

Rules of Procedure
of the
Functional Commissions
of the
Economic and Social Council



UNITED NATIONS

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NOTE

The rules of procedure of the functional commissions were initially adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 100 (V) of 12 August 1947. After a comprehensive review, they were revised by the Council in resolution 289 (X) of 6 March 1950. The present edition embodies all the amendments adopted by the Council since the latter date and contained in the following resolutions and decisions of the Council: resolution 481 (XV) of 1 April 1953; resolution 1231 (XLII) of 6 June 1967; decision of 2 August 1968 (1561st meeting); resolution 1393 (XLVI) of 3 June 1969; decision of 3 June 1969 (1596th meeting); decision of 17 November 1969 (1647th meeting); decision 216 (LXII) of 26 April 1977; and decision 1982/147 of 15 April 1982.

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**RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE FUNCTIONAL
COMMISSIONS¹
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

I. SESSIONS

Number of sessions

Rule 1

Unless the Economic and Social Council (the Council) decides otherwise, the functional commission (the commission) shall hold sessions biennially.

Date of opening

Rule 2

1. The date of opening of each session of the commission shall be fixed by the Council, taking into account any recommendation of the commission and in consultation with the Secretary-General.

2. In exceptional cases, the date of opening of a session may be altered by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Committee on Conferences of the General Assembly and, whenever practicable, with the Chairman of the commission.

Place of sessions

Rule 3

Sessions shall be held at the Headquarters of the United Nations unless another place is designated by the Council, taking into account any recommendation of the commission and in consultation with the Secretary-General.

Notification of opening date of sessions

Rule 4

The Secretary-General shall notify the members of the commission and also, in the case of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the President of the International Narcotics Control Board, of the date and place of the first meeting of each session at least six weeks in advance.

¹At present: Statistical Commission, Population Commission for Social Development, Commission on Human Rights, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

II. AGENDA

Drawing up of the provisional agenda

Rule 5

1. The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chairman whenever possible, shall draw up the provisional agenda for each session.

2. The provisional agenda shall include all items required by these rules as well as items proposed by:

(a) The commission at a previous session;

(b) The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council or the Trusteeship Council;

(c) A Member of the United Nations;

(d) A sub-commission of the commission;

(e) The Chairman;

(f) The Secretary-General;

(g) A specialized agency,² subject to rule 72;

(h) A non-governmental organization, subject to paragraph 4 of this rule.

3. Items proposed for inclusion in the provisional agenda pursuant to subparagraphs (c), (e), (f), (g) and (h) of paragraph 2 shall be submitted with basic documents in sufficient time to reach the Secretary-General not less than seven weeks before the first meeting of each session.

4. (i) Non-governmental organizations in category I may propose items for the provisional agenda of the commission provided that:

(a) An organization that intends to propose such an item shall inform the Secretary-General at least nine weeks before the commencement of the session, and before formally proposing an item shall give due consideration to any comments the secretariat may make.

(b) The proposal shall be formally submitted with basic documents not less than seven weeks before the commencement of the session.

(ii) An item proposed in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph shall be included in the agenda of the commission if it is adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

² When the term "specialized agencies" is used in these rules, it refers to specialized agencies brought into relationship with the United Nations; it also includes the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Communication of the provisional agenda

Rule 6

1. The Secretary-General shall, not less than six weeks before the opening of the session, communicate the provisional agenda for a session of the commission and transmit the basic documents related to each item appearing thereon to the Members of the United Nations, the President of the Security Council, the President of the Trusteeship Council, the specialized agencies, the intergovernmental organizations referred to in rule 74, the non-governmental organizations³ in category I or II or on the Roster and also, in the case of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to the President of the International Narcotics Control Board.

2. In exceptional circumstances, the Secretary-General may, for reasons to be specified in writing, transmit the basic documentation relating to items on the provisional agenda not less than four weeks before the opening of the session.

Adoption of the agenda

Rule 7

The commission shall at the beginning of each session, after the election of its officers, in accordance with rule 15, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda referred to in rule 5.

