Rules of Procedure

of the German Council for Sustainable Development
(version dated 22 November 2016)

1 Duties

(1) The German Council for Sustainable Development, hereinafter referred to as the Council, is subject solely to the mandate based on the decision adopted by the German Government to establish the Council. It is independent in its activities.

(2) The Council’s duties shall include the following in particular:

   a. The Council shall develop contributions to refine and implement the German Sustainability Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To do so, it shall propose specific projects and support mutual learning, particularly through peer reviews.

   b. The Council shall issue statements on matters submitted to the Council by the State Secretaries’ Committee for Sustainable Development. The German Government shall decide whether these statements are to be published. In addition, the Council may comment on topics relating to sustainable development without being called on to do so by the State Secretaries’ Committee for Sustainable Development, in particular on the current status of sustainability policy in specific areas of activity.

   c. The Council shall promote dialogue within society on sustainable development at national and international level. It shall implement projects to establish the idea of sustainability effectively within society and business, and shall foster the international exchange of experience.

(3) The Council shall adopt a programme of work. This programme shall contain steps to perform the duties pursuant to section 1, paragraph 2.

(4) The German Government may second representatives to attend the meetings of the Council and its bodies. They shall be entitled to comment on agenda items.

(5) The Council may, with the consent of the German Government, invite competent third parties to attend Council meetings for a limited period. Collaboration by the competent third parties is linked to a specific project and may not be extended; it is not associated with voting rights.
(6) The Council may invite guests to attend its meetings.

(7) The Chair of the German Bundestag's Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development is a regular guest. He or she may send a representative.

2 Chair

(1) The Council shall elect one of its members as Chair for the duration of three years by secret ballot.

(2) The Chair shall represent the Council to the outside world and shall chair the meetings.

(3) The Council shall elect a Deputy Chair.

3 Meetings, adoption of resolutions

(1) The Chair shall convene the Council as required – at least twice a year – in writing for ordinary meetings. At the request of the German Government or of at least five Council members, the Chair is obliged to convene the Council.

(2) A proposed agenda shall be enclosed with the notice of convening a meeting; any consultation documents shall be enclosed with the proposed agenda.

(3) The Council meetings are not open to the public. This shall also apply regarding meeting documents and minutes unless otherwise agreed.

(4) The members of the Council, competent third parties (sec. 1, para. 5) and guests (sec. 1, paras. 6 and 7) and the Office staff are obliged to maintain secrecy concerning deliberations, including statements by the German Government used in such deliberations, and the consultation documents designated as confidential by the Council. The obligation to maintain secrecy shall also apply to information conveyed to the Council by the German Government outside meetings and designated as confidential.

(5) A minimum of two thirds of the Council members shall constitute a quorum. The Council shall strive to pass resolutions by unanimous agreement. If this cannot be achieved, it shall pass resolutions with the majority of the members present. Statements that the Council submits to the German Government shall require a majority of members. In the event of parity of votes, the Chair shall have a second vote. Statements deviating from the resolution shall be included in the minutes pursuant to sec. 6 upon request.

(6) The Council may agree to pass resolutions by written correspondence in certain cases. The quorum stipulated in sec. 3, para. 5 shall apply.

(7) Within the scope of the available funds, the Council may consult experts, draw on expert reports and commission third parties to conduct studies.

(8) In consultation with the German Government, the Council may, for a particular project, accept financial or in-kind support from third parties insofar as this assists with its duties, particularly in
the dialogue within society, and does not impair the Council’s independence in the eyes of the public. The provisions of the Allgemeine Verwaltungsvorschrift zur Förderung von Tätigkeiten des Bundes durch Leistungen Privater (VV Sponsoring) (‘General Administrative Regulation to Promote Activities of the Federal Government Through Contributions from the Private Sector’; Bundesanzeiger – federal gazette – no. 126 of 11 July 2003, p. 14906) with the relevant notes on implementation are to be complied with.

4 Bodies of the German Council for Sustainable Development

(1) The Council may set up working groups. It may task them with preparing statements.

