

APROPOS THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS SOCIETIES

by **Jacques Meurant**

Second part

IV. THE BODIES OF THE LEAGUE

A. THE COLLECTIVE BODIES

The Constitution Revision Commission, noting some confusion in the Constitution then in force concerning the power and functions of the League's two most important bodies, the Board of Governors and the Executive Committee, was predominantly concerned with adapting the structure to the specific character of the organization as the international federation of National Societies, and to ensure the greatest possible participation by National Red Cross Societies in the work of the organization by reinforcing the functions of its collective bodies. The Commission also wished to limit the duration of mandates in the organization and to make a rigorous distinction between the functions of the different bodies of the federation.

The specific character of the federation, as an association of National Red Cross Societies, should be evident in the active participation of all members in the work of the federation and should give emphasis to their responsibilities in this respect. On the other hand, it should be recognized that certain functions could only be exercised efficiently by a small number of representatives. The Commission therefore had to find a legal solution reconciling these two ideas in the form of two different bodies, one of them responsible for taking decisions and the other for putting them into effect.

General Assembly

At the outset of its work, the Commission adopted the principle that the bodies responsible for taking decisions should include all the National Societies which are members of the federation. Consequently, the Constitution provides that the General Assembly shall be the supreme decision-making body of the League and exercise all powers not expressly conferred on other bodies. This guarantees the widest possible participation by National Societies in the work of the League, since all important decisions must be taken by the General Assembly and therefore by the National Societies. The Constitution makes no provision for delegation of the powers of the General Assembly to other bodies. Only in the event of emergency is the Executive Council or the Secretary General authorized to decide questions which are normally within the competence of the General Assembly. Furthermore, certain powers specified in the Constitution cannot be the subject of emergency decisions and are consequently within the exclusive jurisdiction of the General Assembly. In the course of discussion concerning the concentration of all powers in the hands of the General Assembly, the reasons for doing so were duly recognized, as they justified entrusting the management of the League to 125 National Societies. Certain members commented, however, that a solution of this nature could reduce the efficiency of measures adopted by the General Assembly. These objections were well-founded but the Board of Governors finally decided to give preference to the system now in force in all international non-governmental organizations, since the interest which members have in these organizations depends upon the possibility they have to participate in all important decisions, especially when these decisions influence their activities in their own countries. A member Society will assume greater responsibilities if it has the feeling that it can exercise the fundamental right to discuss all important questions and take the necessary decisions concerning them.

The composition of the General Assembly, which includes all the delegations from National Societies which are members of the federation, confirms what had in fact been a practice for nearly 15 years, namely the National Societies had for this period taken part in the meetings of the Board of Governors, with delegations led by their respective Governors. Under the new Constitution, each Society is represented by a delegation of a maximum of five members, to which may be added experts designated by the Societies. We may thus conclude that the name "General Assembly", taking the place of the former "Board of Governors", more accurately reflects the composition of the body.

The frequency of sessions of the General Assembly was the subject of comment by nearly all the National Societies. About ten of them argued that the General Assembly should meet every year, emphasizing the importance of democratic conduct of the affairs of the federation, so that the Societies would have the opportunity to discuss matters every year. The majority of Societies and a majority of members of the Commission, however, spoke in favour of maintaining the practice already in force which had produced positive results, that is, the practice of holding ordinary sessions every two years.

It was decided that these meetings would normally be held in Geneva, or elsewhere, on the invitation of a member Society. In this connection, in order to ensure application of the principle of universality, a specific clause was introduced into the League's Rules of Procedure, designed to ensure the participation without discrimination of all the member Societies of the League at all the statutory meetings of the League and at all those organized by the National Societies.²¹

While questions of a procedural nature concerning sessions of the General Assembly (convocation, agenda, extraordinary sessions, conduct of business, deposit of texts, voting procedures, etc.) are dealt with more precisely and systematically in the Rules of Procedure than in the Constitution, the members of the federation insisted on specifying in the Constitution certain provisions concerning the quorums and majorities required for the adoption of certain decisions. As in the case of many other international organizations, the Constitution makes a distinction between decisions on important questions—such as voting the budget, admission of a National Society, any change in the definition of the general object and functions of the League—and those on other questions. It was provided that the former would require a two-thirds majority of the member Societies present and voting while the latter would be decided by a simple majority. This simple majority would also suffice for a new subject to be classified as an important matter.

