



MAURITIUS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THIRD REPORT

OF THE

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

MAURITIUS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

Third Report of the Standing Orders Committee

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

- 1.1 Your Committee consists of the undersigned, Speaker of the National Assembly as Chairperson, Honourable Adrien Charles Duval, MP, Deputy Speaker, and four other Members who were nominated by the Committee of Selection to serve thereon, namely, Honourable Satyaprakashsing Rutnah, MP, Deputy Chief Government Whip, Honourable Rajesh Anand Bhagwan, MP, Opposition Whip, Honourable Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunboccus, Parliamentary Private Secretary and Honourable Vedasingam V. Baloomoody, MP, and Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee.

2. NOTICE OF MOTION

- 2.1 On 10 November 2016, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications, gave notice of the following motion which stood in his name and the motion was circulated to the Honourable Members on the same day –

“This Assembly is of opinion that, with a view to making provision for a mechanism for the promotion of gender equality, it is necessary and expedient that the Standing Orders Committee be empowered, and it is hereby empowered, to look into the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly 1995 presently in force, more specifically Standing Order 69, to make recommendations for the setting up of a Sessional Select Committee to be known as the Parliamentary Gender Caucus and matters ancillary thereto.”

- 2.2 The draft proposed amendment to Standing Order 69 was also circulated on 10 November 2016 and read as follows –

In Standing Order 69, by adding the following –

“(6) Parliamentary Gender Caucus

(a) Parliamentary Gender Caucus

There shall be a Sessional Select Committee to be known as the Parliamentary Gender Caucus to be appointed at the beginning of every Session. The objective of the Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall be to work for the attainment of gender equality.

(b) Membership

- (i) Subject to paragraph (ii), the Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall consist of the Speaker as Chairperson, the Deputy Speaker as Deputy Chairperson and not more than 15 members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection.
- (ii) The composition of the Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall, as far as possible, reflect party and such other political representation and be gender balanced.

(c) Meetings

- (i) In the absence of both the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson, the Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall elect another Chairperson whose tenure of office shall be for the day of his election only.
- (ii) The Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall hold its first meeting at such time as the Chairperson shall appoint. Subsequent meetings shall be held at such time as the Parliamentary Gender Caucus may determine.

(d) Quorum and decisions

A quorum shall consist of 5 members. Decisions shall, as far as possible, be reached by consensus. In case consensus cannot be reached, the decision shall be by majority vote.

(e) Duties

It shall be the duty of the Parliamentary Gender Caucus to –

- (i) recommend the carrying out of –
 - (A) periodical gender assessments of government policies;
 - (B) research on salient gender issues; and
- (ii) facilitate networking with organisations and institutions within and outside the country in activities,

with a view to promoting gender equality and participation.

(f) Powers

In the discharge of its duties under this Order, the Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall have power to engage into agreements, as required, with such stakeholders, public and private as necessary.

(g) Reporting

The Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall, as and when necessary, lay a report outlining its activities and achievements in the Assembly.

(h) Proceedings

Except as otherwise provided in this Order, the proceedings before the Parliamentary Gender Caucus shall be governed by the other provisions of the Standing Orders relating to Select Committees.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MOTION INVOLVING PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF THE STANDING ORDERS

- 3.1 At the sitting of the Assembly held on 15 November 2016, the House agreed to the motion which stood in the name of the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications and the proposal for amendments stood referred to the Standing Orders Committee.

4. MEETING

- 4.1 Your Committee has held a meeting on Friday 18 November 2016 at 2.30 p.m.

5. SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

- 5.1 Your Committee was served by Mrs Bibi Safeena Lotun, Clerk of the National Assembly who was assisted by Ms Urmeelah Devi Ramchurn, Deputy Clerk, National Assembly and Mr Navin Gopall, Clerk Assistant. The Committee proceedings were taken down verbatim by *Hansard* Reporters and Sub-Editors. Mr Ram Ranjit Dowlutta, Adviser to the Speaker also attended Your Committee.

6. METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 Your Committee reviewed the draft of the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly 1995 which was circulated to Honourable Members when the notice of motion was circulated.

7. EXPERT ASSISTANCE

- 7.1 Your Committee considered it fit to hear the Solicitor General, who was invited to provide expert assistance on the proposed amendments. However, Mr Dheerendra Kumar Dabee, GOSK, SC, Solicitor General, was represented by Mr R.S. Ramloll, S.C., Deputy Solicitor General and by Mr M.S.M.R.P. Seetaram, Principal State Counsel.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Your Committee recommends the adoption of the amendment proposed to Standing Order 69 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly 1995, as per amendment circulated, subject however to the further amendments as discussed and approved at the meeting held on 18 November 2016, as reproduced hereunder –

“(6) Parliamentary Gender Caucus

(a) Parliamentary Gender Caucus

There shall be a Committee to be known as the Parliamentary Gender Caucus (the Caucus) to be appointed at the beginning of every Session. The objective of the Caucus shall be to work for the promotion and attainment of gender equality.

(b) Membership

- (i) Subject to paragraph (ii), the Caucus shall consist of the Speaker as Chairperson, the Deputy Speaker as Deputy Chairperson and not more than 15 members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection.
- (ii) The composition of the Caucus shall, as far as possible, reflect party representation and such other political representation and be gender balanced.

(c) Meetings

- (i) In the absence of both the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson, the Caucus shall elect another Chairperson whose tenure of office shall be for the day of his or her election only.
- (ii) The Caucus shall hold its first meeting at such time and place as the Chairperson shall appoint. Subsequent meetings shall be held at such times and places as the Caucus may determine.

(d) Quorum and decisions

A quorum shall consist of 5 members. Decisions shall, as far as possible, be reached by consensus. In case consensus cannot be reached, the decision shall be by majority vote.

(e) Duties

It shall be the duty of the Caucus to –

(i) recommend the carrying out of –

(A) periodical gender assessments of government policies;

(B) research on salient gender issues; and

(ii) facilitate networking with organisations and institutions in Mauritius and abroad in all such activities,

with a view to promoting gender equality and participation.

(f) Powers

In the discharge of its duties under this Order, the Caucus shall have power to engage into agreements, as required, with such stakeholders, public and private as necessary.

(g) Reporting

The Caucus shall, as and when necessary, lay a report outlining its activities and achievements in the Assembly.

(h) Proceedings

Except as otherwise provided in this Order, the proceedings before the Caucus shall be governed by the other provisions of the Standing Orders and Rules of the Assembly relating to Select Committees.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Your Committee thanks all the persons who have provided assistance thereto.