



WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO and WHO

STATUTES

Adopted by the First General Assembly of the WFD in Rome on 23 September 1951; and amended in Stockholm, Sweden, on 22-23 August 1963; in Warsaw, Poland, on 11 August 1967; in Espoo, Finland on 20-21 July 1987; in Tokyo, Japan, on 3 July 1991; in Vienna, Austria, on 8 July 1995; and in Montreal, Canada, on 18 July 2003.

Article 1 - ORGANISATION

Section 1 - NAME

Delegates convening in a general assembly preceding the World Congress of the Deaf (now known as the World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf), held in Rome, Italy, 19-23 September 1951, voted to unite all national organisations of Deaf people into one single international organisation called "THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF," hereafter referred to as WFD.

Section 2 - LOCATION

The location of the WFD General Secretariat may be determined by the WFD Board and ratified by the General Assembly (GA). The legal seat will follow the location of the General Secretariat.

Section 3 - FLAG

The flag of the WFD is white with the WFD symbol at its centre. On the upper left corner are the letters FMS and at the lower right corner WFD (initials in French and English, respectively). The symbol consists of three (3) small blue interlaced circles on a white background, surrounded by three (3) large blue concentric circles and five (5) pentacles (red, yellow, green, blue, and black) regularly arranged on the second large concentric circle. Two blue laurels surround the symbol.

Section 4 - LANGUAGES

The two means of communication for WFD are International Sign and written English. International Sign shall be used for communication at all meetings of WFD. Its uses are described below. English shall be used for correspondence, printed materials, interpreting, and voice translating at meetings of WFD.

Article 2 - AIMS

Section 1 - AIMS

In accordance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other general acts and recommendations of the UN and its specialised agencies, WFD develops its activities towards the goal of equalisation of opportunities and full participation in society by Deaf individuals. WFD shall, when necessary, use special, legal or administrative measures to ensure that Deaf people in every country have the right to preserve their own sign languages, organisations, and cultural and other activities.

WFD pursues the following ends:

- a) to promote the unification of national associations, federations and other organisations of and for Deaf people at both regional and international levels;
- b) to ensure that the government in each country observes all international declarations and recommendations on human rights and the rights of Deaf people and people with disabilities;
- c) to promote the creation and development of national organisations of Deaf people and organisations providing services to Deaf people where such organisations do not exist;
- d) to organise and stimulate the exchange of information and experiences among organisations of and for Deaf people and professionals specialising in the study of deafness;
- e) to provide technical aid and expert advice, either directly or indirectly, as necessary, to organisations of and for Deaf people upon request, after consultation with the governments involved;
- f) to disseminate scientific and legal materials about deafness and the current needs of Deaf people in publications and other media;
- g) to distribute and make UN documents available to all organisations and experts interested in deafness;
- h) to promote the coordination and conduct of research and studies in all fields of deafness, including other categories of hearing loss; and
- i) to facilitate the efforts of Deaf people to make contributions to cultural enrichment in every country.

Section 2 - DEFINITION

The term "Deaf" refers to any person who cannot hear, particularly those who use sign language as their natural language. National organisations shall be entitled to use their own preferred definition of deafness and sign language.

Section 3 - STATUS

WFD is an international non-governmental unidisability organisation.

Section 4 - RELATIONSHIPS

WFD shall develop and maintain official relations with the UN and its specialised agencies and organisations. WFD shall also cooperate with other international organisations promoting the interests of Deaf people, and international organisations representing people with disabilities.

Article 3 – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 - MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

WFD membership shall consist of the following categories:

- I Ordinary Members
- II Associate Members
- III International Members
- IV Honorary Members
- V Sponsoring Members
- VI Individual Members

Section 2 - ORDINARY MEMBERS

Only national organisations of Deaf people with a clear majority of Deaf voting members, a governing board with a majority of Deaf persons and goals similar to the above-described aims are eligible for admission to the Ordinary Membership category. These organisations will hereafter be referred to as Ordinary Members or OMs. The WFD Board must approve Ordinary Membership status.

Ordinary Membership is limited to one national organisation in each country. If two or more national organisations exist in any country and are unable to become united into a single organisation, WFD shall follow the document "WFD Role in OM Conflicts" to establish an appropriate procedure to determine which of the national organisations has the widest recognition among the Deaf population in that country.

If WFD doesn't receive contact from an OM for a period of three years, the Board can investigate the situation and make a recommendation to the GA regarding this organisation's membership.

Section 3 - ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Any national or regional organisation or institution which does not meet the criteria to become an OM, or cannot become an OM because there is already one in existence in their country, can apply for Associate Membership. Organisations in this category shall be called Associate Members or AMs. AMs must support the aims of WFD and must submit a letter in support of their application from their OM. If no OM exists in their country, they may be granted a special Associate Membership.

