



Commonwealth Handbook

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RULES AND PROCEDURES

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

At first glance, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting is a chaotic frenzy of activity; Heads of Government trade ten second soundbites across the floor at each other; foreign ministers filing out of the room, running back in, while pages flit back and forth from delegation to delegation carrying notes for various people. At any given time, ten people can be moving, all of them in different directions, doing different things. This guide is to help you make sense of the chaos.

THE DELEGATES

- **HEAD OF GOVERNMENT (HOG):** The head of government sits at the table, in the front row. They are the only ones that the chairperson will acknowledge, and the only ones that can make a comment on the resolution inside the chambers. Heads of Government will address **ONLY** the chairperson, and will not address the other heads of government directly. Also, the Head of Government should only converse with their own foreign minister, and cannot leave the table without first consulting with a page.

- **FOREIGN MINISTER (FM):** The foreign minister will sit directly behind his Head of Government, and will be meeting with the other foreign ministers in the foreign minister's hall. Foreign ministers are expected to communicate their head of government's policy in the foreign ministers discussions. Foreign ministers will meet in an unmoderated setting in an adjacent room. If they are not in the foreign minister's meetings they will be expected to return to their seats in the chambers. Foreign ministers are only allowed to speak to their own head of government when inside chambers; only when outside can they speak to other foreign ministers.

• **PRESS CORPS/NATIONAL MEDIA (PC):** This year we have added the Press as another role for a delegation. Journalists will observe the meetings, and write news articles for 'Commonwealth NewsLink', the in-house news source. To write these articles, journalists will be interviewing the heads of government and the foreign ministers, as well as the speeches and discussions of both meetings. The Press Corps may only speak to the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government in an interview context; journalists are asked not to speak to the ministers while they are in debate (except for certain circumstances).

Given the power of the Press, your articles will be uploaded to NewsLink as soon as we receive them. Maybe someone will see the article you write and that will affect their position.

DURING DEBATES (Head of Government)

- **TO GET ON THE SPEAKER'S LIST:** Stand your nation placard vertically. You will be added to the speaker's list by the Secretary-General.
- **IF YOU WANT TO GET OFF THE SPEAKER'S LIST, OR PASS ON YOUR TURN:** Lay down your placard. You will be removed off the speaker's list. Please note that once you have removed yourself, you will not be able to regain that position, so choose carefully.
- **WHEN IT IS YOUR TURN TO SPEAK:** The Chairperson will call upon you to speak. Stand up, and please address all comments to the chair. Failure to do so will result in you being cut off by the Chairperson and the forfeiture of your turn. We will initially be lax with this rule, but as the conference goes on, we will begin to enforce it.



- **TO DIRECT A QUESTION TOWARDS OTHER DELEGATIONS:**

While speaking, indicate that you are directing a question to someone.

“Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to ask the (insert person here) (insert question here).”

This is only an example; as long as you say something to the same effect, the Chairperson will understand. If the Chairperson is distracted, gently remind him/her that a question was asked and who it was asked to.

Asking the question ends your speaking turn. The Chairperson will pass the floor to the person being asked, and once he has finished answering, the Chairperson will resume with the next speaker on speakers' list.

- **WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED SPEAKING:** Lower your placard, and sit down. This will signify that you are finished speaking and the Chairperson will acknowledge the next speaker.

PAGING

Pages are Commonwealth staff. They will answer questions regarding rules, operations, and carry out various duties. They can also be used to recall your foreign minister from the meetings outside.

- **TO REQUEST A PAGE:** Simply put your hand up. A page will come around. This is a first-come, first-serve system, so it may be a little while before we get to you if we are suddenly overwhelmed.

- **TO PASS A WRITTEN MESSAGE TO ANY OTHER DELEGATION:** Please write the message, with clearly marked To: and From:, and hold the message up. A page will take it and route it to the proper recipients.

- **TO RECALL YOUR FOREIGN MINISTER:** Request a page, and then tell him which country's foreign minister he should look for.

VOTING

The Commonwealth operates on a principle of consensus, rather than majority. As a result, all delegations must agree on or endorse a resolution in order for it to become an actionable item for the Secretariat.

If a vote is to be held, the Chairperson will ask for all placards to be temporarily lowered (you will NOT lose your place in the speaker's list). The Chairperson will then announce what the vote is for: vote yes by standing your placard, vote no by leaving it down. There is NO abstaining. As this is the Commonwealth, votes can only pass by consensus.

There are three (3) types of votes:

1. PASS: Pass the resolution. If there is consensus to pass, the resolution will be sent on to the Secretariat.
2. STRIKE: Remove the resolution from discussion. If there is consensus to strike, a new resolution will be discussed.
3. TABLE: Table the resolution, for later discussion. If there is consensus to table, the resolution may be revisited later.

If any vote fails to achieve consensus, the Chairperson will return to the speakers list.

- REQUESTING A VOTE: In order to request a vote, use the pages to take a written request to the Secretary-General. Simply write which type of vote you are requesting. Please note that calling a vote is entirely up to the Chairperson's discretion.

Resolutions which have undergone three votes will be arbitrarily tabled by the Chairperson, due to the three strikes rule. This is in acknowledgment to the fact that the resolution is unlikely to achieve consensus.



FOREIGN MINISTER'S RULES

Within the moderated meeting, foreign ministers may not speak to anyone inside the chambers except their own head of government. They may still request pages; however, to send/receive messages.

Foreign ministers are free to meet with other foreign ministers outside, and are free to discuss anything.

Once outside, there are NO rules. Foreign minister's meetings are completely unmoderated.

RESOLUTIONS

The Commonwealth Heads of Government direct the activities of the Commonwealth by releasing statements and declarations.

For the purpose of this conference, all resolutions put before the Commonwealth are to be one sentence, without preamble and perambulatory clauses. They should be as simple as possible; you will be given the floor at the introduction of your resolution in order to defend your resolution.

This is a sample resolution:

Be it resolved that (BIRT): we avoid using paper to build houses.

Do not forget that if your resolution is selected, you will be asked to defend your resolution. Delegates should prepare a defense for each resolution they submit.

• **TO AMEND A RESOLUTION:** Only the proposing Head of Government may amend a resolution. Simply send a written revision of your resolution to the Secretary-General. You may add, delete, and modify text. It is fully expected that you may need to add clauses to your sentence in order to get other nations to agree with you. You cannot amend another nation's resolution.

PRESS CORPS: The press corps will observe the meeting, take notes, and write articles based on the events and activities of the other delegates in discussion. Press corps may freely move between both the FM and HoG meetings, but are asked to not be directly involved in the meetings.

Instead, the press corps will be interviewing the HoG's and the FM's. To do this, at the beginning of each session, press corps delegates will be given a number of "press cards", which will be given to a delegate at the start of the session.

Simply hand the card to a HoG or FM, and they will be obligated to do an interview for you. However, please respect the speakers list; if you need to interview an HoG who is scheduled to speak, ask nicely if they will give up their speakers list position for the interview. If they will not, then that is their decision. You can get them after their speaking turn.

We expect at least one article per PC delegate per session. Those of you inclined may choose to write more. Your participation will have an influence on your chances of being sent to the NSCF.