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²¹ *Rules of Procedure*, Rule 2.2: "If an invitation is received from a member Society for the Assembly to meet elsewhere than at the headquarters of the League, the decision to accept the invitation shall be made by the Assembly if it is in session, in accordance with Article 10. para. 1. of the Constitution."

Rule 2.3: "Such an invitation can only be accepted by the Assembly if the Society in the country where the session is to be held has obtained and submitted in advance to the Secretary General of the League a guarantee in writing from its Government that all member Societies will be allowed to send delegations to take part in the session."

The new Constitution has an article on *observers* to the sessions of the Assembly. This article fills a gap which had sometimes been a source of difficulties at meetings of the Board of Governors.²²

The Constitution now provides for four categories of observers: first of all the ICRC as a privileged observer with which the League maintains permanent relations and virtually institutional co-operation; then the intergovernmental organizations with which the federation has consultative status (WHO, UNESCO, ECOSOC, UNICEF, HCR, FAO). In the latter case this constitutes a sort of reciprocity between the League and the organizations in question.

This article also provides for the participation of any governmental or non-governmental organization as observers in sessions of the General Assembly if the Executive Council or the President deems it appropriate. This refers to institutions with which the League might have relations in the humanitarian field or which carry out activities of the same nature as those of the League.

Finally, the Executive Council and the President, if they deem it appropriate, may invite any organization or National Society in process of formation and not yet admitted to the League to participate as observers in sessions of the Assembly, provided that their activities are in conformity with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross.

Executive Council

The creation of a new executive organ, the Executive Council, is a direct result of the new conception of the structure of the federation,

²² It may seem strange that some governmental and private organizations may send observers to the International Conference but not to the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors attempted at its 1971 session in Mexico to remedy this shortcoming in the Constitution by adopting Resolution 4 which reads:
"The Board of Governors resolves that:

- (a) National Societies members of the League may be represented by not more than three observers at sessions of the Executive and Advisory Committees of the League of which they are not members. The names of such observers shall be notified in advance to the Secretary General,
- (b) the International Committee of the Red Cross may be represented at the sessions of the Board of Governors and those of the Executive and Advisory Committees,
- (c) other institutions, namely recognized National Societies which are completing their formalities for admission to the League and international governmental and non-governmental organizations with which the League maintains special working relations and co-operates in the humanitarian field in which it specializes, may be invited by the Chairman of the League to be represented by observers at sessions of the Board of Governors and those of the Executive Committee...".

which makes a clear distinction between the organ of decision, the General Assembly, and the organ of execution, the Executive Council.

Henceforth, there is no possible comparison between the new body and the Executive Committee of the 1969 Constitution. That document did not provide, *stricto sensu*, for an executive body really responsible for putting into effect and carrying out the decisions of the deliberative organ, the Board of Governors. In fact, the Executive Committee exercised the powers of the Board of Governors between the sessions of the Board.²³

In like manner, the functions of the Executive Council differ from those of the Committee of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen, an organ established in 1965 to study and discuss any matters which the Chairman considered advisable to submit to it.²⁴

The functions of the Executive Council are enumerated and specified exhaustively so as to avoid any confusion between its jurisdiction and that of the General Assembly. The principal role of the Executive Council is to implement the decisions of the Assembly and carry out the mandates entrusted to it by the Assembly. In emergency situations the Executive Council is authorized to take such measures as it deems necessary, but the decisions thus taken must be submitted to the next session of the Assembly for approval.

