

**THE BYLAWS OF THE
NATIONAL ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLY
(OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH)**

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The National Ecclesiastical Assembly (hereby NEA) is the supreme governing body of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church.

2. The Catholicos of All Armenians convenes the NEA at least once every seven years. If necessary, the Catholicos of All Armenians may convene a special session of the NEA.

In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Catholicos of All Armenians, within six months the Locum Tenens shall call a special session of the NEA to elect the Catholicos of All Armenians.

In the event of insurmountable obstacles to the convening of a special session of the NEA within the period specified in this paragraph, the Supreme Spiritual Council is authorized to postpone the deadline for the convening of the NEA.

3. NEA is convened at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

4. The powers and the duties of the NEA shall be;

a. to elect the Catholicos of All Armenians,

b. to make decisions regarding national and ecclesiastical issues,

c. to make decisions on significant doctrinal, liturgical, canonical and administrative issues,

d. to approve the Constitution of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church as well as changes and amendments to it,

e. to determine the status of the different bodies of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the limits and procedure of their spiritual authority, responsibilities and reciprocal relations, as well as the audit procedures on their operations,

f. to define the fundamentals of the relations with other Churches, religious communities, states and international organizations.

g. to hear the reports of the Catholicos of All Armenians, (the Council of Bishops), the Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly, the Supreme Spiritual Council, as well as the reports of commissions established by the NEA, and, when necessary, to make decisions,

- h. when necessary, to appoint respective committees to oversee the implementation of its decisions,
- i. to approve the regulations of the NEA,
- j. to elect the members of the NEA Tivan.

5. The Catholicos of All Armenians, or in the event of a vacancy, the Locum Tenens serves as President of the NEA. The Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, the Armenian Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople are ex officio preeminent members of the NEA.

If the Catholicos of All Armenians is unable to attend the meeting, the NEA is presided over in order of hierarchical rank by the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, and then the vicar of the Catholicos of All Armenians.

B. THE FORMATION OF THE NEA

6. The delegates of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly are:

- a. the Bishops of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church,
- b. the members of the Supreme Spiritual Council,
- c. Diocesan Primates or Locum Tenenses,
- d. Four delegates from the brotherhood of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin
- e. Four delegates from the brotherhood of the Great House of Cilicia,
- f. Four delegates from the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem,
- g. Four delegates from the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople,
- h. Delegates from the Dioceses and Catholicossal Delegations, according to the quotas established in paragraph 7.2 of the present Bylaws.

If the Patriarchs and Diocesan Primates or their Locum Tenenses are unable to attend the NEA with good reason, their vicars shall participate in their absence.

7. The quotas of the NEA delegates, regarding the Dioceses and the Catholicossal Delegations, are determined according to the following proportions based on numbers of Armenians;

One delegate for 1 and up to 25,000 people. Then one (additional) delegate for every 25,000 people. In the case the last 25,000 is incomplete, the minimum number (for an additional delegate) is 10,000

people. Elections are made by dividing the population of the administrative regions into units of 25,000 people, from which a delegate and an alternate are elected.

8. NEA delegates from the Patriarchates are elected by the Assemblies of the Brotherhoods or by the supreme governing body of the Patriarchal Sees, and in the Dioceses they are elected by the Diocesan Assemblies.

The Catholicosal Delegations and the Dioceses, which do not have a Diocesan Assemblies, elect NEA delegates in an Assembly comprised of the active ordained clergy and the members of the Parish Council(s).

9. The election day of the NEA delegates is announced three times in two-week intervals beginning 45 days prior to the election, by the respective ecclesiastical structures via the media, including the official websites, as well as by posting announcements in churches, in the special places reserved for such announcements.

10. To be a candidate to the NEA, one must have completed his or her 30th year, be a member of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, accept the doctrines of the Armenian Church, have exemplary conduct and a good reputation, and be involved in the life of the Armenian Church.

11. The slate of candidates shall include at least double the number of candidates needed to be elected according to the established quotas. The candidates who receive the highest number of votes are elected delegates.

Candidates within the same quota having received the next highest number of votes short of election are considered alternates. In the event that a delegate is unable to attend the NEA, the alternates participate with the same status (rights and privileges) as elected delegates.

The delegates of the NEA are elected by secret ballot.

12. A confirmation letter regarding the election of the NEA delegate, signed by the Tivan of the electing assembly, is sent to the Supreme Spiritual Council two months prior to the date of the convening of the NEA.

13. The confirmation letters about the election of the NEA delegates and alternates are approved by the Supreme Spiritual Council.

14. The term of NEA delegates is seven years. It is kept until elections are held for the delegates to the next NEA to be convened. Each delegate is entitled to one vote which is not transferable to another person.

