

CONSENSUS IN SUBUD



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RESOLUTION REGARDING CONSENSUS OF THE 16TH SUBUD WORLD CONGRESS 2024

16TH CONGRESS RESOLUTION ON CONSENSUS:

Congress to approve withdrawal of Subud Britain's Consensus Proposal, and the insertion of the text for the White Book, as agreed with Subud Spain:

‘The members of the World Subud Association, in all their consultative and deliberative procedures shall be guided by democratic principles and shall seek consensus in decision making through guidance received in the Latihan Kejiwaan.’

Congress Vote:

- 38 countries approve
- 2 abstain

Subud Canada would like further guidance for the consensus to be reached for the White Book, not for the Bylaws

CONGRESS RECOMMENDATION ON CONSENSUS:

Congress recommends to the incoming World Subud Council to produce procedures and processes that are effective to achieve consensus-based decision making in accordance with advice and guidance given by Bapak.

Congress Vote:

- 37 countries approve
- 3 countries abstain

➔ It is recommended to add the approved version of this paper as an appendix to the *Guidelines for the Subud Organisation* (the ‘White Book’).

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CONSENSUS?



The WSA Constitution says:

‘The members [countries] of the World Subud Association, in all their consultative and deliberative procedures shall be guided by democratic principles and shall seek consensus in decision making through guidance received in the Latihan Kejiwaan.’¹

Consensus is clearly more than just about numbers and voting, as applied in politics or corporate business. Rather, consensus is a process of ‘convergence’: the act of converging and especially moving toward union or uniformity². Think of the convergence of three rivers, also referred to as ‘confluence’.

Voting in our Subud organisation ought to be nothing more than a moment of outer formality after a process of convergence has been completed. ‘*Seek consensus*’ implies a process that sometimes can be very quick, but at other times takes longer than we would like or hope for. Time is needed to make sure that everyone involved is willing and ready to go forward in the same direction. It doesn’t necessarily mean everyone has the same opinion. It means that guidance (‘received in the Latihan Kejiwaan’) is taking us forward, all together.

The core elements in Subud that Bapak mentioned at almost every occasion, are all in play here: patience, surrender, submission. We often need patience to go through a process of consensus, to deal with other views and opinions; we need to surrender our wishes, interests and hopes; and in the end, we need to submit the outcome to God Almighty.

Bapak often used the Indonesian words *musyawara mufakat*, meaning ‘deliberation and consensus or agreement’. It involves discussion among individuals or representatives with the

¹ <http://www.subud.org/the-constitution-of-the-wsa> (page 3)

² Merriam-Webster dictionary

aim of reaching a mutual agreement or decision, ensuring that all opinions and views are considered. The goal is to find a solution that everyone can accept, fostering harmony and unity.

In summary, consensus is a decision-making process with the following key characteristics:

- The process is inclusive
- The process takes time
- The collective interest is more important than the individual interest

The aim is to reach a stage where a proposed solution is good enough for all parties to agree with.

Consensus requires a certain approach and a specific awareness, in line with what we are being trained to put into practice through the Latihan Kejiwaan of Subud. This can be described as:

- Quiet listening from within
- Welcoming and respecting all input without judgement
- Being patient
- Being flexible with a willingness to let go.

When following the practical steps described on the following page, having this approach will help to create a calm feeling in the group, allowing space for inner guidance to arise.

BENEFITS OF DECISION-MAKING THROUGH CONSENSUS

By reaching decisions through consensus:

- A decision is widely supported by the parties involved, it creates a solid foundation.
- Individuals will feel responsible for the outcome and engaged with any follow up activities.
- Unity is fostered and the healthy and steady development of the group, organisation, or project, is facilitated.

