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OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
FOR DEVELOPMENT



General Assembly

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Report of the Secretary-General

Part III: Administrative and statutory matters

(i) Amendment to Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (Election of Members of the Executive Council)

I. Background

1. Article 14(1) of the Statutes provides that the total number Full Members of the Organization determines the number of seats on the Executive Council:

“The Council shall consist of Full Members elected by the Assembly in the ratio of one Member for every five Full Members, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure laid down by the Assembly, with a view to achieving fair and equitable geographical distribution”.

2. Unlike other specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the UNWTO Statutes do not establish a fixed number of seats in the Executive Council. Instead, the General Assembly decides at each of its sessions the number of seats to be allocated in application of Article 14(1) mentioned above.

3. Through resolution 671(XXI), the General Assembly, during its twenty-first session held in 2015 in Medellín, Colombia, decided that, taking into account that the figure resulting from the ratio of one Member for every five of the 158 Full Members was closer to 32 than to 31, the number of seats in the Executive Council for the period 2015-2017 would be 32, in addition to that of Spain.

4. This decision was taken in order to align the number of seats with the increasing membership of the Organization and to ensure the representativeness of the Executive Council with a fair and equitable geographical distribution. As highlighted in document A/21/12, the ad hoc practice of rounding up the figure resulting from the ratio established in Article 14(1) of the Statutes did not require any amendment to the Statutes or to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly in order to be effective for the period 2015-2017. However, the Secretariat recommended that, in case the member States wish to adopt this new interpretation as a consistent rule to be applied in the future, an amendment to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly should be produced and submitted to the next session of the General Assembly for its approval.



5. Ultimately, in accordance with Rule 58 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, the Assembly alone is competent to amend its Rules of Procedure.

II. Practice of specialized agencies of the United Nations regarding the number of seats in non-plenary organs

6. The non-plenary organs – in which only some member States participate – with decision-making capacity of international organizations within the United Nations system, usually have a size of between 1/5 and 1/3 of the entire membership of the Organization. Unlike the UNWTO Statutes, the constitutive treaties of the majority of UN specialized agencies provide a fixed number of seats on their non-plenary organs at the time of the establishment of the Organization. This is the case, for example, of FAO (49), UNESCO (58), ICAO (36), WHO (34), WMO (37), ILO (56), UNIDO (53) and IAEA (35). However, many of these organizations have undergone a series of amendments in order to align the number of seats with their increasing membership, thus setting the proportion of 1/5 or 1/3 of the full number of Members.

7. Furthermore, most international organizations increase the number of seats within their non-plenary organs following the rise of total number of members of the Organization. In this regard, when applying the mathematical ratio, the general practice is to round up should the resulting figure not be an integer. This is probably due to the need to ensure representativeness in decision-making organs with fair and equitable geographical distribution.

8. With due consideration of the differences between the organizations, the Secretariat proposes to include in current Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly that the figure resulting from the 1/5 ratio is rounded to the nearest higher integer, in accordance with the rationale contained in resolution 671(XXI) when determining the seats of the Executive Council.

III. The amendment to Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly

9. The current text of Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (left) and the new wording that is being proposed (right) read as follows:

CURRENT TEXT

The Assembly shall elect by secret ballot the Members of the Council in the proportion of one Member of the Council for every five Full Members of the Organization, having regard to fair and equitable geographical distribution.

PROPOSED NEW TEXT

The Assembly shall elect by secret ballot the Members of the Council in the proportion of one Member of the Council for every five Full Members of the Organization, having regard to fair and equitable geographical distribution. *In the event that the figure obtained after the calculation of the said ratio is not whole, it shall be rounded up to the nearest higher integer.*

IV. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

10. The General Assembly is requested, in view of Rule 58 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly and taking note of the ad hoc practice that was initially applied at its last session in Medellín, Colombia, regarding the number of seats in the Executive Council for the period 2017-2019:

(a) To stress the importance of balance, representativeness and equitable regional representation in the Executive Council of the Organization; and

(b) To decide to amend Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly as follows:

“The Assembly shall elect by secret ballot the Members of the Council in the proportion of one Member of the Council for every five Full Members of the Organization, having regard to fair and equitable geographical distribution. In the event that the figure obtained after the calculation of the said ratio is not whole, it shall be rounded up to the nearest higher integer.”