

# INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMISSION

Spring 2025

# MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

**PRIOR SESSION:**  
**SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION**  
**(2025)**

- In accordance with resolution [79/121](#) of 4 December 2024, the Commission held its [seventy-sixth session](#) at the United Nations Office in Geneva (the Palais des Nations), in conference room XXI.
- As a consequence of the ongoing financial crisis facing the UN, the annual session of the Commission was reduced to five weeks and took place from 28 April to 30 May 2025.
- [Documents](#) | [Daily Bulletin](#)
- [2025 Annual Report](#) (final version)



## LOGISTICS

- **Rules of Procedure:** since the Commission is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, unless the Assembly or Commission decide otherwise, the Commission's proceedings are governed by the [Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly](#) relating to the procedure of committees (see Rules 60 and 96 to 133).
- **Agenda:** the Secretariat prepares a provisional agenda for the Commission that is adopted at the beginning of each session.
  - **The agenda is separate from the programme of work**, which may include more topics than those included on the agenda. For instance, a topic may be on the programme of work but not the agenda during the period of time between concluding the first reading and beginning the second reading.
  - The agenda also does not reflect the order in which topics are addressed.
- **Language:** the official languages of the Commission are those of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish).
  - **In practice**, this means the UN provides translation of official Commission meetings and documents in all the official languages.
- **Quorum for opening a meeting:** one quarter of the Commission's members.
- **Quorum for decision making:** a majority of the Commission's members.
- **Voting:** the Commission should take every effort to reach a consensus, but if this is not possible in the time available, a vote will be taken (see Rules 124 to 133).

- **Statute, Article 12:** originally provided that the Commission would meet at the UN Headquarters in New York, with the ability to hold meetings at other places after consultation with the Secretary-General.
  - However, from 1950 to 1955, the Commission decided to hold its sessions in Geneva.
  - Afterward, the Article 12 was amended to provide for the Commission to meet in Geneva instead of New York.
- The Commission has held all its sessions in Geneva, except for:
  - **1949:** the 1st session was held in New York (at Lake Success);
  - **1954:** the 6th session was held at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris;
  - **1966:** the second half of the 17th session was held in Monaco;
  - **1998:** the second half of the 50th session was held in New York.
  - **2018:** the first half of the 70th session was held in New York.



LOCATION

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There is no statutory provision concerning dividing the Commission's annual session into two parts.

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Traditionally, the Commission held a single session, with the exception of the seventeenth session which was held in Geneva and Monaco in 1965 and 1966.

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In 1992, the Commission considered dividing its annual session into two parts but concluded there was not yet enough support.

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In 1996, the Commission returned to the question and decided to hold a split session as an experiment in 1998, with the first session held in New York and the second in Geneva.

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The Commission concluded that a split session was more efficient and effective, and that the positive results outweighed any resulting cost increases.

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During the split, the Commission prepares commentaries on the texts adopted during the first part of the session, and the Secretariat prepares translations.

SPLIT SESSIONS

## DURATION OF THE SESSION

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The Statute does not specify the duration of the Commission's sessions.

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Until 1973, the Commission's sessions normally lasted ten weeks.

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From 1974 to 1996, the Commission's session extended to twelve weeks.

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In 1996, the Commission expressed the view that, in principle, it should be able to determine on a year-to-year basis the necessary length of the following session (i.e., twelve weeks or less), depending on the state of work and any priorities laid down by the General Assembly.

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Since 1996, the Commission has held ten-week sessions, with the possibility of extending this to twelve weeks in particular years, as required.

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In 2020, the Commission's session was postponed until 2021 due to COVID.

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In 2025, the Commission's session was decreased to five weeks due to the UN's budgetary crisis.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- (1) What is the legal significance of the Commission applying the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure rather than having its own procedural rules?**
- (2) If financial constraints continue to limit session length, how should the Commission adapt its meeting structure?**
- (3) Would changing how the Commission meets (duration, format, openness) meaningfully affect the authority of its final products?**