These provisions ensure a clear distinction between the jurisdiction of the collective bodies inasmuch as the powers of the Executive Council are limited to execution. The idea prevailed of attributing to the General Assembly functions of a general order and of defining the functions of the Executive Council by an exhaustive enumeration. No exception to this principle is provided except in cases of emergency. Decisions by the Executive Council, in such cases, are taken under the responsibility of the General Assembly and in this way the National Societies always have the possibility of discussing, at subsequent sessions of the General Assembly, questions relating to cases of emergency.

It is also interesting to note that those who approved the new Constitution showed their desire to make of the Executive Council as a whole a truly collective body whose members would be guided in their decisions only by the interests of the League. In this connection, Justice Adefarasin, elected President of the League in 1977, told at the first meeting of the

²³ Except for the suspension of National Societies and the dissolution of the League (Art. 9 and 39 of the 1969 Constitution).

²⁴ Because of the new structure and the frequency of Executive Council meetings, it was not thought necessary to maintain this Committee.

Executive Council that he depended strongly upon great co-operation among the members of the Council so that a true "team spirit" would be established.

The National Societies recognized the necessity for a single executive body to enhance the efficacy of the federation's activity, and had to face the problem of the composition of this body. How would it be possible to ensure the widest possible participation by National Societies in the work of the executive body and at the same time enable this body to carry out its dynamic functions? How was it possible to reconcile the election of a National Society to the executive body with the election of members of National Societies in their personal capacities? Finally, how many members should there be to ensure at the same time adequate representation of the National Societies and efficiency of the executive body.

In its second draft of July 1975 the Constitution Revision Commission offered a compromise formula: the Council would consist of the President, of six Vice-Presidents elected *ad personam*, and of twelve National Societies elected by the General Assembly.

This formula was rejected, with the adversaries of election *ad personam* emphasizing that should a person elected be unable to attend he or she could not be replaced until the next session of the General Assembly and that the cessation of activity by the person within the National Society to which he or she belonged would have no effect upon the functioning of that Society within the federation.

Although the principle of election of National Societies to the Executive Council finally prevailed, a compromise was reached, making a distinction between the election of National Societies, eight in number, each of which would nominate a candidate, a member of their Society, who would be appointed as a Vice-President upon the election of that Society by the General Assembly, and sixteen National Societies elected by the same Assembly as members of the Executive Council.²⁵ This solution reconciled two lines of thought, in that it linked the idea that National Societies should be elected as members of the Council and the

²⁵ *League Constitution*, Art. 13:

"1. The Council shall be composed of:

- (a) the President of the League, elected by the Assembly;
- (b) eight Vice-Presidents of the League appointed by the Assembly, in accordance with Article 17 of this Constitution,
- (c) the ex-officio Vice-President, i.e. the President of the National Society of the country in which the League has its headquarters;
- (d) 16 member Societies elected by the Assembly.

idea that National Societies at the same time should designate candidates who would be appointed as Vice-Presidents of the League if the Societies in question should be elected. This formula gave special emphasis to the juridical character of the League as the federation of National Societies.

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The principle of *fair geographical distribution* is now universally recognized and is included in nearly all the constitutions of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. It is also provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is therefore not surprising that this principle should have been unanimously approved by the National Societies and introduced into the Constitution as a fundamental rule which must be respected and applied in the elections of all of the organs of the federation and in appointments of the staff of the League.

Problems arose in considering the procedure for putting this principle into effect. It appeared to be difficult to establish a designation of regions in geographical terms. In addition there was no formula universally accepted by states or by international organizations. *Ad hoc* solutions existed, adopted separately by the organs or specialized agencies of the United Nations, but these are not identical for all of them. In giving effect to the principle of fair geographical distribution, each body reaches its own separate decision, adapted to the circumstances.

The formulas proposed by the National Societies and by the Constitution Revision Commission²⁶ could not gain a consensus in the Board of Governors which, at its 1977 session, finally decided upon a

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2. In the elections of the Council, the Assembly shall take fair geographical distribution into account."

