



# SURVIVAL GUIDE

## 29th General Assembly of IFSA

Local Committee

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Country

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## PREFACE

Welcome to the 29th General Assembly of the International Forestry Students Association (IFSA)!

This guide should help you survive, understand and actively participate in the Plenary Sessions and Workshops planned throughout the next two weeks!

More information about what IFSA has done this past year as well as the official positions which keep us going can be found in two separate documents: the *Annual Report* and the *Job Descriptions* respectively.

We hope you will learn to love the GA process, as it is your way of participating in IFSA decision making on behalf of your LC as well as a way to learn something new personally.

It is our hope that this guide will answer any questions you have, but if not, please feel free to ask one of us as well!

IFSA 7 2017-2018

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# Introduction

## AN OVERVIEW OF IFSA

The International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) is a globally organized and locally operating students organization seeking to connect forest science students to their peers and forest-related organizations and policy platforms. Our vision is a world that appreciates forests and we seek to create this world by enriching our members education through global events, networking, and intercultural exchange. We intend to create a new generation of leaders committed to sustainable development who can promote greater cultural understanding and cooperation.

Today forestry encompasses much more than just technical knowledge. To achieve sustainable development it is important that future professionals in forest and related fields understand and are aware of the environmental, social, political, cultural and economic aspects related to forests.

Through our global network of IFSA, we provide opportunities for students to participate and take leadership in international forest policy processes, scientific conferences, development events, cultural events, and traineeships.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN ACTIVITIES OF IFSA?

### 1) Build a global community

IFSA exists to build community between students across national, regional and global levels and with relevant IFSA partners. Together this makes up the IFSA community that we seek to continually strengthen.

#### **IFSA Student Meetings.**

We are spread around the world, so the internet is an extremely useful and efficient tool that allows IFSA to conduct its affairs despite geographical challenges. However, meeting in person offers benefits for the running of IFSA, particularly the promotion of cultural understanding.

- The biggest event is the **International Forestry Students' Symposium (IFSS)** which gathers forestry students from all over the world during two weeks in a different country each year. This event hosts the IFSA General Assembly to evaluate work over the year, elect the new board and set the next year's' work-plan.
- **Regional meetings** also occur annually within IFSA's seven regions (Asia-Pacific, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Latin America, Northern America, Northern Europe and Southern Europe). These meetings are the opportunity to discuss the forestry related issues in a particular geographical area and promote cross-regional discussions. National meetings and other informal meetings are also commonly organized inclusive of one or more LCs.
- **IFSA Supporting and Alumni Network** also exists for those that seek to support IFSA financially and IFSA Alumni members.

## IFSA Partner Events

- IFSA has very strong partnerships with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, Center for International Forest Research (CIFOR) and the European Forest Institute (EFI) which permit students to join international scientific congresses, to have the opportunity to present their work, and to meet specialists from a diverse range of forestry related fields. Other partners are listed in the IFSA job descriptions. All of the above mentioned partnerships are **managed by Liaison Officers** with the President and External Partnerships Councillor.
- IFSA has also many partner student organizations, such as the International Association of Students in Agricultural and Related Sciences (IAAS), The Informal Forum of International Students' Organizations (IFISO), European Geography Association for Students and Young Geographers (EGEA) and Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudiantes de Ciencias Forestales (ALECIF).

## 2) Take learning beyond the classroom

We believe that transformative change happens outside of the classroom. IFSA seeks to create learning experiences in all IFSA events and activities. We accomplish this through:

- Enhancing forestry education with projects in collaboration with IFSA partners, such as the IFSA IUFRO Joint Task force on forest education and upcoming projects with EFI and IUFRO.
- Facilitate traineeships and internships with IFSA partners
- Create training and learning workshops that provide needed competencies for forest professionals and on intercultural understanding
- Facilitate IFSA local, regional, and global projects

## 3) Enable students to engage globally

More than 40% of the world's population is younger than 20 years old! IFSA seeks to create a space for youth in international decision making processes regarding environmental and forest policy and in some cases represent the views of our membership in these processes. Within IFSA, forest and related science students have the platform to represent the interests of youth and to create their own projects to implement sustainable forest management.

As a Youth Non-Governmental Organization (YNGO), IFSA has the statute of youth representative for the following:

- United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)
- Forest Europe – formerly Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forest in Europe
- And has several IFSA professional partners

These privileged statutes offer many opportunities for forestry students to actively take part and contribute to international processes which are very important for our future.