Revision of the agenda

Rule 8

During a session, the commission may revise the agenda by adding, deleting, deferring or amending items. Only important and urgent items shall be added to the agenda during the session.

Draft provisional agenda for subsequent session

Rule 9

At each session of the commission, the Secretary-General shall submit a draft provisional agenda for the commission's subsequent session, indicating in respect of each agenda item the documents to be submitted under that item and the legislative authority for their preparation, in order to enable the commission to consider the documents from the point of view of their contribution to the work of the commission and of their urgency and relevance in the light of the current situation.

³ When the term "non-governmental organizations" is used in these rules, it refers to non-governmental organizations which are in consultative relationship with the Council in accordance with part III of its resolution 1296 (XLIV).

III. REPRESENTATION

Terms of office of members

Rule 10

Unless the Council decides otherwise, the term of office of members of the commission shall begin on 1 January following the election of the States concerned to membership of the commission and shall end on 31 December following the election of the States that are to succeed them as members of the commission.

Representatives

Rule 11

Each member of the commission shall, after consultation with the Secretary-General and subject to confirmation by the Council,⁴ designate a person to serve as its representative on the commission.

Rights of representatives pending confirmation⁴

Rule 12

A person designated as the representative of a member of the commission in accordance with rule 11 may, pending confirmation by the Council, participate in the work on the commission with the same rights as the other representatives on the commission.

Alternates⁴

Rule 13

1. Each member of the commission may, in consultation with the Secretary-General, designate an alternate representative to act in place of its representative at any meeting of the commission or, except as provided in paragraph 2 of this rule, of its subsidiary organs. When acting as representative, the alternate so designated shall have the same status as a representative, including the right to vote.

2. In the case of a subsidiary organ whose members are experts nominated by Governments serving in their individual capacity, if a member is unable to attend all or part of a session he may, with the consent of his Government and in consultation with the Secretary-General, designate an alternate to act in his place during his absence. Such an alternate shall have the same status as the expert serving as member on the subsidiary organ concerned, including the right to vote.

⁴ Not applicable to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which is composed of States whose representatives are appointed by Governments without consultation with the Secretary-General and without confirmation by the Council.

Advisers

Rule 14

The representative of a member of the commission may be accompanied by such advisers as may be required.

IV. OFFICERS

Election of officers

Rule 15

At the commencement of its first meeting of a regular session the commission shall elect, from among the representatives of its members, a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and such other officers as may be required.

Term of office

Rule 16

The officers of the commission shall, subject to rule 19, hold office until their successors are elected and shall be eligible for re-election.

Acting Chairman

Rule 17

1. If the Chairman finds it necessary to be absent during a meeting or any part thereof, he shall designate one of the Vice-Chairmen to take his place.
2. If the Chairman ceases to hold office pursuant to rule 19, the remaining officers shall designate one of the Vice-Chairmen to take his place until the election of a new Chairman.

Powers of the Acting Chairman

Rule 18

A Vice-Chairman acting as Chairman shall have the powers and duties of the Chairman.

Replacement of the Chairman or other officers

Rule 19

If the Chairman or any other officer is unable to carry out his functions or ceases to be a representative of a member of the commission or if the State of which he is a representative ceases to be a member of the commission he shall cease to hold such office and a new officer shall be elected for the unexpired term.

*Voting rights of the Chairman*⁵

Rule 20

The Chairman, or a Vice-Chairman acting as Chairman, may empower his alternate designated in accordance with rule 13 to participate in the proceedings and vote in the commission. In this case, the Chairman or Acting Chairman shall not participate in the proceedings except in his capacity as presiding officer of the commission.

V. SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

Establishment of committees and working groups

Rule 21

1. During a session, the commission, in consultation with the Secretary-General, may set up such committees or working groups composed of members of the commission as are deemed necessary and refer to them any questions on the agenda for study and report.