Article 17 states:

"The Assembly, in accordance with the voting procedure provided for in Article 11 of this Constitution and taking into account fair geographical distribution, shall by a simple majority of the member Societies present and voting elect eight Society members of the League for the purpose of each of them nominating a candidate, a member of their Society, for appointment by the Assembly to the post of Vice-President of the League for a period of four years. No Society may be re-elected for more than two consecutive terms of office."

²⁶ The Constitution Revision Commission, for example, proposed that a special commission appointed by the Assembly should draw up a list of geographic regions according to which the National Societies would vote. Some National Societies suggested that the General Assembly itself should define four or six geographic regions to one of which each National Society would be assigned.

reaffirmation of the principle of fair geographical distribution in the Rules of Procedure ²⁷.

B. INDIVIDUAL BODIES

The new provisions concerning the individual bodies of the League, the President and the Vice-Presidents, indicate concern to specify their functions exactly.

President and Vice-Presidents

The *President*, as the highest official of the League, is made responsible to the Assembly for ensuring that the League remains faithful to its general object. He carries out his functions under the authority of the Assembly and of the Council.

For the reasons indicated earlier, these functions are also exhaustively defined. He presides over the sessions of the Assembly and of the Council; he co-ordinates the work of the bodies of the League; he represents the League in its relations with the other institutions of the International Red Cross, international organizations and National Societies; lastly, he carries out any other function entrusted to him by the Assembly or Council.

The President may also delegate a part of his functions to one of the Vice-Presidents or to the Secretary General of the League. This is the first time that the Constitution has provided for delegation of functions. While refusing to allow for delegation of the powers of collective bodies, it was agreed that an individual had the legal right to delegate a part of his powers.

The *Vice-Presidents* are primarily members of the Executive Council. In addition, it is their duty to carry out any other function which may be entrusted to them by the President. In this connection, one of the functions of the Vice-Presidents is to represent the President or to replace him in case of necessity.

Another problem which must be mentioned in connection with the elected officials is that of limitation of their terms of office. A choice had to be made between the need to ensure a certain degree of continuity

²⁷ *Rules of Procedure*, Rule 23: "During the election of the eight National Societies each of which shall have nominated a candidate for appointment to the office of Vice-President, as well as of the sixteen member Societies of the Council, fair geographical distribution shall be taken into consideration."

in the exercise of a function and a better rotation, and therefore a better participation of National Societies in all the important functions of the League. The compromise arrived at by the Board of Governors was to limit the terms of the President and Vice-Presidents to four years, renewable only once.

Secretary General

Without taking up the legal problem of deciding whether or not the Secretary General is an official whose position can be compared to that of the other officials, one point is nevertheless important: the Secretary General must be a person highly qualified to assume important responsibilities in the League.

The innovation in the new Constitution relates to the choice and appointment of the Secretary General. The latter is no longer elected but appointed by the Assembly on the proposal of the Executive Council. It is therefore up to the Council to select qualified persons and to propose one of them as a candidate to the General Assembly, who shall then accept or reject the proposal.

This special procedure was provided for various reasons. First of all, the Secretary General must be a person with outstanding qualifications which can be examined by only a small group of Societies. There is the further fact that such a choice requires more time than is available in the course of a session of the General Assembly. In addition, this procedure makes it possible to avoid any "electoral" pressure. Furthermore, since the Secretary General is a paid official this function can only be fulfilled as it should be if the office holder is prepared to devote all his time to it. Anyone who accepts this post must establish himself at the headquarters of the federation and must consequently abandon his previous occupation. One cannot expect a person appointed to the office of Secretary General to accept that post unless his contract offers appropriate conditions. It is up to the General Assembly to establish such conditions in advance and it is up to the Executive Council to work out the details of the contract, with clauses providing reciprocal guarantees.

A very difficult question is: under what authority should the Secretary General carry out his functions?

