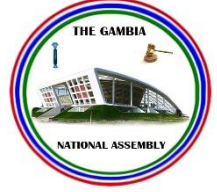


Wednesday, 08 June 2022



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA
National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reg . Pye Lane
Banjul, The Gambia

STATEMENT BY

THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (FPAC)

ON THE

BRIEFING SESSION WITH HEADS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE

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✚ Hon. Members of FPAC;

✚ H.E The Vice President;

✚ Hon. Ministers herein present;

✚ The Auditor General;

✚ Permanent Secretaries;

✚ Boards of Directors;

✚ Heads of Institutions;

✚ The Clerk and Support Staff to FPAC;

✚ The Media; and

✚ All other protocols duly observed.

Good morning to you all !!!

It is my honour and privilege, as Chairperson of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) of the Sixth Legislature, to welcome you all to this maiden briefing session with the Committee.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The purpose of this briefing is to highlight the policy direction of the Committee in relation to our operations and oversight role over the Public Institutions.

ESTABLISHMENT, MANDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

To begin with, the Finance and Public Accounts Standing Committee (FPAC) is established by Section 109 (1) (b) of the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia and draws its mandate from Orders 81, 97 and 112 of the Revised Standing Orders of the National Assembly. It is entrusted with the responsibility of exercising the functions of the National Assembly in considering and advising upon all matters connected with Public Finance and Public Accounts.

In the execution of its mandate, FPAC has the following key functions:

1. Identify, monitor, and collaborate with all Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Government, responsible for Public Finance matters.
2. Examine the accounts showing the appropriation of sums granted by the Assembly to meet the public expenditure and such other accounts laid before the Assembly as the Assembly may refer to the committee together with, the Auditor General's report thereon.
3. Scrutinise, review, and consider the audited financial statements, activity reports, and management letters of Public Agencies, Departments, Hospitals, Public Tertiary Institutions, Councils and the Central Government Accounts.
4. Approve extension of deadlines where necessary, for submission of reports of public Agencies to the Assembly.
5. Monitor the performance and viability of Public Agencies in relation to Public Service.
6. Receive and review Bills/Acts, strategic plans and other measures relating to Government/Public Agencies and proffer advice on improving text and implementing mandates.

7. Appoint an appropriately qualified auditor or firm of auditors to audit the accounts of the National Audit Office (NAO)
8. Receive and review Loan/Grant agreements relating to Public Finance and give advice before ratification.
9. Table report of minutes of meetings held in every session to the National Assembly.
10. Agree to a protocol with the government (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs), on the administrative arrangements for the scrutiny of the annual draft budget and other related budgetary matters.
11. Table the consolidated report of Committees on the scrutiny of the National Budget to the Assembly.
12. Give periodic and annual report on the state of affairs of public finance management by Government and Public Agencies to the National Assembly.

MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

The current composition of the committee is as follows:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. Hon. Alhagie S. Darbo | - | Chairperson |
| 2. Hon. Alhagie Mbow | - | Vice-Chairperson |
| 3. Hon. Seedy S.K Njie | - | Member |
| 4. Hon. Fatoumatta Njai | - | Member |
| 5. Hon. Fatou Cham | - | Member |
| 6. Hon. Musa Cham | - | Member |
| 7. Hon. Kebba Lang Fofana | - | Member |
| 8. Hon. Kebba T. Sanneh | - | Member |
| 9. Hon. Sulayman Jammeh | - | Member |

CURRENT OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENT

During the course of the Fifth Legislature, Public institutions were submitting their activity reports and audited financial statements to their portfolio Select or Standing Committees for scrutiny. However, this was not yielding the desired results. There was no proper coordination on the reporting and, in some instances, non-compliance with the law.

Accordingly, the Bureau of Committees which is tasked by the Assembly to set the policy direction of Committee operations, met and resolved that moving forward, the scrutiny of all Public Accounts shall be the sole responsibility of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) except thirteen (13) Commercial State-Owned Public Enterprises whose accounts shall be submitted to and scrutinized by the Public Enterprises Committee (PEC).

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Furthermore, the Select Committees shall continue to perform their oversight role on Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and are at liberty to request any document or summon or conduct any oversight visits on institutions within their remit.

COMMITTEE'S OVERSIGHT SESSION

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

FPAC shall commence its oversight sessions as per the approved schedule, from the 20th of June 2022 to 30th October 2022. During this period, the Committee shall consider the Audited Account and Financial Statement of the Government of Republic of The Gambia, all Public Agencies, Departments, Independent/Autonomous Public Institutions, Councils, Tertiary Education Institutions, All Public Hospitals, etc.

POWERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

To empower the Committee to better perform its functions, subsection 3 of section 109 of the 1997 Constitutions stipulates as follows:

“For the purpose of effectively performing its functions, each of the Committees shall have all the powers, rights and privileges as are vested in the High Court at a trial in respect of:

- (a) Enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise;
- (b) Compelling production of documents; and
- (c) The issue of a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad.”

Thus, moving forward the sitting procedures of the Committee shall be as follows:

1. Engagement with the Finance and Public Accounts Committee takes precedence over all other engagements. Thus, once an officer or Institution is summoned to appear before the Committee and gives excuses for not appearing, without a prior authority from the Chairperson, he/she/they will be in contempt of the Committee and will, in consequence, be subject to a sanction the nature of which will be determined by the Committee.
2. Sittings of the Committee shall be solemnized by conduct characteristic of the sittings of the High Court.

3. Before presenting any report or testimony, all officials shall take the proscribed oath to be administered by the Clerk to the Committee
4. An official will be held responsible for any disallowed expenditure as a result of his or her negligence, misconduct or inefficiency.
5. Institutions/officers shall submit both hard and soft copies of their annual activity reports and audited financial statements to the Office of the Clerk two weeks before the date set for scrutiny. Failure to do so will be considered to be in contempt of the Committee and shall call for a reprimand whose nature will be defined by the Committee.
6. The Committee will begin consideration of activity reports and audited financial statements relating to auditing periods 2016 to 2020 depending on the last year of submission to the National Assembly.
7. The Committee shall give a timeline for the implementation of its recommendations and shall assume responsibility to monitor the implementation of its recommendations through the various Select Committees and shall hold Institutions accountable for not adhering to its dictates.
8. As provided for in the Standing Order 100 (1) and (2), I quote, “Within thirty days of the resolution of the Assembly or adoption of any report of a Committee, [in this case FPAC’s report] the Minister under whose portfolio the matter raised in the report or contained in the assurances or resolution fall, shall provide a reply to the Assembly. Furthermore, a Minister who fails to submit a report under this Standing Order shall be deemed to be in contempt of the Assembly within the meaning of section 75 (6) of the Constitution (misconduct in office)”.
9. All Permanent Secretaries and Vote Controllers at Ministries and Departments should be present during the Presentation and Consideration of Government, to answer questions and make clarifications.
10. Going forward, FPAC will implement the law (Constitution, Public Finance and State-Owned Enterprises Acts) regarding the three months and six months requirements for Agencies and Government respectively to submit reports.
11. Failure to comply with the reporting requirements will not prevent FPAC from laying its report at the plenary and making recommendations.

CONCLUSION

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to seize this opportunity to thank all of you for coming to attend this maiden briefing session. The Secretariat would share copies of the briefing statement and schedule of the Committee for your attention and necessary action. I now open the floor for questions and or clarifications. THANK YOU.

DRAFT