## **Working groups called “commissions” carry out much of this vital work.**

IFSA has several commissions to provide students with opportunities to develop skills that help run IFSA world and are extremely useful for professional careers and networking for students to develop skills which help us run IFSA and will prove to be useful in students' later professional careers. The commissions are as follows:

### **Capacity Development Commission**

It seeks opportunities to develop skills of IFSA officials and members by organising training sessions and sharing other skill development opportunities, ideally alongside IFSA delegations and IFSA Partner events. The capacity development commission creates new learning content and opportunities for IFSA members.

- Forest Education: Facilitating IFSA's engagement in the IUFRO IFSA Joint Task force on forest education, a partnership built to increase trainings on needed competencies, increase student mobility and increase visibility of global forest programs.
- Project and Grants: raises vital funds for IFSA and its activities through writing proposals for projects and grants while assisting the Treasurer with grant reporting objectives.
- Publications: generates Tree News, monthly news and content created by IFSA members
- Mentorship: facilitates the integration of mentorship programs in IFSA delegations and a new mentoring program for IFSA officials - consulting members
- Cultural Competency: inspiring a new IFSA culture with intercultural understanding through creating training programs and learning material for IFSA events

### **Public Relations Commission**

Communicating what we do is core business, and this commission oversees it with support from the following sub-commissions:

- Web: oversees our website, keeping information up to date, and re-thinking format
- Social Media: manages our presence across social media platforms
- Design: prepares promotional materials and graphics as needed for IFSA

### **International Processes Commission (IPC)**

This commission is responsible for the coordination and preparation of IFSA's contribution and delegations to forest related political process and United Nations (UN) functions outlined below. The commission is also a forum for the discussion and exchange of opinions on forest policy and conduit for forest students to increase engagement with national policies. Each of the six sub-commissions support a dedicated process or a UN Agency:

- United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)
- United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UN FAO)
- United Nations Environment (UN Environment)
- Forest Europe

## WHAT IS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA)?

The General Assembly (GA), is the highest decision making body of IFSA. It consists of all IFSA Ordinary Member Associations which we call Local Committees (LC). The GA is divided into 5 parts called Plenary Sessions and is designed to:

- Assess the work completed over the past 12 months
  - Approve the annual report, financial report and the budget.
- Elect the next Board and Liaison Officers
- Appoint the Regional Representatives
- Create the Commissions and appoint Heads of Commissions
- Plan the next year of IFSA work
- Identify hosts for future IFSA events including Interim and IFSS.

The GA is run by a Board of Assembly (BoA) consisting of 3 people being led by the Chairperson.

As members of the GA, it is your responsibility and right to propose and accept items outlined on the agenda and introduce your thoughts into the discussion. The main procedures of the GA are explained within this document. If you have any questions, first check this file and if you don't find the answer, turn to an IFSA Board member or any other IFSA official.

Each active and paid LC has one voting right. By attending IFSS, participants act as a delegates for their LC. Regardless of the size of the delegation, each LC can only cast one vote. If an LC is unable to attend the GA by sending a delegate (IFSS participant), it can transfer its voting right to any other LC in attendance. By transferring your vote, you are authorising another member of IFSA to vote on behalf of your student association.

The GA is your chance to have a say on behalf of yourself and on behalf of fellow forestry students at your home university into the future running of IFSA – the world's only international forestry student organisation.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are commonly used in IFSA; here are some important ones you might encounter during the GA and IFSS. If you hear one that is not included in this list, feel free to ask!

APRM	Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting
CARM	Canadian-American Regional Meeting
FE	Forestry Education
GA	General Assembly
HoC	Head of Commission
HoSC	Head of Sub-Commission
IFSA	International Forestry Students' Association
IFSA 7	IFSA Direction and Council (IFSA Board)
IFSA year	Time between one GA and the next GA
IFSS	International Forestry Students' Symposium

IPC	International Processes Commission
LARM	Latin American Regional Meeting
LC	Local Committee (ordinary member organizations of IFSA)
LO	Liaison Officer
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NARM	Northern African Regional Meeting
NERM	Northern European Regional Meeting
OC	Organisation Committee (for events)
RR	Regional Representative
SARM	Southern African Regional Meeting
SERM	Southern European Regional Meeting
VP	Vice-President