2. With the prior approval of the Council and in agreement with the Secretary-General such committees or working groups may be authorized to sit while the commission is not in session.

3. The members of committees or working groups of the commission shall be nominated by the Chairman, subject to approval of the commission.

Establishment of sub-commissions

Rule 22

1. The commission shall set up only such sub-commissions as may be authorized by the Council.

2. Unless otherwise determined by the Council, the commission shall determine the functions and composition of each sub-commission.

Officers

Rule 23

Unless the commission decides otherwise, its subsidiary organs shall elect their own officers.

⁵ Not applicable in the case of a subsidiary organ which is composed of experts serving in their individual capacity.

Rules of procedure

Rule 24

The rules of procedure of the commission shall apply to the proceedings of its subsidiary organs in so far as they are applicable.

VI. SECRETARIAT

Duties of the Secretary-General

Rule 25

1. The Secretary-General shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the commission. He may designate a member of the Secretariat to act as his representative.

2. He shall provide and direct the staff required by the commission and be responsible for all the arrangements that may be necessary for its meetings.

3. He shall keep the members of the commission informed of any questions that may be brought before it for consideration.

Duties of the Secretariat

Rule 26

The Secretariat shall:

- (a) Interpret speeches made at meetings;
- (b) Receive, translate and circulate documents;
- (c) Print, publish and circulate as appropriate the records of the sessions, the resolutions of the commission and the required documentation;
- (d) Have custody of the documents in the archives; and
- (e) Generally perform all other work that may be required.

Statements by the Secretariat

Rule 27

The Secretary-General or his representative may, subject to rule 43, make oral as well as written statements to the commission concerning any question under consideration.

Estimates of expenditure

Rule 28

1. Before a proposal involving the expenditure of United Nations funds is approved by the commission, the Secretary-General shall prepare and provide to the commission an estimate of the programme budget implications of implementing the proposal. The Chairman shall draw attention to that estimate and invite discussion on it when the proposal is considered by the commission.

2. Any programme budget proposal recommended by the commission to the Council for its approval must be stated in terms of the objectives to be achieved.

VII. LANGUAGES

Official and working languages

Rule 29

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish shall be the official languages, and English, French and Spanish the working languages of the commission.

Interpretation

Rule 30

1. Speeches made in an official language shall be interpreted into the other official languages.

2. A speaker may speak in a language other than an official language if he provides for interpretation into one of the official languages. Interpretation into the other official languages by the interpreters of the Secretariat may be based on the interpretation given in the first such language.

Languages of records

Rule 31

Records shall be drawn up in the working languages. A translation of the whole or part of any record into any of the other official languages shall be furnished if requested by a representative.

Languages of resolutions and other formal decisions

Rule 32

All resolutions, recommendations and other formal decisions of the commission shall be made available in the official languages.

VIII. RECORDS AND REPORTS

Sound recordings of meetings

Rule 33

Sound recordings of meetings of the commission shall be made and kept by the secretariat. Such recordings may also be made and kept of the meetings of committees, working groups and sub-commissions if so decided by the commission.

Summary records of meetings

Rule 34

No summary records of meetings of the commission or any subsidiary organs shall be provided unless these have been specifically authorized by the Council.

Records of public meetings

Rule 35

1. Summary records of the public meetings of the commission and its subsidiary organs, where authorized and required, shall be prepared by the Secretariat. They shall be distributed as soon as possible to all members of the commission or of the organ concerned, and to any other participants in the meeting, who may, within one week of their receipt, submit corrections to the Secretariat; in special circumstances, the presiding officer may, in consultation with the Secretary-General, extend the time for submitting corrections. Any disagreement concerning such corrections shall be decided by the presiding officer of the body to which the record relates, after consulting, where necessary, the sound recordings of the proceedings. Corrections will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued after the end of the session.

2. The summary records and the consolidated corrigendum thereto shall be distributed promptly to the Members of the United Nations and to the specialized agencies. On publication, these records may be consulted by the public.