The WFD Board approves Associate Membership. AM status is maintained only as long as membership payments are up to date.

OMs are responsible for the recruitment of AMs in their country.

Section 4 - INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS

Organisations applying for International Membership must give evidence of their exclusively international objectives and information about their activities directed to promote the goals and objectives of WFD. These organisations shall be referred to as International Members.

The WFD Board approves International Membership.

Section 5 - HONORARY MEMBERS

Honorary membership may be conferred upon any person who has rendered important and outstanding international services to WFD. Honorary Membership falls into three categories:

- a) President Emeritus
The President Emeritus shall be proposed at a Board meeting for approval by the GA. There shall be only one President Emeritus at any time and the position can only be filled by a previous President of WFD. President Emeritus status should only be granted after long and dedicated service to WFD.
- b) Honorary Board Members

Honorary Board Members shall be proposed at a Board meeting for approval by the GA. Honorary Board Members have the right to participate in Board meetings and other WFD activities, with no voting status at the GA or Board meetings.

c) Honorary Members

This category of membership has the same standing as Individual Members albeit on a lifetime basis. The WFD Board and OMs may nominate any person to this status, which must be approved by the GA. Honorary Members shall receive all WFD information and have the same privileges as Individual Members free of charge.

Section 6 - INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Individuals desiring to support WFD and its activities may join as Individual Members upon payment of a fee. Such members are entitled to WFD information and other membership privileges as determined by the WFD Board, but shall have no floor or voting privileges.

The General Secretary approves Individual Membership.

Section 7 - SPONSORING MEMBERS

Any organisation or individual desiring to support the aims of WFD with a sum of money beyond a normal membership fee is considered a Sponsoring Member. Sponsoring Members receive WFD information and other Individual Membership privileges.

OMs shall encourage organisations and individuals in their countries to become a Sponsoring Member.

Article 4 - THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Section 1 - THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly (GA) shall consist of delegates representing OMs. Each OM whose membership fees are fully paid and current is allowed up to two (2) Deaf delegates at meetings of the GA.

Section 2 - MEETINGS

Ordinary meetings of the GA shall be held every four (4) years. Such meetings shall be called by the President and General Secretary at least twelve (12) months in advance. Their call shall be accompanied by a proposed Agenda. Proposals for inclusion in the Agenda must be received at least eight (8) months in advance. The final agenda with attached reports and other materials shall be sent to all OMs at least three (3) months in advance.

Extraordinary meetings may be called by the President and the General Secretary after consultation with other Board Members or at the request of a minimum of two-thirds (2/3) of the OMs. Such meetings shall require advance notice of at least three (3) months.

Delegates shall assume responsibility for their own travel and other expenses while attending Ordinary or Extraordinary meetings.

International Sign shall be used for communication within the GA. All delegates must assume responsibility for acquiring a working knowledge of this method of communication.

Section 3 - FUNCTIONS

The GA shall have the following functions:

- a) to consider and vote on all submitted recommendations, motions and proposals;
- b) to review and approve submitted reports on activities of WFD and plans for future activities;
- c) to review and give new directions for WFD;
- d) to take action on submitted audited financial reports;
- e) to elect the Board of WFD;
- e) to confer President Emeritus, Honorary Board Member and Honorary Membership upon deserving individuals.

Section 4 - VOTING

Each fully-paid and current OM is entitled to one (1) vote at meetings of the GA.

Voting may be by roll call, by show of hands, or, if requested by at least one (1) delegate, by secret ballot. All questions except proposals for amendments in the Statutes or for the dissolution of WFD may be decided by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, not including election results, the President shall re-open debate on a particular question and then call for a new vote from the GA. Should there be a second tied vote, the President may after consultation with other Board Members cast the deciding vote.

President Emeritus, Associate, International, Honorary, Individual and Sponsoring Members have no voting

rights at meetings of the GA. However, the President may allow such members or special guests floor privileges during any meeting.

Article 5 - THE BOARD

Section 1 - OFFICERS

The GA shall elect a President, Vice President and nine (9) Members, all from different countries. These Officers constitute an executive board, hereafter known as the Board. The recruitment and appointment of a person as the salaried General Secretary are described in Article 6.

Only OMs may submit nominations for office in the Board provided they agree to commit travel and maintenance support to enable such elected officers to participate in meetings of the Board and its standing committees.

The President shall preside over meetings of both the GA and the Board. The President shall represent WFD and may with the concurrence of the Board appoint another person to represent WFD at international or national meetings.

The Vice President shall preside over meetings of the GA and the Board whenever the President is unable to attend.

Board members shall serve as individuals, not as representatives for their respective national organisations. Members of the Board are elected for a four-year term, and may be re-elected.

The President or his/her duly appointed alternates and the General Secretary shall have the authority to sign agreements on behalf of the WFD.