The answer to this question was not without a certain ambiguity in the 1969 Constitution. In 1977, the Board of Governors considered that the Secretary General should carry out the decisions of the Assembly and of the Council and the mandates assigned to him by other bodies of the League.

To the extent that he reports to the General Assembly, he is responsible to that body; to the extent that he carries out functions entrusted to him by the Executive Council or the President, he is responsible to them. Apart from these responsibilities, the authority he needs to carry out his functions is accorded to him by the bodies with which he maintains close co-operation, the President and the Executive Council. Every time the Secretary General makes a decision, he does so under the authority of the Executive Council or the President, in particular with regard to members of the federation and third parties. It is essential for the Secretary General to be able to refer to the authority under which he discharges his responsibilities.

The functions of the Secretary General are now listed exhaustively. We may note, for example, that the Secretary General directs the Secretariat of the League and is responsible for the execution of the work entrusted to it; he implements the decisions of the Assembly and of the Council and the mandates assigned to him by other bodies of the League; he organizes the different services of the Secretariat, in accordance with the decisions of the Assembly and Council, and appoints the staff of the Secretariat (but appointments of the Deputy Secretary General and of the Under-Secretaries General are made in consultation with the Council).

The Secretary General directs relief or other actions decided upon by the Assembly or Council. In exceptional or urgent circumstances, he is authorized to take all appropriate measures in this field.

With regard to financial matters, it should be noted that the Secretary General is now exclusively responsible for the administration of the budget of the League; he implements the budget, ensures the payment of contributions and, depending on needs, pays authorized expenses; he receives and holds all funds paid to the League for whatever purpose and is accountable for these funds to the Assembly and Council and uses them in accordance with the budget adopted. Finally, he decides on the handling and investment of available funds, after consultation with the Treasurer General.

The specifying and enlargement of the functions of the Secretary General will contribute to the efficiency not only of the Secretariat of the federation but of all its bodies, since the Secretary General is also the *ex officio* Secretary of these bodies.

Treasurer General

The Treasurer General of the League is the principal adviser to the League on all financial matters. The obligation to consult him has been

defined in the Constitution. Appointed by the General Assembly for a period of four years, his term of office is renewable, because it seemed wise to guarantee the continuity of his functions and not to provide any limitations to the duration of his responsibilities.

C. SUBSIDIARY BODIES

As it had under the previous Constitution, the League has two subsidiary bodies in the financial field.

The Permanent Scale of Contributions Commission consists of a Chairman and six members elected in their personal capacity by the General Assembly. Its functions, among others, are the periodic review of the formula fixing the financial participation of National Societies, fixing the quota of each National Society every two years, hearing appeals from National Societies, and studying the cases of Societies with arrears in payments.

The Finance Commission has undergone some changes in structure. It is no longer composed of 14 member Societies designated by the Board of Governors but of a Chairman, five members elected in their personal capacity and the Treasurer general *ex officio*. Its functions are to advise and assist the Council in applying and implementing the decisions of the Assembly on the financial administration of the League. It comments on the annual financial report and on the budgets drawn up by the Secretary General and also on the handling and investment of funds. It may recommend to the Assembly and the Council any financial measures which it deems appropriate.

The consultative system has undergone a rather substantial reform. Experience had brought to light a certain degree of confusion between the Advisory Committees, committees of experts and *ad hoc* or permanent working groups, especially with regard to their terms of reference or vis-à-vis the bodies to which they were responsible.

Study of this question led to a solution which is both simpler and more rigorous, consisting of the establishment by the General Assembly of three categories of consultative bodies.

These comprise first of all the Advisory Committees which are permanent League bodies responsible for advising the Assembly and the Council on specific subjects having great importance with regard to the functions and general object of the League and also on technical questions.

In addition the Constitution provides for commissions of experts assigned to study various specific technical, scientific, economic and legal questions confronting the League and to present the results of their

study and if necessary their recommendations to the Assembly or the Council.

