

Special GB sessions – Past practice

1. A special meeting of the Governing Body (*session spéciale* or *session extraordinaire* in French) may be convened when (i) 16 regular GB members so request in writing (art 7(8) of the Constitution); (ii) 16 Government members or 12 Employer members or 12 Worker members so request (para 3.2.2. of the Standing Order); (iii) the chairperson considers it necessary (para 3.2.2.).
2. The record shows that there have been three special meetings/ sessions convened by the GB Chairperson on the basis of his discretionary authority to do so when he considers it necessary. On two other occasions, he declined requests for a special meeting (see attached internal JUR Note of 16 August 1977).¹
3. The first instance was the special meeting convened in [September 1932](#) between the 59th and 60th Sessions of the Governing Body at the request of Italian Government. The Italian Government's proposal asked the Governing Body to decide that the International Labour Organisation should examine the question of the reduction of hours of work as an urgent matter, in accordance with the resolutions of the Unemployment Committee adopted by the Governing Body and with the resolution which the Conference itself had adopted at its Sixteenth Session. For the meeting, Italy proposed a Resolution, and the Office prepared a Note.
4. The second precedent was special meeting convened on 3 October 1935 between 72nd and 73rd Sessions of the Governing Body. The meeting took place one day before the opening of the 73rd Session and was summoned by the Chairperson to discuss matters that needed to be resolved prior to the beginning of the 73rd Session (in which new Officers would be elected). These matters were the effective withdrawal of Germany and the designation of Canada as a State of chief industrial importance, as well as the revision of the rules concerning the election of the Officers.
5. The third instance was the special session held on [19-20 May 1970](#) to elect a Director-General following the resignation of David Morse on 9 February 1970, effective 31 May 1970. At the immediately preceding 178th Session, "the Chairman informed members that, in the light of consultations between the groups and as provided for in article 20 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, he had convened a special session, to be held from 18 to 20 May 1970, for the appointment of the Director-General of the International Labour Office." ([GB.178/PV](#), p. 79).
6. As regards the two occasions on which the Chairperson refused to respond favourably to requests for a special meeting, the first was in 1973 when two Governing Body members solicited the holding of a special meeting to discuss the *coup* in Chile. The Chairperson, after consulting the Vice-Chairpersons, decided that no special session was necessary

¹ *Special meetings* should be distinguished from *special sittings* organized, for example, to honour (Albert Thomas in [June 1932](#) or Wilfred Jenks in [November 1973](#)), or receive personalities (Joseph Stiglitz in [March 2009](#)).

“considering the ILO's financial situation and the fact that the present session was due to begin shortly” ([GB.191/PV](#), p. II/1).

7. Two years later, in 1975, the WFTU requested the Chairperson to hold a special session regarding events in Spain but he decided not to summon such a special meeting (see attached internal JUR Note of 7 October 1975).