The nine (9) Members shall perform various duties as assigned by the Board.

At all international meetings and conferences, the President, Vice President and Board Members shall be official representatives of WFD only, understanding that they are not also representing other organisations

Members of the Board shall have no voting privileges at meetings of the GA except in the event of a tied vote. Board members may not in any case vote during elections.

Section 2 - MEETINGS

The Board shall meet at least once a year or more often when requested by a minimum of five (5) Members of the Board. The President and the General Secretary shall jointly prepare materials and reports for the Board at least one (1) month before the date of each Board meeting.

The President Emeritus, Honorary Board Members and the General Secretary attend Board meetings as participants without voting power. Representatives of Regional Secretariats and Regional Cooperating Partners have the right to participate in Board meetings but likewise do not have voting power.

International Sign shall be used for communication within the Board.

Section 3 - FUNCTIONS

The Board reviews actions and makes decisions between meetings of the GA and implements policies approved by the GA. A copy of the minutes of Board meetings shall be sent to all OMs.

The Board has the authority to issue and revise Internal Rules within the limitations of the Statutes. A copy of the Internal Rules, including revisions, shall be sent to all OMs.

The Board reviews applications for Ordinary, Associate and International Membership.

The Board shall either at its meeting or by postal or electronic mail agree on a final agenda for meetings of the GA.

Upon the recommendations of the General Secretary, the Board shall determine membership fees which shall be announced to all Members.

Section 4 - MEMBER REPLACEMENT

In case of death or resignation of a Board member, or if a Board Member is absent from two consecutive meetings without apology or good reason, he or she may be replaced at the discretion of the Board. Should the

President die, retire or become incapacitated, he or she will automatically be succeeded by the Vice President.

Section 5 – VACANT SEATS

When less than nine (9) Board Members have been elected during the GA or a seat becomes vacant during a four-year term, the Board reserves the right to appoint individuals to the vacant seat(s). This may be done by co-opting appropriate known individuals, or by process of seeking nominations from OMs. The Board has the final decision in appointment to vacant seat(s).

Article 6 - GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Section 1 - WFD MANAGEMENT

Following procedures spelled out in the Internal Rules, the Board shall have authority to recruit and appoint an appropriately qualified person to the salaried General Secretary position. The General Secretary is responsible to the Board and works under the direction of the President.

The General Secretary administers and coordinates implementation of decisions made by the WFD GA and the Board. He or she organises and attends all Board meetings, prepares budgets, reports, and other documents for WFD meetings, and maintains correspondence with Board Members, interested individuals, organisations and governments, and the UN and its specialised agencies. The General Secretary may represent WFD at international meetings and conferences, and is responsible for supervision of WFD staff members.

The General Secretary has no voting privileges at meetings of the GA or Board.

Other duties of the General Secretary are spelled out in the Internal Rules. Should the position of General Secretary become vacant, the Board may immediately recruit and appoint a replacement.

Section 2 - MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The President, Vice President, General Secretary and two Members, elected from and by the Board, constitute a Management Committee (MC). The MC is responsible to give direction to the General Secretary in implementing decisions of the Board, and to make recommendations and proposals to the Board.

The MC cannot function as a substitute for the Board.

The MC shall meet as often as requested by the President and the General Secretary. International Sign shall be used for communication within the MC.

Section 3 – OTHER COMMITTEES

The Board may establish any other committees deemed necessary at any time and for any period of time. Each committee established shall have terms of reference to guide their work.

Section 4 - MINUTES

The minutes of Board meetings shall be drafted and sent to members of the Board within 1 (one) month after each meeting. Within thirty (30) days members shall share their reactions with the General Secretary. If there are no substantial revisions to the original draft or if the General Secretary does not hear from Board Members, the General Secretary may assume the minutes have become an official document.

Section 5 - REGIONAL SECRETARIATS

The Board may, in response to at least three (3) OMs in a geographical region, establish a regional secretariat. Such OMs must agree to provide financial and moral support to the activities of their regional secretariat.

An official name for the regional secretariat is subject to Board approval. The administrator of a regional secretariat shall be called the Regional Director.

The aims and activities of each Regional Secretariat must be compatible with those outlined in Article 2:1 of the WFD Statutes.

All Regional Secretariats shall cooperate with and report to the General Secretariat. In case of mismanagement, the General Secretariat may after consultation with the Board request the sponsoring OMs to appoint a new person as Regional Director.

Section 6 – WFD YOUTH SECTION

The President of the WFD Youth Section (WFDYS) shall have the right to participate in WFD Board meetings, with no voting privileges.

Article 7 - EXPERTS

Section 1 - EXPERTS

Professionals working with Deaf persons or the promotion of Deaf culture who have been recommended by OMs and appointed by the Board, shall for a four-year period serve as a panel of experts to the Board and the General Secretary. These distinguished specialists shall be called Experts. Their disciplines are to be determined by the Board.