## Related Organisations and Processes

CBD/UNCBD	(United Nations) Convention on Biological Diversity
CFA	Commonwealth Forestry Association
CIFOR	Centre of International Forestry Research
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
EFI	European Forest Institute
EGEA	European Geography Association
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
IPFE	International Partnership for Forestry Education
IAAS	International Association of Students in Agriculture and Related Sciences
IFISO	Informal Forum of International Students' Organisations
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organisation
SAF	Society of American Foresters
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
TFD	The Forests Dialogue
YIL	Youth in Landscapes Initiative
GLF	Global Landscapes Forum

## DECISION MAKING PROCEDURE IN THE IFSA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

During our GA, all decisions, except elections, will be taken publicly. However, any decision can become secret on the request of one GA participant. So if you don't feel comfortable to take a decision publicly, you just need to stand up and ask for it to be taken secretly.

There are usually two different ways to make decisions in the GA. One of these two different ways will be used almost every time a decision has to be taken throughout the different GA sessions (this will be decided on by the moderator and the Chairperson). The only times the procedure will change will be for the exceptions explained in the second paragraph (statutes changes, appointments and elections).

There is only one opinion per LC permitted. Each time you express yourself, you are expressing your LC's opinion - so they should be done in consultation with your fellow LC delegates.

### 1) The vote:

The vote will be public (by raising the LC's voting card) except if someone motions for it to be secret (you will then cast votes on ballots/sheets of paper).

Here is the process:

1. A GA participant makes a proposal stating his/her full name and LC for example : *"Juli Actable from LC IPB, I propose that the IFSA headquarters be moved to Antarctica"*
2. The moderator will then announce that each LC has the choice to vote between the following: Yes, No or Abstain. Each LC can only vote once.
3. Together with the other students from your LC, you will have to agree on one opinion and raise your voting card or write on the paper ballot accordingly.
4. All paper ballots will be collected and votes counted.
5. The results will be announced  
*for example : "out of 40 votes, 4 voted "Yes", 15 voted "No", and "21" abstained*
6. The decision is then taken according to the simple majority, for example: *"No wins, the IFSA headquarters will NOT be moved to Antarctica."*

Abstain means that you are indifferent about the topic, or you don't know enough about it to vote. This means abstain is not counted as an active opinion or vote.

### 2) The "Proposal-Seconding"

As voting takes time, we often work another way. This procedure is always public.

1. A GA participant makes a proposal stating his/her full name and LC Name for example : *"Jane Doe from LC UW, propose that the IFSA headquarters will be moved to Antarctica"*
2. The moderator will ask if there are any objections to this proposal → If no LC disagrees with the proposal, no one will talk.
3. Another GA participant (not the one proposing) will then stand up and second the proposal for example : *"Rick Astley from LC Freiburg, I second Jane's proposal to have the IFSA headquarters moved to Antarctica"*
4. The decision is therefore taken: the IFSA headquarters will be moved to Antarctica → If an LC disagrees with the proposal, one of its members has to stand up in order to object for example: *"Rick Astley from LC Freiburg, I object to Jane's proposal to have the IFSA headquarters moved to Antarctica"*
  - a. Objecting means that there is a different opinion than the first one expressed.
  - b. This will therefore automatically lead to a vote (either public or secret) as explained above.

Let's get now to the next stage: **the exceptions.**

### Specific procedures:

#### 1) Statutes changes and Rules of Procedure Changes approval

The GA is the only time during the year when changes to IFSA statutes and rules of procedure can be made. The proposals for changes will be explained in a workshop and then brought to a vote at a

plenary session. Statutes changes are usually “proposed and seconded” exactly as explained above.

If there is no objection, the proposal is seconded and finally approved.

If the proposal is objected, we will be going into a vote.

The vote will be public except on the request of one of us. The procedure will also go as explained: proposal to approve, expression of the opinions through the actual vote and count of the votes.

**The exception comes at this point:** the decision to approve the proposed statute change is taken only if three quarters of the valid votes are positive (valid votes include “yes” or “no” votes, not the “abstain” ones).

## 2) The Election Process

The new Direction, Council and Liaison Officers are elected. Elections are always done by secret ballot and result from a process lasting over several days:

- A call for candidates who would like to run for the positions mentioned above is opened during the first three plenary sessions.
- During this call, candidates can either nominate themselves or be nominated by other GA participants for example : *“I, Kutelani Tshivhase from South Africa, would like to run to for president.”* or *“I, Hugo Pierre from France, would like to nominate Magdalena Lackner as a candidate for the next LO IUFRO.”*
- LC members not able to attend the IFSS, but have sent their motivation letters, will also be nominated.

