



at Chatham House in London

THE CHATHAM HOUSE RULE

The explanation and wording of the Chatham House Rule is as follows:

Meetings of the Institute may be held 'on the record' or under the Chatham House Rule. In the latter case, it may be agreed with the speaker(s) that it would be conducive to free discussion that a given meeting, or part thereof, should be strictly private and thus held under the Chatham House Rule.'

When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant may be revealed; nor may it be mentioned that the information was received at a meeting of the Institute'.

Frequently asked questions

Q When was the Rule devised?

A In 1927, then refined in 1992

Q Should one refer to the Chatham House Rule or the Chatham House Rules?

A There is only one Rule.

Q What are the benefits of using the Rule?

A It allows people to speak as individuals, and to express views that may not be those of their organizations, and therefore it encourages free discussion. People usually feel more relaxed if they don't have to worry about their reputation or the implications if they are publicly quoted.

Q How is the Rule enforced?

A Chatham House can take disciplinary action against one of its members who breaks the Rule. Not all organisations that use the Rule have sanctions. The Rule then depends for its success on being seen as morally binding.

Q Is the Rule used for all meetings at Chatham House?

A Not often for the larger meetings (so called General Meetings); more frequently for smaller ones, for example where work in progress is discussed or when subject matter is politically sensitive

Q Who uses the Rule these days?

A It is widely used in the English-speaking world - by local government and commercial organisations as well as research organisations.

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