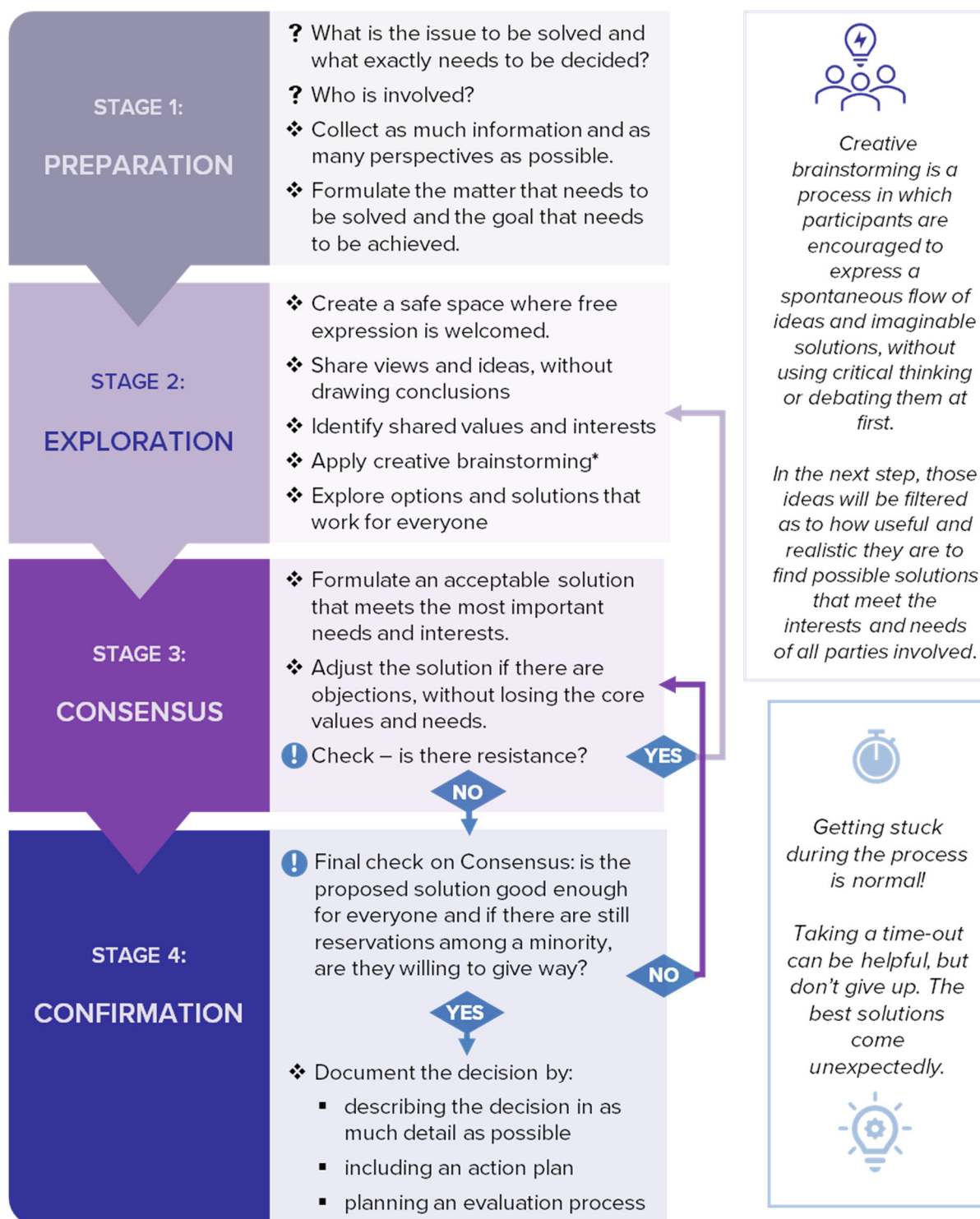
COMMON BLOCKERS TO CONSENSUS

Common pitfalls that block the process and create the opposite of unity and engagement (disharmony, division, disengagement) are:

- Claiming to be right and that others are wrong
- Time pressure
- Short term thinking (quick fix)
- Holding on to strong emotions (it's okay to have emotions, but not to be led by them)
- Personal agendas
- Lobbying behind others people's backs and many other forms of getting one's own way

PRACTICAL STEPS LEADING TO CONSENSUS

➔ **Please note:** If the situation is complicated with many competing interests involved, it is highly recommended to make use of an experienced facilitator.