Finally, there are *ad hoc* Commissions which are created to study specific problems arising during the session of the Assembly with the aim of facilitating the consideration and decisions of the Assembly.

In like manner the Executive Council can create temporary subsidiary bodies to study particular problems. The composition of these bodies, the election of their members, the duration of their terms and the procedure for their meetings are henceforth governed by the Rules of Procedure.

It is noteworthy that these Commissions and Committees submit their reports and recommendations to the President and Secretary General of the League in sufficient time to enable them to refer the recommendations to the Finance Commission so that it can report on the financial implications of all new proposals to the Council and to the Assembly.

The new Constitution has established a legal formula for the consultative bodies in general. It is henceforth a matter of adapting the functions and organization of the consultative Committees and Commissions according to the nature of the activities of the League and in terms of the needs of its deliberative and executive bodies. This task was entrusted by the Board of Governors at its XXXIVth session to a working group charged with re-examining the whole consultative system of the League.

V. PROPERTY AND FINANCE

The statutory provisions concerning the resources and property of the federation, financial transactions, the contributions of National Societies and the financial obligations of members have been appreciably developed. Certain details have been stipulated in respect of National Societies which either contest the contributions fixed for them or are unable to pay these contributions. The role of the Permanent Scale of Contributions Commission in this respect has been specified.

On the other hand, with the aim of avoiding any conflict of authority with regard to the preparation and administration of the budget and the handling and investment of funds, the Constitution states that these powers are assumed by the Secretary General of the League.

Financial regulations have been provided to define as completely as possible the procedure for dealing with financial questions.

VI. REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Study of this matter went far beyond the framework of regional conferences in the usual sense and led to major discussions, both in the Constitution Revision Commission and in the Board of Governors, on the problem of regionalization. Various proposals had been presented aiming at the institutionalizing of regions. It must certainly be acknowledged that the National Societies, as members of the International Red Cross on the one hand and as members of the League on the other hand, have absolute freedom to meet one another apart from at the International Conference, the Council of Delegates and the League. The great value and practical importance of special or regional conferences has been generally recognized. It must, however, be clearly established that such special or regional conferences must abstain from taking decisions on questions already decided by the International Conference or Board of Governors and from procedures not in conformity with the regulations in force.

Furthermore, the unity of the Red Cross movement is guaranteed above all else by the International Red Cross Conference, whose mission is to ensure the unity of the efforts of the National Societies, of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the League; by the International Committee of the Red Cross which has the responsibility of maintaining the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross; and by the League, the international federation of National Societies and protector and guardian of the integrity and interests of its members. It was therefore difficult to conceive a new institutionalized structure on the regional level within the framework of the Red Cross movement.

Many National Societies made the point that institutionalized regionalization could tend to undermine the Fundamental Principles on which Red Cross activities depend; and that such regionalization could easily fall under the influence and pressure of elements foreign to the Red Cross and might finally threaten the independence of the Red Cross as a whole. As a direct consequence of such an institutionalization of the regions, the National Societies would belong to regional organizations and would be represented in the world federation by organs appointed or elected by the regional organizations. The independence of National Societies would not be respected in the event of a National Society not wishing to belong to the region provided for it in the Constitution. Such a Society would be in danger of being excluded from the bodies of the federation. The apolitical character of the Red Cross Societies might thus suffer great injury.

It was clearly demonstrated that the total change in character resulting from conversion of the association of National Societies into regional groups would be contrary to the Fundamental Principles of Independence, Unity and Universality. It was also obvious that the equality of National Societies and their freedom to present proposals and to vote in conformity with their interests could only be ensured by universal association.

In contrast regionalization in the sense established by the International Red Cross Conferences, by the League and by the ICRC takes the form of regular meetings which consider and deal with special and specific questions of concern to the National Societies belonging to the same region.

For all these reasons, the majority of members of the League did not support proposals made by other members on the subject of regionalization. The need was nevertheless recognized for exchanges of views at the regional level. Technical questions in particular should be discussed at this level. The League could and should promote such contacts, but all the regional conferences should be organized under its auspices and take place in conformity with the Constitution of the League and with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross.