Records of private meetings

Rule 36

The records of private meetings of the commission shall be distributed promptly to the members of the commission and to any other participants in these meetings. They shall be made available to other Members of the United Nations upon decision of the commission. They may be made public at such time and under such conditions as the commission may decide.

Reports to the Council

Rule 37

The commission shall submit to the Council a report, which shall normally not exceed thirty-two pages, on the work of each session containing a concise summary of recommendations and a statement of issues requiring action by the Council. It shall as far as practicable frame its recommendations and resolutions in the form of drafts for approval by the Council.

Communication of formal decisions and reports

Rule 38

As soon as possible, the text of the formal decisions and reports adopted by the commission shall be distributed to all members of the commission and to any other participants in the session. The printed text of such decisions and reports shall be distributed as soon as possible after the close of the session to the Members of the United Nations, to the specialized agencies, to the inter-governmental organizations referred to in rule 74 and to the concerned non-governmental organizations in category I or II or on the Roster.

IX. PUBLIC OR PRIVATE MEETINGS

General principle

Rule 39

Unless the commission decides otherwise its meetings shall be held in public.

X. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Quorum

Rule 40

A majority of the representatives of members of the commission shall constitute a quorum.

General powers of the Chairman

Rule 41

1. In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon him elsewhere by these rules, the Chairman shall declare the opening and closing of each

meeting of the commission, direct the discussions, ensure observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions. The Chairman, subject to these rules, shall have complete control of the proceedings of the commission and over the maintenance of order at its meetings. He shall rule on points of order. He may propose to the commission the closure of the list of speakers, a limitation on the time to be allowed to speakers and on the number of times the representative of each member may speak on an item, the adjournment or closure of the debate, and the suspension or adjournment of a meeting.

2. The Chairman, in the exercise of his functions, remains under the authority of the commission.

Points of order

Rule 42

1. During the discussion of any matter, a representative may at any time raise a point of order, which shall be decided immediately by the Chairman in accordance with these rules. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the Chairman. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote, and the ruling of the Chairman shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the members present and voting.

2. A representative may not, in raising a point of order, speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Speeches

Rule 43

1. No one may address the commission without having previously obtained the permission of the Chairman. Subject to rules 42, 45 and 48 to 50, the Chairman shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak.

2. Debate shall be confined to the question before the commission and the Chairman may call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.

3. The commission may limit the time allowed to speakers and the number of times the representative of each member may speak on any question; permission to speak on a motion to set such limits shall be accorded only to two representatives favouring and to two opposing such limits, after which the motion shall be put to the vote immediately. Interventions on procedural questions shall not exceed five minutes unless the commission decides otherwise. When debate is limited and a speaker exceeds the allotted time, the Chairman shall call him to order without delay.

Closing of list of speakers

Rule 44

During the course of a debate the Chairman may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the commission, declare the list closed. When there are no more speakers, the Chairman shall, with the consent of the commission, declare the debate closed. Such closure shall have the same effect as closure by decision of the commission.

Right of reply

Rule 45

The right of reply shall be accorded by the Chairman to the representative of any member who requests it. Representatives should attempt, in exercising this right, to be as brief as possible and preferably to deliver their statements at the end of the meeting at which this right is requested.

Congratulations

Rule 46

Congratulations to the newly elected officers shall be expressed only by the outgoing Chairman or a member of his delegation, or by a representative designated by the outgoing Chairman.

Condolences

Rule 47

Condolences shall be expressed solely by the Chairman on behalf of all members. The Chairman, with the agreement of the commission, may dispatch a message on behalf of all members of the commission.

Suspension or adjournment of the meeting

Rule 48

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may at any time move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. No discussion on such motions shall be permitted, and they shall be put to the vote immediately.

Adjournment of debate

Rule 49

A representative may at any time move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded only to two representatives favouring and to two opposing the adjournment, after which the motion shall be put to the vote immediately.

Closure of debate

Rule 50

A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified his wish to speak. Permission to speak on the motion shall be accorded only to two representatives opposing the closure, after which the motion shall be put to the vote immediately.

