

Special sessions of Governing Body – Origin and evolution of applicable rules

	GB Standing Orders	Constitution	GB regular members	Origin and rationale
1920	ARTICLE 10 <i>Times of Meeting.</i> [...] Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 393 of the Treaty of Versailles the President may also summon a special meeting, should it appear necessary to him to do so, and shall be bound to summon a special meeting on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by six members of the same group. * 50 per cent of the government group, or a full non-governmental group	ARTICLE 393 [...] A special meeting shall be held if a written request to that effect is made by <i>at least ten members of the Governing Body</i>. * 41 per cent of total number of GB regular members (24)	12 G 6 Es 6 Ws	At the 2nd Session GB, Draft SO proposed but not discussed, Appendix IX of the minutes Then draft article 11 proposed that a special session be summoned “on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by 10 or more Members, as provided in Article 393 of the Treaty of Versailles. Not less than 7 days' notice shall be given of any special Session.” At the 3rd Session GB, SO proposed by a special committee and examined, GB.3/PV, p.16-18 and 60-61. Article 11 proposed by the Special committee was adopted as article 10. The explanation for the evolution from the second to the third sessions is found in an undated/ unsigned note that comments on the proposed number of ten members as follows: <i>« A ceci on peut objecter que, seul, le groupe des représentants des Gouvernements serait à même de provoquer une réunion et qu'aucun des autres groupes n'aurait la possibilité de le faire. Il conviendrait de réduire le nombre de membres exigés afin de permettre à tout group qui le désirerait, de provoquer une session extraordinaire ».</i>

1934	ARTICLE 11 2. Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 7 of the Constitution of the Organisation (393), the Chairman may also summon a special meeting, should it appear necessary to him to do so, and shall be bound to summon a special meeting on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by eight members of the Government group, or six members of the employers' group, or six members of the workers' group. * 50 per cent of Government group, or 75 per cent of a non-governmental group	Article 393 (amended by the ILC at its 4th Session in October 1922) A special meeting shall be held if a written request to that effect is made by at <i>least twelve of the representatives on the Governing Body.</i> * 37.5 per cent of total number of GB regular of members (32)	Article 393 (amended) 16 G 8 Es 8Ws	GB.68/PV, pp. 80-81 "The Committee felt that in view of the increased representation of overseas countries on the Governing Body it would be difficult to obtain the signatures of all the members of the employers' or workers' group for the convocation of special meetings of the Governing Body, so that if all the members of either of those groups were required to sign a request, it would be impossible for special meetings for urgent business ever to be convened at short notice, except at the request of the members of the Government group. <i>The Committee therefore proposed to increase the number of members of the Government group to eight and to retain the number of six in the case of the other two groups".</i>
1955	Article 20 2. Without prejudice to the provisions of article 7 of the Constitution of the Organisation, the Chairman may also summon a special meeting should it appear necessary to him to do so, and shall be bound to summon a special meeting on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by ten members of the	Article 7(8) (amended by the Conference at its 36th Session in June 1953) A special meeting shall be held if a written request to that effect is made by at <i>least sixteen of the representatives on the Governing Body.</i>	Article 7(8) (amended) 20 Gs 10 Es 10 Ws	GB.128/PV, p. 103 "The Committee further noted that several articles of the Standing Orders refer to the number of members of the Governing Body required to validate particular action and considered that in the light of the increase in the size of the Governing Body the numbers in these provisions should be changed to maintain the same or substantially the same proportion".

	<i>Government group, or seven members of the Employers' group, or seven members of the Workers' group.</i> * 50 per cent of Government group, or 70 per cent of a non-governmental group	* 40 per cent of total number of GB regular members (40)		
1974	Article 20 2. Without prejudice to the provisions of article 7 of the Constitution of the Organisation, the Chairman may also summon a special meeting should it appear necessary to him to do so and shall be bound to summon a special meeting on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by sixteen members of the Government group, or twelve members of the Employers' group, or twelve members of the Workers' group. * 57 per cent of Government group, or 85 per cent of a non-governmental group	Article 7(8) Unchanged	Article 7(1) (amended in 1962 and 1972) 28 Gs 14 Es 14 Ws	GB.194/SC/5/4, para. 6(d) "Article 20, paragraph 2, which provides that a special meeting of the Governing Body shall be summoned on the written request of <u>ten</u> members of the Government group, or <u>seven</u> of the Employers' group, or <u>seven</u> members of the Workers' group; until 1963 these figures were equivalent to half the membership of the Government group and 70 per cent of the Employers' or Workers' groups; from 1963, they represented some 40 or 60 per cent respectively. In both cases the figures are substantially less than the 16 members required for this purpose by the Constitution (Article 7, paragraph 8), as fixed by the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation Instrument of Amendment, 1953, so as to maintain the previous proportion to the total size of the Governing Body (40 per cent). In view of the constitutional provision whereby it is not possible to require more than 16 signatures calling for a special session of the Governing Body it is proposed that the figures "ten", "seven" and "seven" should be replaced by the figures "sixteen", "twelve" and "twelve".

2005	3.2.2 Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged	GB.294/LILS/1 Renumbering as part of the publication of the Compendium
2016	3.2.2. Without prejudice to the provisions of article 7 of the Constitution of the Organization, the Chairperson may also convene, <u>after consultation with the other Officers</u> , a special meeting should it appear necessary to do so, and shall be bound to convene a special meeting on receipt of a written request to that effect signed by sixteen members of the Government group, or twelve members of the Employers' group, or twelve members of the Workers' group.	Unchanged	Unchanged	GB.326/LILS/2 Consultation with the other Officers was added, codifying existing practice.

Conclusion

Art 7(8) of the Constitution provides for the holding of a special GB meeting at the request of a specified number of regular GB members irrespective of the group to which they belong (representing approximately 40 per cent of the total number of regular members). This number was originally set at 10 members, currently stands at 16 and will increase to 32 upon the entry into force of the 1986 amendment.

Art 7 of the Constitution also provides that the GB controls its own procedure. Within those limits, the GB has developed complementary rules providing that a special meeting may also be convened at the initiative of the Chairperson or at the written request of a specific number of regular members of one of the three groups. The number of group members required to convene a special meeting has evolved from 6-6-6 to 8-6-6, then 10-7-7 and is currently set 16-12-12. The rationale underlying this complementary rule was that each of the three groups – and not only the government group – should be empowered to provoke the convening of a special meeting.

Based on a combined reading of art 7(8) of the Constitution and para 3.2.2 of the Standing Orders, it is established that a special GB meeting (*session spéciale* or *session extraordinaire* in French) may be convened in three distinct instances.

- First, at the request of at least 16 regular GB members regardless of the group (for instance, a written request signed by 8 G, 2 E and 6 W members, or a request signed by 6 G and 10 E members, or a request signed by 7 E and 9 W members). No record of relevant practice.
- Second, at the discretion of the Chairperson if he/she considers it necessary after consulting the Vice-Chairpersons. Provision invoked on five occasions; three special meetings convened.
- Third, at the request of the majority of the regular members of any of the three groups, i.e. 16 G members, or 12 E members, or 12 W members. No record of relevant practice.

In sum, due to its extraordinary nature, a special GB meeting should be convened only if the Chairperson deems it necessary, or if a considerable number of GB regular members of the same or different groups formally so requests. These are complementary, self-standing rules that can be applied separately.