❖ If required for legal reasons, a formal vote can be taken. This should be merely a confirmation of the fact that consensus has been achieved. Those who still hold reservations can abstain from voting, but if everyone is willing to move forward, there should be no vote against.

QUOTES FROM BAPAK THAT REFER TO DECISION MAKING

70 SKY 9 'Indeed, we are unlike other organisations. Our organisation, as a spiritual organisation, is different from normal organisations in which an elected chairperson decides everything. The Subud Spiritual Association is not run that way; everything must be decided by the power of God. That is the difference.'

70 SKY 9, Bapak's Talks Vol. 32-VT

64 MLG 1 'Bapak needs to emphasise to all of you attending this congress that it is a congress of a spiritual association. Therefore, in discussing all the things that need to be looked at, do not just follow the example of other organisations, but consider things with a feeling of patience and, even more, a willingness to give way.

Brothers and sisters, when you give way it does not mean that you are defeated. A person who is willing to give way is a person who can accept. When a person accepts, the activity of their heart, thinking and desires stops, and when that happens, their feeling is awakened and comes to the fore. This awakening of their feeling will be able to influence the feeling of those around them, causing them to become calm and patient. To use an analogy: if a fire is burning and you add another fire, it will burn more fiercely. It is best not to meet fire with fire, but to sprinkle it with cool water, so that it is extinguished.

As for those who are impatient or tend to be obstinate, they are not yet aware that they behave like that because they are still filled with the material force, which generally does not want to give way. You do need your heart and your mind to consider or weigh up alternatives, but what is even more important is your feeling, because it is your feeling that can unite people. There is a proverb that teaches us that whoever wants to be loved must love, and whoever wants to be helped must also be willing to give help. Who would want to help someone who isn't willing to help others?'

64 MLG 1, Bapak's Talks Vol. 11-VT

63 BCL 7 "All the same, let us not lose touch with the realm of the soul. Let us not organise Subud affairs in the ordinary way; that is, as in political bodies where voting is necessary, based on the majority principle, where what is known as the democratic method prevails. This is not our way at all. Although we may have diverse ideas and we are in an organisation – meaning that we are bound together – we do not depart from what we have received in the latihan; that is to say, from testing. So, although we make rules in our organisation, we still need the assurance and certainty that come from the power of God through our receiving in the latihan – in testing. Therefore, in all things, the decision rests with the power of God.

For this reason, in this spiritual association the manner of forming a body, of making appointments and so on, should not be motivated by the interest and advantage of individual groups. Rather, you should regard the creation and appointment of this new body as being for the development, improvement and well-being of the whole of our association. If there is a group, for instance, with a small membership and so unable to contribute anything towards the body now being formed, the stronger groups should not feel that they can ignore the members in such a weak group. No. They should receive equal attention.

This is because, based on what Bapak just called the realm of the soul, we need to feel love and compassion towards one another, and we need to respect and help one another. Do not think that the outcome has to be like this or like that; rather, we need to consider all the members – those present here and those elsewhere – as we consider ourselves. If you have that attitude, it is very likely that you will be able to arrive easily and quickly at whatever decisions need to be taken in this congress.”

63 BCL 7, Bapak's Talks Vol.10 -VT

In ‘Advice and Guidance for Bapak’s Helpers’, page 134:

‘The Majority Decide’, Bapak says: “And when you test together you need to let the majority decide. For example, if there are twenty helpers and eighteen say it would be good for A to become a member but two say no, well, those two helpers have to give in, since their conclusion is less convincing than that of the eighteen.”

59 NYC 3, Bapak's Talks Vol.3 -VT