Order of motions

Rule 51

Subject to rule 42, the motions indicated below shall have precedence in the following order over all proposals or other motions before the meeting:

- (a) To suspend the meeting;
- (b) To adjourn the meeting;
- (c) To adjourn the debate on the item under discussion;
- (d) To close the debate on the item under discussion.

Submission of proposals and substantive amendments

Rule 52

Proposals and substantive amendments shall normally be submitted in writing to the Secretary-General. Unless the commission decides otherwise, proposals and substantive amendments shall be discussed or put to the vote no earlier than twenty-four hours after copies have been circulated to all members.

Withdrawal of proposals and motions

Rule 53

A proposal or a motion may be withdrawn by its sponsor at any time before voting on it has commenced, provided that it has not been amended. A proposal or a motion thus withdrawn may be reintroduced by any representative.

Decisions on competence

Rule 54

A motion calling for a decision on the competence of the commission to adopt a proposal submitted to it shall be put to the vote before a vote is taken on the proposal in question.

Reconsideration of proposals

Rule 55

When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same session unless the commission so decides. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider shall be accorded only to two representatives opposing the motion, after which it shall be put to the vote immediately.

XI. VOTING AND ELECTIONS

Voting rights

Rule 56

Each member of the commission shall have one vote.

Request for a vote

Rule 57

A proposal or motion before the commission for decision shall be voted upon if any member so requests. When no member requests a vote, the commission may adopt proposals or motions without a vote.

Majority required

Rule 58

1. Except as provided in rule 5(4) (ii), decisions of the commission shall be made by a majority of the members present and voting.

2. For the purpose of these rules, the phrase “members present and voting” means members casting an affirmative or negative vote. Members which abstain from voting are considered as not voting.

Method of voting

Rule 59

1. Except as provided in rule 66, the commission shall normally vote by show of hands, except that a representative may request a roll-call which shall be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the States represented on the commission, beginning with the State whose name is drawn by lot by the Chairman. The name of each member shall be called in all roll-calls, and its representative shall reply “yes”, “no” or “abstention”.

2. The vote of each member participating in any roll-call shall be inserted in the record.

Explanation of vote

Rule 60

Representatives may make brief statements consisting solely of explanation of their votes, before the voting has commenced or after the voting has been completed. The representative of a member sponsoring a proposal or motion shall not speak in explanation of vote thereon, except if it has been amended.

Conduct during voting

Rule 61

After the Chairman has announced the commencement of voting, no representative may interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual process of voting.

Division of proposals and amendments

Rule 62

Parts of a proposal or an amendment shall be voted on separately if a representative requests that the proposal be divided. Those parts of the proposal or the amendment which have been approved shall then be put to the vote as a whole; if all the operative parts of a proposal or an amendment have been rejected, the proposal or amendment shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.

Amendments

Rule 63

An amendment is a proposal that does no more than add to, delete from or revise part of another proposal.

Order of voting on amendments

Rule 64

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal shall be voted on first and then the amendment next furthest removed therefrom and so on until all the amendments have been put to the vote. Where, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted on.

Order of voting on proposals

Rule 65

1. If two or more proposals, other than amendments, relate to the same question, they shall, unless the commission decides otherwise, be voted on in the order in which they were submitted. The commission may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

2. A motion requiring that no decision be taken on a proposal shall have priority over that proposal.

Elections

Rule 66

All elections shall be held by secret ballot, unless, in the absence of any objection, the commission decides to proceed without taking a ballot on an agreed candidate or slate.

Rule 67

1. When one or more elective places are to be filled at one time under the same conditions, those candidates, in a number not exceeding the number of such places, obtaining in the first ballot a majority of the votes cast and the largest number of votes, shall be elected.

2. If the number of candidates obtaining such majority is less than the number of places to be filled, additional ballots shall be held to fill the remaining places.