The new Constitution specifies that when a member Society requests the assistance of the Secretariat in organizing a regional conference in its country the approval of the Council must be obtained. This measure is designed to ensure the unity of the League and to avoid any separatism on a regional basis.

To sum up, insofar as common interest calls for regional contacts, the Societies of a region are encouraged to convoke regional conferences. However, this constituted the maximum that the Board of Governors could accept without injurious consequences for the Red Cross as a whole and for the League in particular.²⁸ While the principle of institutionalizing the regions was dismissed, the principle of fair geographical representation of the National Societies in all the bodies of the federation was guaranteed.

VII. REGULATIONS

The Constitution Revision Commission attached particular importance to the matter of rules and regulations. Experience had revealed

²⁸ These provisions tally exactly with Mr. Tansley's remarks. In his report he makes out a strong case for the recognition of regional ideas, such as regional planning committees to decide which National Societies in the region most needed help and of what kind, thereby giving expression to desires of regional groupings without undermining the universality of the movement. (Tansley Report p. 88).

numerous instances of confusion or duplication between the previous Constitution and the Bye-Laws, although the former contained provisions of a legal nature and the latter provisions of an administrative nature. Several important provisions relating to the admission of National Societies to the League, Advisory Committees, Regional Conferences, etc., were contained in different regulations.

It was quickly agreed that the mechanism of an international federation of National Societies called for detailed procedural rules which, for technical reasons, could not be included in the Constitution itself. To put the Constitution into effect, it was essential to draw up rules of procedure explaining the Constitution in procedural terms while being in conformity with it. The new Rules of Procedure contain revised and adapted provisions from the previous bye-laws and should serve as a complete instrument enabling the bodies of the federation to carry out their functions. In addition, it was considered desirable to draw up detailed regulations concerning finances and personnel.

We do not intend to present here all the different procedural provisions in the three regulations adopted. Some of them indeed have already been referred to above. One point however is deserving of special attention, the languages used by the institution.

The Constitution of 1969 was quite vague in defining the *official and working languages* of the League and in specifying the exact nature of the languages used. The Board of Governors at its XXXIIIrd session in 1975 therefore asked the Constitution Revision Commission to consider the matter of defining the official and working languages of the League and determining the criteria which could facilitate the choice of languages belonging to each of these categories. It will be recognized that this was a difficult task since the international organizations themselves do not have uniform standards in this respect.

The Council finally adopted the following definitions. The working languages of the Assembly are those in which simultaneous interpretation is provided and in which documents relating exclusively to items of the agenda are prepared. The official languages of the Assembly are those which may be used in discussions without the prior permission of the President. Any delegate using one of the official languages which is not also a working language must himself provide for its interpretation into one of the working languages.

The Council adopted certain provisions concerning the choice of languages. The official languages of the Assembly are French, English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. The working languages of the Assembly are French, English, Spanish and Arabic. In the case of

Arabic and of any other language which may subsequently be recognized as a working language of the Assembly, the member Societies wishing to use one of them are obliged to pay, six months in advance, all costs involved in accordance with an estimate established for each year by the League Secretariat until such time as the Assembly decides that such costs can be covered by the League budget. ²⁹

CONCLUSION

Such are the new legal texts which entered into force on 12 October 1977.

They are the result of a vast collective effort which for several years mobilized all the forces of the League, the National Societies, legal experts and laymen, the Committee of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen, the Secretariat and its Staff Association—all those who realized the importance of what was involved in the construction of the new Constitution of the League and who were concerned to establish the new bases for its future.

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²⁹ During its first session in Geneva in May 1978, the Executive Council, taking into consideration a request from the Arab National Societies, recommended that the next General Assembly of the League should decide to introduce Arabic as a working language of the Executive Council and that the relevant Rules of Procedure should be amended accordingly.