C. THE CONVENING AND CONDUCTING OF THE NEA

15. The National-Ecclesiastical Assembly begins with Holy *Badarak*, during which the delegates receive Holy Communion. If it is the case that the agenda of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly includes the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians, then at the conclusion of the Holy *Badarak* the delegates recite the following vow according to the established manner:

I, the below named lay delegate to the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians, promise and vow to Almighty God and before His Holy Gospel that in the matter of this election of the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians to the highest government of the Holy Church of the Armenians and to the oversight of her clergy; with a pure conscience and without partiality or personal expectations, renouncing all ill-will and all manner of affinity or family ties, I pledge to elect from among the spiritual fathers of my Armenian Church the individual that I consider to be the most capable and worthy in intelligence and integrity, and from whom I expect that in the discharge of the responsibilities imposed upon him by this august spiritual office, he will show himself to be a fervent servant of God and the diligent caretaker for the good and welfare of the Church of Christ and will be faithful in his patriarchal authority over the rational flock of Christ.

And if for my own personal gain, I should act as an infidel, in a manner detrimental to the Church and her true children, I surrender myself to the indictment of my colleagues and the impending reckoning before God and his awesome judgement. In sealing my pledge for an impartial election, I kiss the Word and the Cross of our Savior.

16. The decision to convene a NEA is made at least six months prior to its convening and is communicated to the respective ecclesiastical organizations and to the delegates within a one month period.

17. The draft agenda of the NEA shall be prepared by the Supreme Spiritual Council, which shall send it and all respective materials to the delegates of the NEA not less than 20 days prior to the date of the Assembly.

18. A special session of the NEA, convened by the Catholicos of All Armenians, is convened with an agenda presented by His Holiness.

19. In order to include other matters of new business in the agenda, delegates shall present their proposals to the Supreme Spiritual Council through their respective ecclesiastical structures no less than 60 days prior to the date of the Assembly.

If the proposals are not included in the agenda by the Supreme Spiritual Council, the delegate representing the ecclesiastical structure can propose that they be during the discussions of the Agenda at the NEA.

20. To ensure the normal functioning of the NEA, the Supreme Spiritual Council forms Organizing and Nominating Committees not less than a year prior to the date of the Assembly.

According to the requirement of the Supreme Spiritual Council, the Organizing Committee shall verify the canonicity of the elections of the delegates and their alternates; and shall submit the election results and the certificates of approval to the delegates; and shall prepare and organize the sessions of the NEA.

The Nominating Committee shall prepare and submit to the NEA the lists of names to be elected in respective bodies formed by the NEA, with a report about each candidate.

21. NEA forms an Electoral Committee, Assembly Message Committee and if necessary other committees.

The Electoral Committee and the Assembly Message Committee are formed in the first session of the NEA.

The Electoral Committee shall prepare and organize the voting. Prior to its formation, the rights (duties) of the Electoral Committee are reserved for the Organizing Committee.

The Assembly Message Committee shall prepare and present to the NEA drafts of messages and communications for its approval and for distribution.

22. The Tivan shall chair the NEA sessions. In its first session the NEA shall elect a Tivan consisting of the following members:

- a. Two Chairmen: one bishop and one lay delegate.
- b. Two Secretaries: one clergy and one lay delegate.

23. The minutes of the NEA shall be prepared in Armenian.

24. The NEA's meetings shall be considered regular when at least 2/3 of the general number of the delegates are present.

25. Except in cases specifically provided by these Bylaws, decisions of the NEA shall be made by majority vote of the delegates present at the session.

According to Article 4.C of these present Bylaws, doctrinal, liturgical, and canonical decisions shall be made by majority vote of the present delegates, and with no less than 2/3 votes of the bishops present at the session.

26. Except for the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians and the election of members of the respective committees of the NEA, all NEA decisions are adopted by open ballot. Upon the initiative of the delegates of the NEA a vote may be taken by secret ballot, providing the initiative has the support of no less than 10 percent of the delegates present at the session.

27. NEA's decisions enter into canonical (legal) force after being approved by the Catholicos of All Armenians.

28. The minutes of the NEA sessions are published in the Official Journal and on the website of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

D. THE APPROVAL AND AMMENDMENTS OF THE PRESENT BYLAWS

29. These Bylaws, as well as changes and amendments thereto shall be adopted by the NEA and shall become effective upon the approval of the Catholicos of All Armenians.

30. These Bylaws may be amended by the Brotherhoods of the Patriarchal Sees, Dioceses, and Catholicosal Delegations provided the proposed amendments are sent 6 months prior to the date of the NEA. Proposals regarding changes and amendments to these Bylaws shall be submitted to the Supreme Spiritual Council.