

OPEC Committee Guidelines

Basic Parliamentary Procedure

When running meetings, here are some of the rules for the language and order that can help them proceed in an orderly fashion. If the group uses this, it is important to review and practice it with all of them early, so every member feels informed and equipped to fully participate in committee discussions.

- Chair calls meeting to order (“this meeting will come to order”).
- Only those who get recognized by the chair may speak during a meeting that has “come to order.”
- Side conversations are not allowed; if someone wants to speak, it should be to the whole group (unless someone gets permission from the chair to have a small side conversation for the purpose of furthering the committee)
- The chair acts as a neutral “gatekeeper” in discussions of matters to be voted upon.
- In order to discuss something the group needs to vote on, someone (other than the chair) has to make a motion or proposal (“I move that...happens”).
- In order to even discuss a motion, someone has to “second” it (“I second the motion”).
- If there is no second, the motion dies (will not be discussed).
- If there is a second, the chair calls on members to vote in favor or against discussing the motion.
- The chair usually sets a limit of a certain amount of minutes for consideration of a motion and may ask speakers to (a) wrap up their point soon and/or (b) only speak if they have new thoughts on the topic.
- Anytime someone who gets called upon can “call the question,” meaning that if someone else seconds that “call” the group must vote at that time on the motion “on the floor” (being discussed).
- Once a vote is taken by eligible voting members, the chair announces whether it “passed” or not. A simple majority is needed for a motion to pass. Without a simple majority, the motion dies and other motions may be entertained and discussed.

- The chair then thanks the participants for their discussion and/or makes suggestions for how to perhaps have a better discussion the next time.
- At the end of the meeting, the chair asks for a “motion to dismiss.” Someone seconds and the chair asks for a vote. If it passes, the meeting is officially over.

Committee Debate

At the beginning of committee, speakers will be added to a speaker’s list. This list will flow in a chronological order with the purpose of allowing delegates to discuss the ideas or topics they may think are most important. The committee will continue to operate on a speaker’s list until a motion for a moderated caucus or unmoderated caucus is made.

The committee will be run in the form of both moderated and unmoderated caucuses. In order to enter a moderated caucus, a delegate must motion to discuss a certain topic under moderated caucus format with a specified speaking time for each speaker. This will then be voted upon and approved or rejected with a simple majority. Delegates may also motion for an unmoderated caucus where the committee will briefly recess for a certain amount of time – specified in a motion – to work in groups and discuss ideas. The committee will mainly be run in moderated caucus; however, the chair will entertain motions for unmoderated caucuses when appropriate and when they feel this will stimulate committee progress.

Committee Resolutions Format

The OPEC committee will pass resolutions that will be made available to the public and media. While discussing issues within the committee, OPEC members may draft resolutions that will holistically address the topics and propose methods on improving the problems. The resolutions are also used for recommendations and suggestions for future action. They may be written alone or in conjunction with other countries. Resolutions for this committee will be divided into three parts: heading, perambulatory clauses, and operative clauses.

Heading – shows the committee, topic, and resolution number at the top of the resolution document.

Example: OPEC
Sponsors: Iran and Kuwait
Signatories: Algeria, Angola, and Ecuador

Perambulatory Clause – states the reasons why the committee is addressing the issue and underscores past actions on the issue

Example: Realizing consumers have suffered from the recent financial crisis and volatility in crude oil prices

Operative Clause – identifies the actions or recommendations made in the resolution. These clauses outline what OPEC will do to address the problems or topics.

Example: Calls for a decrease in the oil production quotas of all member states by 10% over the next year in order to maintain fair oil trading prices for producers and consumers.

In order to introduce resolutions, the document must be sponsored. The resolution can have one sponsor or multiple sponsors. It is recommended that delegates find more than one sponsor for a resolution since the committee will be more likely to pass it when many delegates contribute ideas. In addition to basic sponsors of a resolution, the document will require signatories. A signatory is a country that may or may not agree with the substance within a draft resolution, but still would like to see it brought to the floor for debate. In the OPEC committee, 20% of member nations – other than sponsors – must be signatories on a resolution before it is brought to the floor for debate (3 member countries). A delegate must motion for a resolution to be brought to the floor for debate and also motion to vote on a resolution.

Resolution Amendments

Amendments may also be introduced to edit, clarify, or revise certain parts of a resolution once it has been passed. The chair will recognize countries that would like to speak in favor or opposition to an amendment after it has been introduced. After everyone has spoken who would like to speak, the amendment will come to a vote and will pass or fail based on a simple majority.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact your chair Evan Covington at ecovingt@fas.harvard.edu.