same status as a member of the Conference;
- (3) Where a Legislature is dissolved for the purposes of a general election, the Speakers or Presiding Officers of that legislature at the time of dissolution shall remain members of the Conference and, if applicable, of the Standing Committee until successors are elected or chosen unless where the Speaker or Presiding Officer is prevented from doing so by the provisions of his or her national Constitution.

5. **Standing Committee**

- (1) There shall be a Standing Committee consisting of:
 - (a) a Chairperson;
 - (b) Vice-Chairperson;
 - (c) immediate past Chairperson;
 - (d) and four (4) other members, generally representatives of the four sub-regions of the Commonwealth - Africa Region which are:
 - (i) Central Africa,
 - (ii) East Africa,
 - (iii) Southern Africa, and
 - (iv) West Africa:

Provided that a sub-regional representative shall not come from a Parliament whose member is the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson or immediate past Chairperson.

- (2) The members of the Standing Committee shall hold office ***for a term of two years and shall be on rotational basis.***
 - (3) The quorum of the Standing Committee shall be three 3 members.
6.
 - (1) The Speaker who is hosting the Conference shall become Chairperson of the Standing Committee.
 - (2) The Speaker who is hosting the next Conference shall become Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee.
7. The Speaker who hosts a meeting of the Standing Committee and who is not the Chairperson or an elected member of the Standing Committee shall be an additional member of the Standing Committee.
8.
 - (1) The Secretary to the Standing Committee shall request all Speakers and Presiding Officers who are members of the Conference to nominate candidates for election to the Standing Committee ***as specified in the roster.***
 - (2) Nominations of candidates for election to the Standing Committee shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Standing Committee not later than the conclusion of proceedings on the first day of the Conference.
9. Speaker of a Commonwealth Africa Region Parliament eligible to attend the Conference as a member may nominate not more than one candidate for membership of the Standing Committee but no Speaker from a bicameral Parliament may nominate his or her colleague from the same Parliament.
10. **The functions of the Standing Committee**
The functions of the Standing Committee shall be to:
 - (a) propose dates, venue and procedures of the next Conference;
 - (b) propose subjects for discussion at the next Conference and to prepare a draft agenda;
 - (c) review the Standing Rules and propose draft amendments to the Standing Rules for the consideration of the Conference as the occasion may arise; and
 - (d) consider all matters those are concerning the organisation and conduct of the Conference including financial arrangements.

11. **Meeting of the Standing Committee**

The meeting of the Standing Committee shall:

- (a) one year before the next Conference; and
- (b) two days before the next Conference.

12. **Functions of the Conference**

The functions of the Conference are:

- (a) *formulation of policy and management of the Conference;*
- (b) *determination of the annual membership fee and other financial obligations of the members of the Conference; and*
- (c) *determination of the number of delegates, observers and officials sent to the Biennial Conference.*

13. **Observers**

- (a) The host Chairperson may invite any person to the Conference as an observer;
- (b) The Conference shall admit to all its sittings all officers accompanying a Speaker;
- (c) At the request of a Speaker with the leave of the Conference, observers may take part in the discussions; and
- (d) The Speaker of State or Provincial Legislatures shall be accorded observer status on rotational and representative basis ***but shall not be entitled to attend the General Meeting.***

14. **Officers of the Conference**

The Officers of the Conference shall be:

- (a) The Chairperson;
- (b) Vice Chairperson; and
- (c) The Secretary.

15. **Chairperson of the Conference**

- (a) The Chairperson shall be the Speaker of the host Parliament;
- (b) In a bicameral Parliament, the Chairperson shall:
 - (i) be the Speaker who presides over the House that is directly elected and designated as either;
 - (ii) the House of Assembly;
 - (iii) the Legislative Assembly;
 - (iv) People's Assembly;
 - (v) the National Assembly; or
 - (vi) House of Representatives.