Vetting:

- Once the call is closed, candidates will be vetted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> plenary session.
- The vetting is a time given to candidates (the time frame depends on the position desired) to present themselves, their capacities and goals if elected in the position they are running for and for GA participants to ask them questions.

Elections:

- During the 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session, after having discharged the current officials, it is time for the actual elections.
- Elections are conducted one position after another, presenting each time all the candidates for the specific position and then going through a vote as explained before. In case there is a single candidate for a position, LCs will be able to vote “Yes” “No” or “Abstain”.
  - In case of several candidates, LCs will be able to vote “Person A”, “Person B”, ..., or “Abstain”.
  - If there are several candidates for the council position from the same region, a vote among those candidates will be done first followed by a vote amongst candidates all from different regions.
- The result is given by simple majority  
In case there is a single candidate for a position, a single LC voting “Yes” and all the other ones abstaining, will therefore result in the election of the candidate.
- A specific procedure will be used in case of a tie when they are several candidates.

- The elected candidates will be asked whether they accept the outcome of the election. For the elected candidates through motivation letters, they will be sent an email and asked to answer before the 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session

In case the elected candidate accepts, he/she becomes the official person elected for the respective position *for example* : “*I, Kutelani Tshivhase, accept the outcome of the election*”

In case the elected candidate does not accept, the LCs will be asked to vote again among the other candidates. In the case of a single candidate, an open call after IFSS will be made according to the statutes.

Following a similar procedure, the IFSS OC for two years later will also be elected:

1. A call is opened during the 1<sup>st</sup> GA session (and possibly the 2<sup>nd</sup> GA session)
2. Presentations are done by nominated LCs during the 2<sup>nd</sup> GA session  
Actual elections are done by a vote
3. The result is given by simple majority.

**3) The appointment procedure** The Election Committee, the Regional Representatives or the Heads of Commission are appointed by the General Assembly, not elected. It is a faster process which co

mes from decisions made at the Region and Commission workshops. The appointment is public and following the “proposal-seconding” process.

The nominations can be done by a peer or by oneself *for example* : “*I, Laerke Heimdal-Holm from Denmark, propose Martina-Marianne Meyer as the next Southern European Regional Representative*” or “*I, Eva von Schönebeck, propose myself as the next Head of the Training commission*”

The procedure is then the same as the “proposal-seconding” and goes through seconding if there are no objections.

If there are objections, we will proceed to a vote. In case of RRs or HoCs, objections to appointments occur very rarely as an agreement has to be reached within the region or commission before the nominations.

## IFSA WORKSHOPS

### Statutes Workshop

This year the 2nd GA will be an opportunity to vote a new structure for the legislative and procedural rules for IFSA. This vote will take the Statutes and divide them into Statutes (the essential functioning of the organization which should not ideally be changed annually) and the Rules of Procedure RoP (which are rules and guidelines for IFSA’s work that can be changed annually). After the 1st GA and before the vote approving the new Statutes and Rules of Procedure Dolores, Council member, will guide us through a workshop in a more informal setting. Where we discuss the new Statutes and RoP as well as proposed changes to the RoP, we will also vote on during the 2nd GA. This is where you will have a

chance to ask more detailed questions about the changes and their implications. It is helpful to read the proposed changes before the workshop.

## Regions Workshop

Regional workshops are opportunities to discuss new plans, challenges and plans for the region. Those interested in being regional representatives will present themselves to the region and provide reasons why. If pre-selections of regional representatives have not happened at prior regional meetings, the selection of the regional representative will happen at this workshop. Come prepared to provide new ideas for regional plans and your challenges.

## Commissions Workshop

You will be guided through a few different steps to establish commissions, submissions and their respective Heads:

1. Structure of Commissions and Sub-commissions that should be continued, discontinued or created.
2. Vetting and unofficial appointment of candidates for Heads of Commissions and sub-commissions

Come prepared with some ideas for commissions and an idea of which existing commission you are interested in. This will help you join a small group where discussions and vetting happens. If you do not wish to run to be a head of a commission or sub-commission, consider submitting yourself to be a commissioner in one of these areas. To be prepared for this, think about your strengths and what new skills and experiences you wish to gain.