



ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית  
World Zionist Organization

# TOWARD THE 37<sup>th</sup> ZIONIST CONGRESS

**The Preparation and Running of Congress Elections**

Prepared by:  
**Fern Braniss, Adv., Legal Advisor**

World Zionist Organization  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

1. DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF DELEGATES FROM EACH ELECTORAL AREA
2. THE AREA ELECTION COMMITTEE
3. COMPULSORY ELECTIONS
4. ELECTION METHOD
5. THE DATE FOR DETERMINING THE ELECTION METHOD
6. ELECTION REGULATIONS
7. THE RIGHT TO VOTE
8. THE REGISTER OF VOTERS (VOTERS' LIST)
9. SUBMISSION OF NOMINATION LISTS (SLATES) OR PERSONAL CANDIDATES
10. WIZO MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF JEWISH AND ZIONIST INTERNATIONAL BODIES – RIGHT TO VOTE
11. THE ELECTION DATE
12. PREPARATIONS PRECEDING A "100% ELECTORAL AGREEMENT"
13. PRECONDITIONS FOR THE VALIDATION OF UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS (100% AGREEMENT)
14. DETERMINATION OF ELECTION RESULTS
15. LODGING OF COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS
16. THE SEQUENCE OF THE FIRST STAGES OF THE ELECTION PREPARATIONS

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the seventh and revised edition of the booklet and its aim is to inform, once again, the members of the World Zionist Organization, and in particular the Zionist Federations, in clear and simple, rather than professional legal language, of all the steps to be taken at the various stages of the preparations and the implementation of the elections to the Zionist Congress.

The Zionist General Council has decided to convene the 37<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress in Jerusalem in October, 2015 and therefore it is time to start the preparations, if they haven't begun already, on all levels and in particular in the electoral areas themselves.

The purpose of this booklet is to give a general picture of the whole election process. We shall also let you have the text of the various legal provisions pertaining to the Congress elections, in particular:

- The Rules for the Election of Delegates to Congress (1976) (referred to in this booklet as "The Election Rules")
- Model Rules Regarding Register of Voters
- Model Rules for Indirect Elections and Postal Vote

The Zionist Supreme Court is adamant in its demand that the delegations to the Congress be duly comprised and approved two weeks prior to the opening of the Congress.

### **1. DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF DELEGATES FROM EACH ELECTORAL AREA**

The number of Congress delegates from Israel and the United States is set down in the Constitution – 38% and 29% respectively of the entire number of elected delegates. However, a special committee called "The Committee for Determining the Number of Delegates to Congress" has already been convened in accordance with Article 18 of the Constitution to decide how to distribute the remaining 33% of the Congress seats. In other words, this Committee decides how many delegates each electoral area (country) receives.

A Federation, feeling aggrieved by the decision of the Committee, may lodge an appeal with the Zionist Supreme Court within one month after receiving information on the number of delegates due to it.

The Committee is obliged to take into consideration, prior to making its decision, the size of the Jewish population and the Zionist achievements of each country. Amongst other things, the number of members of the Zionist Federation is examined, as well as the number of olim from that area, the quality of Jewish and Zionist education, and the contributions to the National Funds (Regulation 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Constitution). Of course, the size of the country's delegation to the previous Congress is also taken into consideration.

The Committee is scheduled to finish its work in January, 2015.

## 2. **THE AREA ELECTION COMMITTEE**

The first official step generally taken in preparing Congress elections is the formation of the Area Election Committee (AEC). The AEC for elections to the 37th Congress must be set up no later than 12 months prior to the Congress, that is, by the third week of October, 2014.

The Executive of the Federation may serve as the AEC in countries where all the organizations and groups active in the Zionist movement are represented on the Federation's Executive. In this case, there is no need to form a separate Committee. The Executive of the Federation will always serve as the AEC in countries represented by only one delegate at the previous Congress. If not all parties and organizations are represented on the Federation's Executive or if the Federation prefers that the election be run by a special committee, then the AEC must be set up in accordance with Rule 2 of the Election Rules. This rule states that the AEC must reflect the composition of the country's delegation to the preceding Congress.

## 3. **COMPULSORY ELECTIONS**

Voting elections are obligatory.

The one exception from obligatory voting elections allowed in the past and reinstated by the Zionist General Council in June 2009 is uncontested elections (100% agreement) which are viewed as elections for all intents and purposes (see sections 12 and 13 below). This means that only if all the groups and parties (or individuals, in countries where elections are on a personal basis) in a certain electoral area (country) who are entitled to put up a nominations list (slate) of candidates and wish to do so, agree without exception on a united list, instead of putting the list up for election, then these "uncontested elections" are deemed valid.