(2) Meetings of these Council bodies that incur reimbursable costs pursuant to sec. 3, para. 7 require the consent of the Secretary General.

5 Minutes and publications

(1) The Secretary General shall prepare minutes of the Council meetings and circulate them as a draft. He or she shall submit them to the Council members for approval at the next meeting. The minutes shall be sent to the members without delay. Any guests invited to the meetings may receive the minutes or excerpts thereof.

(2) Sec. 5, para. 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis to meetings of the Council bodies pursuant to sec. 4.

(3) Publications that appear in the Council’s name or that contain key results of the Council’s work shall be deliberated and decided on in the Council.

6 Secretary General

(1) The Secretary General shall prepare the Council meetings in consultation with the Council Chair, implement Council projects and inform the Council and the German Government of the result. The Secretary General shall take part in consensus building within the Council and may propose topics to the Council for debate.

(2) He or she shall compile the information necessary for the Council’s work, establish current knowledge on individual issues and implement the Council’s initiatives to promote dialogue within society on sustainable development at national and international level. To do so, he or she may commission expert reports and award other commissions.

(3) The Secretary General shall accept the commissions from the German Government, particularly from the State Secretaries’ Committee on Sustainable Development, and agree on working and submission dates with the German Government. The Secretary General shall maintain contact with ministries and authorities, parliament, the private sector, the scientific community and other groups within society. He or she shall inform the Council about projects by these institutions and groups insofar as they are relevant to the Council’s work. He or she shall represent the Council to the outside world.
Moreover, the Secretary General shall submit the draft work programme pursuant to sec. 1, para. 3. He or she shall coordinate technical aspects of the duties and work pursuant to sec. 3, para. 7 and sec. 4, para. 1 and resolutions pursuant to sec. 5, para. 3, and shall deal with budgetary and administrative issues connected with them. He or she shall perform all other Council transactions by agreement with the Chair and after consulting any proposals submitted by the members.

In performing his or her duties, the Secretary General shall be supported by the Council Office, of which he or she is head. He or she shall be assisted by a Deputy Secretary General. The Sustainability Code Office and the Coordination Centre of the Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies are part of the Office.

7 Travel expenses and reimbursements for meetings

With regards to the reimbursement of travel expenses of the staff of the Office and the Council members, the provisions of the German Federal Travel Expenses Act (Bundesreisekostengesetz) and for the latter the Guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Finance on the Compensation of Members of Advisory Boards, Committees, Commissions and Similar Federal Institutions (Richtlinien für die Abfindung der Mitglieder von Beiräten, Ausschüssen, Kommissionen und ähnlichen Einrichtungen im Bereich des Bundes) shall apply by analogy.

Travel expenses shall be reimbursed for attending ordinary Council sessions, meetings of its working groups and meetings in the Office. Moreover, travel expenses may be reimbursed if a Council member represents the Council at third-party events; the Chair together with the Secretary General shall decide whether the Council is to be represented by a Council member.

Travel expenses that are incurred in connection with the Council’s work shall be settled on the basis of a copy of the invitation to the meeting, the completed form, the original vouchers (tickets, etc.) and a copy of the travel agency invoice (if there is one).

For attendance at ordinary meetings of the Council and its working groups, Council members shall be paid an expenses allowance of 500 euros per meeting upon application. If a Council member attends more than one meeting on the same day, the expenses allowance shall be paid only once. The Office requires a formal request from the Council members to make such payment.

To compensate for the time spent by the Chair representing the Council on official occasions such as at conferences and panel discussions and at meetings to discuss the Sustainability Strategy, an expenses allowance shall be paid by analogy with sec. 7, para. 4 depending on the time required. The same shall apply if a Council member represents the Council at third-party events; the Chair together with the Secretary General shall decide whether the Council is to be represented by a Council member.

Sec. 7, paras. 1–4 shall apply to expert third parties by analogy (sec. 1, para. 5). Sec. 7, paras. 1–3 shall apply to guests by analogy (sec. 1, para. 6, not in the case of sec. 1, para. 7).