Equally divided votes

Rule 68

If a vote is equally divided on a matter other than an election, the proposal or motion shall be regarded as rejected.

XII. PARTICIPATION OF NON-MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Participation of non-Member States

Rule 69

1. The commission shall invite any Member of the United Nations that is not a member of the commission, and any other State,⁶ to participate in its deliberations on any matter of particular concern to that State.

⁶ It is the understanding of the Economic and Social Council that a commission, in discharging its functions under this rule, will follow the practice of the General Assembly in implementing an all States clause, and that in all cases where it is advisable it will request the opinion of the Council before taking appropriate decisions.

2. A subsidiary organ of the commission shall invite any State⁶ that is not one of its own members⁷ to participate in its deliberations on any matter of particular concern to that State.

3. A State thus invited shall not have the right to vote, but may submit proposals which may be put to the vote on request of any member of the commission or of the subsidiary organ concerned.

Participation of national liberation movements

Rule 70

The commission may invite any national liberation movement recognized by or in accordance with resolutions of the General Assembly to participate, without the right to vote, in its deliberations on any matter of particular concern to that movement.

Participation of and consultation with specialized agencies⁸

Rule 71

In accordance with the agreements concluded between the United Nations and the specialized agencies, the specialized agencies shall be entitled:

(a) To be represented at meetings of the commission and its subsidiary organs;

(b) To participate, without the right to vote, through their representatives, in deliberations with respect to items of concern to them and to submit proposals regarding such items, which may be put to the vote at the request of any member of the commission or of the subsidiary organ concerned.

Rule 72

Before the Secretary-General places an item proposed by a specialized agency on the provisional agenda, he shall carry out with the agency concerned such preliminary consultation as may be necessary.

Rule 73

1. Where an item proposed for inclusion in the provisional agenda for a session or added to the agenda under rule 5 contains a proposal for new activities to be undertaken by the United Nations relating to matters that are of direct concern to one or more specialized agencies, the Secretary-General shall enter into consultation with the agencies concerned and report to the commission on the means of achieving a co-ordinated use of the resources of the respective agencies.

⁷ The expression "that is not one of its own members" does not apply to subsidiary organs composed of experts serving in their individual capacity.

⁸ See footnote 2.

2. When in the course of a meeting of the commission a proposal for new activities to be undertaken by the United Nations relates to matters that are of direct concern to one or more specialized agencies, the Secretary-General shall, after such consultation as may be possible with the representatives of the agencies concerned, draw the attention of the commission to the implications of the proposal.

3. Before deciding on proposals referred to above, the commission shall satisfy itself that adequate consultations have taken place with the agencies concerned.

Participation of other intergovernmental organizations

Rule 74

Representatives of intergovernmental organizations accorded permanent observer status by the General Assembly and of other intergovernmental organizations designated on a continuing basis by the Council or invited by the commission may participate, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the commission on questions within the scope of the activities of the organizations.

**XIII. CONSULTATION WITH AND REPRESENTATION
OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Representation

Rule 75

Non-governmental organizations in category I or II may designate authorized representatives to sit as observers at public meetings of the commission and its subsidiary organs. Those on the Roster may have representatives present at such meetings when matters within their field of competence are being discussed.

Consultation

Rule 76

1. The commission may consult with organizations in category I or II either directly or through a committee or committees established for the purpose. In all cases, such consultations may be arranged on the invitation of the commission or at the request of the organization.

2. On the recommendation of the Secretary-General and at the request of the commission, organizations on the Roster may also be heard by the commission.

XIV. AMENDMENT AND SUSPENSION OF RULES
OF PROCEDURE

Method of amendment

Rule 77

Only the Council may amend these rules.

Method of suspension

Rule 78

A rule of procedure may be temporarily suspended by the commission provided that such suspension shall not be inconsistent with any applicable decisions of the Council and provided that twenty-four hours' notice of the proposal for suspension has been given, which may be waived if no representative objects. Any such suspension shall be limited to a specific purpose and to a period required to achieve that purpose.