## 4. **ELECTION METHOD**

In the past, elections were held around the Zionist world in accordance with rigid and unified election rules which allowed no deviation. The Constitution of the World Zionist Organization, enacted in 1960, radically changed the situation, as set down (in Article 19) that every electoral area shall determine the method of choosing its delegates to Congress, provided the method be "consistent with generally accepted democratic principles". This freedom was somewhat limited by the promulgation of the "Rules of the Election of Delegates to the Zionist Congress (1976) (hereafter: "Election Rules"), which regulate quite a flexible framework within which each electoral area can determine a suitable method.

In contradistinction to the past, these Rules are not rigid and uniform. They offer a variety of alternatives. For example elections can be by ballot box or by postal vote or even by internet, under certain conditions (or a combination of these methods). Elections may be direct or indirect (an Electoral College system). They can be proportional, on a personal basis or by nomination lists. On the other hand, election procedures outside this framework are not permissible unless such deviation is expressly approved by the Central Elections Board.

## 5) **THE DATE FOR DETERMINING THE ELECTION METHOD**

The AEC must determine the election method no later than six months before the opening of Congress, that is, until the third week of April, 2015. The factors which influence the choice of method are local conditions, political tradition and the experiences of past Congress elections.

The Election Rules clearly state that indirect elections (an Electoral College system) provided that the electors are democratically elected and a postal vote are acceptable election methods (Rule 13). The Zionist Supreme Court has even pointed out in several of its decisions that in certain circumstances, a postal vote is preferable to a ballot box vote. Voting elections over the internet have been approved in the past by the Central Elections Board, under certain conditions, i.e. that all the necessary security measures for registration and voting are in place.

In any case, rules passed by an Area Election Committee for indirect elections or for a postal vote or an internet vote must be submitted to the Central Elections Board in Jerusalem for approval. However, the Central Elections Board issued Model Rules for indirect elections and for a postal vote, in order to save time and assist the Area Election Committees. If the Area Election Committee decides to use the Model Rules, then there is no need for special approval for the Central Elections Board. These Model Rules will be sent out to interested parties in the near future.

The elections to the Convention of a Zionist Federation may serve as the basis for the Congress representation of an election area and there is no need to conduct special elections to the Congress, provided the following conditions are fulfilled: the elections to the Convention must have been democratic and general and they must have taken place at a reasonable time and no later than three months before the Congress. That is to say, one cannot rely, for example, on elections that were held two or three years before the Congress, or on the composition of a Convention which had been the result of nominations, or the figures of a membership drive rather than democratic elections with voting.

If the elections to the Convention are used as the basis for the representation to Congress, this fact that this is the election method must be made public ahead of time.

## 6) **ELECTION REGULATIONS**

Each Area Election Committee is obliged, within the framework of the Election Rules, to issue "Election Regulations" for that country. These regulations must be detailed and concrete. They must be published no later than two months prior to the date set for elections in that country.

The Election Regulations are, as it were, the concrete and specific applications to a certain electoral area of the general Election Rules valid and obligatory for all countries.

The following are the items which must be included in the Election Regulations:

- ⇒ a description of the election method;
- ⇒ the date for the submission of nomination lists (slates) or nomination of candidates;
- ⇒ the election date;
- ⇒ the location of the polling stations (in the case of a ballot box election);
- ⇒ the number of signatures necessary to support a nomination list (slate), which was not represented in that electoral area at the last Congress;
- ⇒ the method of calculating the election results.

In short, the Election Regulations must include comprehensive information for Federation members on their rights and obligations and how and when they may fulfill these rights and obligations regarding Congress elections.

## **7) THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

Every member of the Federation who has reached the age of 18 by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and has paid his dues for the period set by the Federation has the right to vote at and be elected to the Zionist Congress.

An additional condition of the right to vote, which cannot be overlooked, is registration in the Register of Voters.

Every member of a Federation has the right to vote and is eligible to be elected, no matter whether he/she is a direct member or affiliated with the Federation through the intermediary of a Zionist party or other organization.

## **8) THE REGISTER OF VOTERS (VOTERS' LIST)**

A preliminary condition for elections, including "100% Agreement", is the compiling of a "Register of Voters". The registration of a voter in the Register of Voters is also a precondition of the individual's right to vote, as mentioned above.

The Area Election Committee must issue regulations regarding the drawing up of the Register of Voters and its use, in accordance with the Model Rules passed by the Central Elections Board. These will be sent out to the Federations. Without going into too much detail, the following are the principle guidelines for the Register of Voters.

The Register of Voters is drawn up on the basis of the membership list of the Zionist Federation. This includes the names and addresses of veteran members and new members who have joined the Federation during the Membership Campaign held prior to the Congress. Every member must have paid his/her membership dues for the period and at the rate set by the Federation.

New members have the right to vote in Congress elections if they joined prior to the date set by the Federation. The Register of Voters includes, of course, those members who have joined the Federation directly and those that are Federation members by virtue of their membership in a constituent party or organization belonging to the Federation. In

either case, dues must be paid either directly or through the constituent party or organization.

