



**PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**AGENDA ITEM 126 - REVITALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

INTRODUCTION OF THE DRAFT DECISION A/75/L.7/REV.1 "PROCEDURE FOR DECISION-MAKING IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WHEN AN IN-PERSON MEETING IS NOT POSSIBLE"

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER**

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President

I have the honor and pleasure to introduce draft decision L.7, submitted on behalf of the core group Liechtenstein, Austria, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Ghana, Iceland, Jamaica, Malta, New Zealand, Qatar, Sweden, Switzerland and all the cosponsors listed in the document Barbados, Colombia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Georgia, Hungary, Honduras, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Republic of Korea, San Marino, as well as Andorra, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Peru, Ukraine, and Sierra Leone.

At the outset, we wish to thank you for your leadership and express our gratitude that we are able to gather in this hall in person, while in imperfect and difficult circumstances. We hope and we are confident that we are able to continue our work following the modus operandi we have been operating under since early September also in the coming weeks and that we will be able to bring the work of the Main Committees and of the plenary to a successful conclusion before

the holidays, which would be an accomplishment we should all be proud of. At the same time, and as we look confidently at the challenges ahead of us, it is also the moment to prepare for less propitious circumstances, such as the ones we encountered earlier in the year during the lockdown period. We were caught, as you have stated repeatedly, Mr. President, unprepared at the time. That was the case not just for this Assembly and this organization, but for most of our national systems and indeed the world as a whole. Our lack of preparedness resulted, for this Assembly, in difficult months that were less productive than they should have been, given the expectations the world has vis-à-vis the United Nations in times of a global health crisis and a pandemic. Our inability to apply our rules of procedure and to resort to decision-making in the manner foreseen for this Assembly led to paralysis and deadlock, the starkest illustration of which is the fact that our omnibus resolution on the pandemic itself was adopted only after we could meet in person again. Being caught unprepared one time is unfortunate – doing so a second time would be unforgivable. This is why we have taken the initiative to build on the work done under the able leadership of Ambassador Rattray from Jamaica during the lockdown and are now able to present a voting procedure for this Assembly at times when in person meetings are not possible. We want to do our business in person, Mr. President, if we can do so safely – and we want to make our decisions in this room whenever possible. We will work with you, the United Nations and the city of New York towards this best possible scenario – but we see it as our obligation to also prepare for the worst. The Security Council has given itself a voting procedure for times when in person meetings are not possible. The one universal intergovernmental body of the UN system – the General Assembly – must do likewise.

Mr. President

In addition to building on our extensive collective consultations during the earlier months of the year, we have engaged intensely on this text, in open consultations as well as in bilateral and other settings. We wish to thank all delegations who have asked questions, offered comments, voiced skepticism, as a result of all of which we are now able to present a text that is able to accommodate concerns expressed to the extent possible and to garner the strongest possible

support in the membership. I wish to highlight briefly some of the aspects of the text that have been subject to in depth discussion and also to further revisions and finetuning.

1. A number of States felt that safeguards were needed for the membership to have a say/control in the decision that in person meetings are not possible. The language in our text is based on past practice including when you, Mr. President, last informed the membership that the building was closed due to a number of Covid-19 infections. In addition, the possibility of electronic voting precludes a situation where a President of the General Assembly could act against the will of the majority of member States.

2. We wish to stress that the procedure we are suggesting for adoption has the most narrow scope of application possible. First, it is limited to the most exceptional circumstances - which, let us remind ourselves, have so far occurred only once in the 75-year history of this Assembly. Second, the procedure is applicable only if the Assembly is unable to meet for a prolonged period of time. The recent instance of temporary closure of the UN premises would typically not qualify and we would expect the Presidency to make the necessary adjustments to the calendar which you were able to do even during the busiest time of work for the Assembly. Third, if proponents of a decision do not wish to see their text adopted under the e-voting procedure, postponement is the obvious option. At the same time, we consider it very important that the scope of application is not further restricted in a way as suggested by the proponents of the amendment. The General Assembly needs to be able to react to a crisis situation and to make decisions of political relevance. The proposed restrictions would not have allowed this Assembly to even adopt the omnibus resolution on Covid-19. It is also clearly our view that such a limitation of scope is not compatible with the Rules of Procedure of this Assembly. This being said, we fully share the concerns of those who do not want to see a proliferation of resolutions. We do not want that either, and we have introduced clear provisions to this effect in the text.

3. We are very sensitive to questions of capacity of small States - I represent one of the smallest members of the UN, and the group of cosponsors is a combination of small States and States who have strong sympathy for small States issues. We have therefore introduced language

in the text that addresses capacity issues and gives the Secretariat a clear mandate to assist States in challenges they may be facing.

4. Some of our partners have also voiced security concerns – concerns that we take seriously and believe to be of the utmost importance for a solid voting system. We are thankful that the procedure provided for in the resolution can be carried out through a platform which has proven to be workable and trustworthy for a good number of years. In addition, the public nature of the voting process is of course relevant, and so is the possibility for every delegation to check that their vote is accurately reflected – just as we do in this hall as a matter of course.

Mr. President

We have worked hard to bring the text in the format before us today. We are satisfied that we are able to present a product that finds overwhelming support among our partners. The measure before us is of the essence – but at the same time it is pretty basic. The Assembly should have had this in place when we went into the lockdown – and we now have the chance to ensure that the rules of procedure of the Assembly, of which voting is a crucial part, are followed as closely as possible when the Assembly is not able to meet in person. Our collective experience earlier this year teaches us that the sheer existence of a voting procedure is in fact a key ingredient of a genuine consensus building effort. If every State has the possibility to block any decision at any time, there is simply no necessity to compromise in negotiations which, ultimately, is what makes consensus possible in the first place.

Mr. President

In September, we gathered in an unusual format both to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our organization and high-level week. A strong commitment to multilateralism was the key takeaway from that week in September, with an overwhelming number of States making it clear that we need more UN, not less, and a better UN, not one that is further incapacitated. This Assembly is the bedrock of multilateralism – the central decision-making and standard-setting body of the United Nations system. It must at all times be capable of making decisions – and even more so in times of extreme crisis situations that will inevitably be in place every time we are unable to meet

in person. Supporting this decision today, and opposing attempts to defer or dilute it, is therefore simply an expression of the belief in the role and value of this Assembly and the importance to make its voice heard when it is most needed.

Finally Mr. President,

Let me address an issue that is important to many delegations in this room today. We have heard in our discussions with Member States that many wished we could end up with a consensual decision and that we should give as much time as needed for that. I would like to convey to you and to all those that this is the very premise on which we started this exercise all along. We have talked in good faith to each and every delegation that has showed openness to work on a consensual text. We have come to the unfortunate but firm conclusion that there are States that we cannot bring on board on this initiative. The amendments before us make this very clear, they are incompatible with its very purpose. Proposals circulated last minute by others are unrelated to the procedure provided for in L.7rev.1 and largely address business continuity while we are able to meet in person. We are happy to engage in that discussion, but it is a different discussion. We are therefore convinced that we need to act decisively now to equip the General Assembly with the procedure we propose, given the worsening conditions in the city. We hope that you can rally behind this cause and oppose any procedural efforts to delay, defer or adjourn it.

I thank you