The Experts work under the supervision of the General Secretary. Upon request, they shall submit recommendations on current issues to the Board for action. They shall also carry out research projects or other studies as requested by the Board or the General Secretary.

The General Secretary shall co-ordinate assignments and progress reports related to the activities of Experts. Whenever necessary, the General Secretary shall be authorised to prepare an agreement on financial support with any OM sponsoring an Experts.

Article 8 - WORLD CONGRESS OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

Section 1 - WORLD CONGRESS OF THE WFD

The World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf shall consist of meetings of the GA and scientific commissions, as well as other meetings. The World Congress shall be convened every four (4) years.

Only an OM may make a bid to host the World Congress of the WFD. Each bid shall be reviewed and voted upon by the GA. The OM hosting the Congress shall assume full responsibility for management of the Congress, following provisions outlined in the Internal Rules.

OMs shall be responsible for arranging interpreting services for their delegates at the Congress. International Sign interpretation will also be provided by the Congress host.

Section 2 - COOPERATION WITH THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

The organisers of the World Congress of the WFD shall cooperate closely with the General Secretary and shall follow stipulated guidelines provided in the Internal Rules. Presidents of commissions work under supervision of the General Secretary.

Section 3 - INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

International conferences between World Congresses may be organised by an Ordinary, International, Associate or Sponsoring Member. Such bids shall be reviewed and voted upon by the Board provided the bids have been approved by the appropriate OM.

Experts, OMs, professionals working with Deaf persons, government officials and representatives of international and national organisations interested in deafness-related issues shall be invited to the International Conference.

The organisers of the International Conference shall cooperate closely with the General Secretary and shall follow provisions of the Internal Rules.

At its conclusion, the International Conference shall submit recommendations to the Board for approval.

Section 4 - THEME

The organisers hosting either the World Congress or an international conference shall submit a proposed theme to the Board for approval.

Section 5 – OTHER INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Any Member may, with approval of the OM, request the Board to provide moral support to organise an international seminar. The Member hosting such a seminar may use the name of WFD in its announcement. Copies of the seminar proceedings shall be forwarded to the General Secretariat.

Article 9 - FINANCES

Section 1 - SOURCES OF FUNDS

Sources for financial funding of WFD shall be:

- a) Regular membership fees;
- b) Contributions, donations and government or foundation grants;
- c) Revenues from the sale of publications, and other properties;
- d) Percentage of registration fees from World Congresses, exact percentage to be determined by the Board according to the Internal Rules;
- e) Other revenues.

Membership fees shall be determined by the Board at its first meeting after election. Each Member is required

to pay the annual fee by the date specified in the Internal Rules in order to remain a member in good standing.

Members failing to pay regular fees without any valid reason shall lose all privileges delineated in the Statutes and Internal Rules and may by decision of the GA be expelled from the Federation. Members desiring to withdraw from WFD shall notify the Board by registered letter at least six (6) months in advance.

Section 2 – FINANCIAL RECORDS AND AUDITING

The Board shall appoint a certified public accountant as auditor of WFD. This auditor shall examine all financial records and accounts and prepare a report to be attached to the final agenda for meetings of the GA.

The General Secretary shall ensure that all financial records are carefully maintained, following accepted accounting practices. The General Secretary shall regularly inform the Board of the financial position of WFD.

Article 10 - AMENDMENT ENFORCEMENT AND DISSOLUTION

Section 1 - AMENDMENT

The GA may review and take action on proposed amendments to the current Statutes only at an Ordinary Meeting. Any proposal for amendments to the Statutes must be submitted to the Board at least six (6) months before the Ordinary Meeting of the GA. After a careful review by the Board, the General Secretary shall report all proposed amendments along with the Board's recommendations to the OMs at least three (3) months before the Ordinary Meeting of the GA. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is required by the GA for approval of proposed amendments.

Section 2 – ENFORCEMENT

These Statutes, including any and all amendments, shall take effect immediately upon approval by the GA.

Section 3 – DISSOLUTION

Proposals regarding the dissolution of WFD shall be submitted by either the Board or the majority of OMs at the Ordinary Meeting of the GA.

Voting on such a proposal shall be taken at an Extraordinary Meeting of the GA or, if at least half of the total Ordinary Membership is unable to attend such a meeting, by registered or certified mail. Approval for dissolution shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote.

In the event of dissolution, WFD shall liquidate all its funds and other assets in accordance with instructions from the GA.

Article 11 – ARCHIVES

Section 1 – LOCATION

Storage of WFD archives, legal documents, and memorabilia shall be maintained in the office of the General Secretariat, or at any other place to be determined by the Board.

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