The Regulations regarding the Register of Voters must contain the procedure and the dates for reviewing the Register, lodging appeals regarding the appearance or non-appearance of certain names and the correction process following such an appeal. The general rule is that each voter is given the opportunity to examine and contest the list and that appropriate time be allotted for the correction of the Register.

It is important to note that the Zionist Supreme Court and the Central Elections Board approved an additional method for the registration of voters, prior to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress (December 1997). This is the method that has been used by the American Zionist Movement, known as pre-registration. Details of this method are available upon request.

#### **9) SUBMISSION OF NOMINATION LISTS (SLATES) OR PERSONAL CANDIDATES**

The following information regarding the submission of nomination lists, which is the norm, applies as well to the submission of personal candidature in countries that elect only one delegate or in countries which have adopted the method of personal elections.

As a matter of principle, someone who is entitled to vote is also eligible for election, provided that he/she has fulfilled his/her obligations to the Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal and the Keren Kayemet Le'Yisrael (see Regulation 5 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Constitution).

As far as the support (endorsement) of slates or personal candidatures is concerned, this obligation does not apply to those slates or candidates in the electoral area concerned who have been represented at the last Congress by one delegate at least. Only those who have not achieved such a representation or new slates or candidates, have to collect a number of supporting signatures in accordance with the following provisions.

The number is set down in Rule 10 of the Election Rules, and depends solely on the overall membership of the Zionist Federation, as described below:

<u>Number of Persons Entitled to Vote</u>	<u>Number of Required Signatures</u>
Up to 1,000	50
Between 1,000 and 10,000	100
Between 10,000 and 100,000	300
Between 100,000 and 250,000	500
Above 250,000	A number to be determined by the Area Election committee

No person may sign more than one slate.

Insofar as supporting signatures are required – that is to say, in all cases except "veteran" nomination lists or candidates who had represented the electoral area concerned at the previous Congress – there is no difference between Zionist parties, including territorial branches of Zionist World Unions, and non-political organizations. The same number of signatures is required from everyone.

It is important to note that the Zionist General Council decided in June 2001, as a Constitutional amendment, that at least one out of every four candidates on any nomination list must be between the ages of 18 and 30. This was decided in order to ensure that at least 25% of the delegates to the Congress will be from this age group.

In addition, the Zionist General Council decided in June 2011, also as a Constitutional amendment, to add another condition for nomination lists, i.e. that at least 30% of the candidates to Congress must be women. This condition may overlap with the condition mentioned above regarding the representation of young people.

#### **10) WIZO MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF JEWISH AND ZIONIST INTERNATIONAL BODIES – RIGHT TO VOTE**

WIZO – The Women's International Zionist Organization – under its agreement with the WZO from 1964, may not submit a nomination list of its own candidates. WIZO leadership, as distinct from regular WIZO members, may not appear on any of the nomination lists of candidates. Every member of WIZO may vote in Congress elections, like any other Federation member, if the aforementioned general requirements have been fulfilled.

The International Jewish and Zionist Bodies (the Sephardi Federation, Maccabi, B'nai Brith International, the student organizations, The World Conference of Synagogues and Kehillot, the World Council of Synagogues, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Na'amat and World Emunah) do not put up their own lists in Congress elections. Members of such organizations, if they are members in good standing of the Federation, have the right to vote in Congress elections.

WIZO and the International Bodies are represented at Congress by a delegation whose number is in accordance with various agreements reached with the WZO Executive over the years and approved by the Zionist General Council.

#### **11) THE ELECTION DATE**

The Rules, as amended by the Zionist General Council in 1991, state that elections shall be held no later than three months before the opening of the Congress.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress is scheduled to take place in the third week of October, 2015. Therefore, Congress elections should be held not later than the third week of July, 2015, but if an electoral area wishes and is prepared to do so, it may conduct them even at an earlier date.



According to the Election Rules, the election date must be published at least six weeks in advance. It is strongly advised that a longer period be allotted between the announcement of the date and the actual elections, in order for the elections to be properly prepared.

## **12) PREPARATIONS PRECEDING A "100% ELECTORAL AGREEMENT"**

Extra emphasis must be put on the fact that only if a long list of preliminary conditions detailed above are fulfilled, can a "100% electoral agreement" take the place of voting elections and be recognized and approved by the Zionist Supreme Court.

Following are the necessary preliminary conditions:

- ⇒ An Area Election Committee has been duly set up;
- ⇒ A voters' list (Register of Voters) has been compiled based on the Zionist Federation's list of members.
- ⇒ The place and time for the submission of nomination lists of candidates (slates) has been announced and has been given proper advertisement.