16. **Vice Chairperson of the Conference**
The Vice Chairperson shall be the Speaker of the next hosting Parliament.
17. **Powers and Functions of the Chairperson**
The Chairperson shall:
(a) Preside at each session of the Conference;
(b) Open, suspend and close the sitting; and
(c) Propose the date, time and items for discussion at the next sitting.
18. **Absence of the Chairperson**
In the absence of the Chairperson or by invitation of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson may preside at a session of the Conference, exercising the powers and functions of the Chairperson.
19. **The Secretary**
The Secretary shall:
(a) Coordinate the secretarial, administrative and other arrangements of the Conference, appoint or co-opt such officers and staff as may be required;
(b) Be the Chief Advisor to the Conference and the Standing Committee on all matters of practice and procedure in the conduct of the proceedings of the Conference; and
(c) Be the Secretary to both the Conference and the Standing Committee.
20. **General Meeting**
(1) ***There shall be a General Meeting of the Conference which shall have the ultimate authority to determine the policy and management of the Conference.***
(2) ***The General meeting shall be held once in every two years.***
(3) ***The Standing Committee may convene a Special General Meeting at any time to consider a matter of urgent importance to the Conference before convening of the next Conference***
21. **Notice of Meeting**
(a) ***The Regional Secretary shall, not less than six Months to the next Conference, notify all member Parliaments of the dates and venue of the Conference; and***
(b) ***A Parliament that proposes to bring up any business before the Conference shall, not less three months, submit such a proposal in writing to the Regional Secretary.***

22. **Amendment of Rules**

- (a) A motion for the amendment of the Standing Rules or the adoption of new rules shall require two months' notice to be given in writing to the Secretary before the commencement of the Conference at which it is to be considered;
- (b) Such a motion shall be proposed and seconded from the floor of the Conference and shall be decided by a majority vote of the Conference; and
- (c) Any amendment or new rule so adopted shall be effective immediately, unless the Conference otherwise determines.

23. **Adoption of Agenda**

The Agenda shall be adopted by the Conference at its first session.

Motions for the addition of new items to or for the amendment of items on, or delegation of items from the draft agenda or agenda, may be proposed and seconded from the floor of the Conference, and shall be decided by a majority vote of the Conference.

- 24. The items of the agenda shall be considered in such order as the Conference may decide.

25. **The Conduct of Business**

The sitting of the Conference shall be open, unless the Conference decides otherwise.

- 26. Members desiring to speak shall seek to be recognised by the Chairperson. When two or more members seek the floor, the member called by the Chairperson shall be entitled to speak.
- 27. A member leading the discussion on any item on the agenda may prepare, for circulation in advance, a paper dealing with that item. A member should make every effort not to read verbatim from a previously prepared and circulated paper, but should summarise and refer to it.
- 28. Members may not speak more than once on any item of the agenda unless by leave of the Chairperson.

29. **Speeches shall be limited as follows:**
- (a) Opening speeches on any item on the agenda - not more than fifteen minutes;
 - (b) Seconding speeches - not more than ten minutes;
 - (c) Speeches under Rule 25 - not more than five minutes; and
 - (d) Speeches in reply - not more than ten minutes.

30. When the time for a speech has expired, and the Speaker has not completed the speech, the Chairperson may grant the Speaker extension of time.

31. A Speaker shall not be interrupted except on a point of order, but may give way to enable elucidation of particular point.

32. Committees

The Conference may refer any matter arising out of an item on the agenda to a Committee for consideration.

33. The Conference shall determine the membership of the Committee.

34. When referring a matter to the Committee, the Conference may fix the time by which the Committee shall make a report.

35. (a) Unless the Conference otherwise decides, the committee shall elect its own chairperson and appoint a rapporteur for each subject referred to it; and
- (b) The rapporteur shall prepare the report of the committee for presentation to the Conference.

36. The Conference may discuss the report of a Committee.

37. Report of the Conference

The Regional Secretary shall arrange for verbatim reports of all plenary discussions of the Conference and these reports shall, if possible, be made available to each Speaker for editorial amendment before the next session of the Conference

38. (a) The Secretary shall prepare and distribute, as soon as possible and not later than six months after a Conference, a report of its proceedings which shall include a verbatim record of plenary discussions and reports presented to the Conference by Committees;

- (b) Copies of this report shall be distributed to Speakers, Presiding Officers and Clerks of the Commonwealth Africa Region Parliaments and Conference observers.

39. Alternates

- (a) At a meeting of the Standing Committee other than at the time of the plenary Conference-
 - (i) Where the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson is unable to attend, the Parliament from which the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson comes from shall be entitled to nominate an alternate to attend the meeting in place of the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson.
 - (ii) An alternate nominated under sub rule (i) shall be a Deputy Speaker or Deputy Presiding Officer of the Parliament where the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson comes from who shall enjoy full rights within the Conference.
- (b) At a meeting of the Standing Committee held at the time of the plenary Conference where the Chairperson is unable to attend, the Deputy Speaker from the Parliament of which the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson is a member shall be entitled to attend as an alternate in place of the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson