

## Procedural Motions – what are they and how do they work?

Conference has Standing Orders for the Conduct of Conference (SOCC) which allow customary procedures of debate in plenary sessions. The Chair is responsible for interpreting procedures and Standing Orders, subject to the right of any member present to appeal against the Chair's ruling to Standing Orders Committee (SOC). Each main motion (or amendment to it) is proposed by someone who may make a speech. Motions on the Final Agenda are the property of Conference and cannot be withdrawn without Conference consent.

Members can move customary 'procedural motions' during the debate, usually on a 'Point of Order' (raise card and say 'Point of Order' to the Chair). If you do move one, then you may have to give a short speech explaining why. If it is an appropriate procedural motion, then someone else in the plenary will often second it. The Chair does not have to accept the motion. For some procedural motions there is a debate, others are put at once to the vote. Procedural motions take priority over any other business, unless someone is still speaking or if a vote is in progress (unless it relates to that vote).

Some procedural motions do not curtail debate (this is not a full list).

The proposer says, **"I move..**

- **"...that the motion (or amendment) be taken in parts."**  
A motion or amendment may be split into two or more parts to be debated on and/or voted on separately. The proposer of the procedural motion must make it clear where the motion or amendment is being split, and each part must make a coherent, in order motion or amendment by itself.
- **"...that Standing Orders Section A be suspended."**  
The only suspension provided for in Standing Orders is suspension of Section A, to allow discussion of Emergency Motions and amendments to them. Whilst Standing Orders is suspended, any motion requires a two-thirds majority.
- **"... that Conference has no confidence in the Chair."**
- **"... a challenge to the Chair's ruling"**  
You believe the Chair's decision on something was wrong.
- **"... that Conference extend plenary time by ... minutes."**  
This allows a plenary session to be extended by up to 15 minutes (once).
- **"... that the motion not be considered."**  
This has to be stated quickly before debate even begins, as soon as the motion is proposed, and requires a two-thirds majority.

Procedural motions that do curtail the debate cannot be accepted if there have been less than two speeches in favour and there are still members wishing to speak in favour of the motion or amendment, or if there have been less than two speeches against and there are still members wishing to speak against the motion or amendment. Procedural motions to curtail debate do not require any speeches, though speeches may be taken at the Chair's discretion, and a vote is taken straight after it has been seconded.

The proposer says, **"I move..**

- **"... that the motion be committed to ...."**  
Where the motion falls within the province of a person or body other than Conference, Conference may "commit" the business to the relevant person, meeting or committee for them to attend to. A report should then come back to Conference to say what was done about it. Conference can even set up a new working group to "commit" to, where the constitution allows for such a group.
- **"... that the motion (or amendment) not be put."**  
This prevents the motion (or amendment) being put to a vote, e.g. because there is not enough information. If a motion (or amendment) goes to a vote and falls, it cannot come back to the next Conference. If not put, it can come back to the next Conference.

- **"That Conference move to next business."**  
This prevents a vote being taken and leaves the motion 'in limbo', so that it can then be brought back to another Conference.
- **"That the motion be referred back."**  
You think that debate should cease and the motion be referred back to the proposers to re-write and bring back to another Conference.
- **"That Conference move to a vote."**  
You think further debate is pointless and Conference should just get on with voting.
- **"That the debate be adjourned to...."**  
You want the current debate adjourned to later in the conference.

Another motion that can be taken under customary rules is to amend a motion that was not in the First Agenda (and was only in the Final Agenda), from the floor. **"I move to amend the amendment..."** or **"I move to amend the motion to approve the report of..."** This needs a seconder. If the proposer accepts the amendment, then the amendment from the floor is assumed to have been approved, and it is not debated and voted on.

Some procedural motions can be amended from the floor. This is where they commit or adjourn, and amendments can be brought to the specified body, person or time. Also to taking in parts, where the parts can be amended, and to a motion to extend the plenary (although not beyond 15 minutes) the time for the extension can be amended.