If, after all these steps have been taken, only one list of candidates has been submitted (as a result of an agreement between all the parties) and no competing list is submitted, then the elections are deemed uncontested and the single united list is considered elected.

In the past, those that wanted to avoid elections were often negligent in making the proper preparations, particularly by not preparing a voters' list. This neglect led to the situation where it became technically impossible to hold elections. An "agreement" reached by these coercive means is invalid and the said Federation runs the real risk that **it will not be represented at Congress.**

It must be added that although uncontested elections are legal and valid under certain conditions, as explained above in detail, a voting election is always preferable. Only voting elections suitably reflect the democratic nature of the Zionist movement.

## **13) PRECONDITIONS FOR THE VALIDATION OF UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS (100% AGREEMENT)**

Once again, it must be pointed out and emphasized that there must be agreement amongst all. The 100% agreement factor necessary for the validity of uncontested elections can be explained in the following concrete example:

In an imaginary country, there are three Zionist parties and they have come to an agreement to distribute the eight seats allotted to this electoral area in the following way: Party A will send three delegates; Party B three delegates and Party C two delegates. The Area Election Committee was presented with this "united list" composed in accordance with this key. However, prior to the final date for the submission of nomination lists of candidates, a new group, which did not exist at the time of the previous Congress and was therefore not represented, submitted its own list, which is in competition with the "united list". If this new list has been supported by the required number of signatures of those with voting rights (see Section 9 above) then the agreement made by the three veteran parties is no longer valid, as it is no longer a 100% agreement amongst all parties or groups wishing to be represented at Congress. In this case, elections must be held, despite the will of the great majority to reach an agreement and to avoid voting. In other words, a

100% electoral agreement will be deemed valid only if no minority capable of putting up a valid slate signed by the requisite number of voters exists.

#### **14) DETERMINATION OF ELECTION RESULTS**

Rules 17 and 18 of the Election Rules lay down how to compute the results of the voting. The principle is that the total of votes cast is to be divided by the number of delegates due to the electoral area concerned and each list receives as many seats as the "election quota" be contained in the number of votes cast for the list. Even a list that did not reach the election quota may under certain circumstances receive a seat from the "remaining votes". Similar provisions apply to electoral areas in which personal candidatures rather than party slates are submitted.

However, some countries may apply another method for computing the election results, especially if it is customary in local parliamentary elections.

In any case, it is necessary that the Election Regulations include detailed provisions regarding the method for the determination of the election results because different systems sometimes yield different results and any lack of clarity in this respect is likely to produce unnecessary problems and conflicts.

#### **15) LODGING OF COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

This booklet will not deal in detail with the various provisions regarding the lodging of complaints and appeals, as in many countries there will be no need to resort to these provisions. Moreover, the purpose of this booklet is to provide precise general information regarding the preparations necessary for Congress elections, especially in the preliminary stages. Therefore, several of the principal provisions will suffice.

As is well known, the Zionist Supreme Court examines the election procedure of all countries and even those where no appeals were lodged against election results. The Court is entitled to confirm, annul or vary the election results as reported to the Court by the AEC. However, even in the preliminary stages of the preparation, there is a set framework for the lodging of complaints and appeals. Whoever feels himself/herself prejudiced or injured by the decisions of the AEC may turn to one or more of the various instances for remedy – the local Zionist Court (if it exists), the Attorney of the WZO, the Central Elections Board or ultimately, the Zionist Supreme Court – depending on the appropriate provision in the Election Rules, especially Rules 24 and 26, and other enactments. These will be distributed in time.

However, it should already be mentioned here that it was decided by the Zionist General Council in 1991, to change the provisions for appeals against the conduct or results of Congress elections so that now such appeals must reach the Secretariat of the Zionist Supreme Court no later than three weeks (21 days) from the date the elections results are published.

**16) THE SEQUENCE OF THE FIRST STAGES OF THE ELECTION PREPARATIONS**

The first step in preparations for Congress elections is the establishment of the Area Election Committee (AEC), (see Sec. 2 of this booklet), which should have been set up no later than twelve months before the opening of the Congress, that is, by the third week in October, 2014. If the Executive of the Federation shall serve as the AEC, the decision to this effect, too, should be taken within the above time limit. The AEC may be set up even before the completion of a Membership Drive.

The second stage is the determination of the election method, (see Sec. 4 of this booklet), which should take place no later than six months before the opening of the Congress, i.e. by the third week of April, 2015. If possible, this step should be taken even before the deadline, in particular if there is reason to assume that an appeal will be lodged against the decision with the Central Elections Board – which may be done within two weeks. The CEB's decision may be appealed again to the Zionist Supreme Court, again within two weeks.

The third stage, which of course may be taken only after the completion of the Membership Drive – is a special drive was held prior to the Congress election – is the compilation of the Register of Voters (see Sec. 8 of this booklet).