



PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

GUIDELINES ON THE CONDUCT OF SITTINGS OF PARLIAMENT AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

In furtherance to various measures that have been put in place by the Government to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and to the earlier guidelines issued by the Speaker on Thursday 19th March 2020, 31st March 2020, 2nd & 4th April 2020, with effect from, 14th April 2020, acting on the Authority given to the Speaker by law, the following additional guidelines shall be followed to facilitate the smooth flow of conducting of parliamentary business in Plenary and Committee sittings during the COVID-19 pandemic period;

A. SITTINGS OF PARLIAMENT

In order to ensure the WHO recommended social distancing and necessary preventive measures-

1. Period of sitting.

Plenary sittings shall be held in the Parliament Chamber and shall end no later than 5:00 p.m.

2. Sitting arrangement.

- (1) Every sitting of the House shall be attended by not more than ;
 - (a) 100 members of Parliament;
 - (b) 5 members of staff of Parliament deployed by the Clerk to Parliament;
 - and
 - (c) 2 staff on the technical bench of the Government.
- (2) Consequently, eighty (80) seats have been noticeably marked in the House for use by the back bench Members, and each has been assigned a number.
- (3) Prior to a scheduled Sitting of the House, the Government Chief Whip, Chief Opposition Whip, the Speaker for Independents and the coordinator

for the UPDF Members shall designate members in accordance with the numerical strength in the House; Provided that all Members of Parliament MUST be given an opportunity to attend the sittings of the House;

- (4) The nominations shall be sent and received by the Clerk to Parliament by 05:00pm a day prior to the date when the sitting of the House will be held.
- (5) The Clerk to Parliament shall notify the nominated Members using the BULK SMS solution, email or other means, and further uploaded on the Parliamentary intranet (Alfresco) and accessible on the members' Tablets (IPads) informing them to attend that particular Sitting.
- (6) The Sergeant At Arms (SAA) shall ensure that each member sits on a seat as numbered.

3. Reserved Seats.

- (1) The Clerk to Parliament shall reserve seats for the following-
 - (a) the Rt. Hon. Speaker or Rt. Hon. Deputy Speaker;
 - (b) the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and leader of Government Business in Parliament;
 - (c) 10 Cabinet Ministers;
 - (d) The Hon. Leader of the Opposition in Parliament; and
 - (e) a member scheduled to move business indicated on the order Paper of the relevant sitting.
- (2) There shall otherwise be free sitting in the House to ensure that members maintain social distancing

4. Prohibition of consultations.

- (1) Where a member occupies his or her allocated seat in the House, the Member shall not change seats or draw closer to another Member, the Speaker's or Clerks-at-the-Table; or the Technical bench.
- (2) There shall be no physical consultations at the Speaker's Chair or at the Clerk's Table. Accordingly, it is out of order for a Member or staff to approach the Speaker's Chair or the Clerk's Table for any purpose.

5. Speaking and Use of the Microphone.

- (1) A member shall only speak with the consent of the Speaker and, other than the front bench, use the microphone designated to that member.
- (2) A member shall stand at least 0.5 metres away from the microphone, and

may, if he or she desires, wear a mask while speaking.

(3) For the front bench, A member is not allowed to touch or adjust the designated microphone. This shall be done by the SAA who will ensure that the microphone is sanitized before a member uses it.

6. Record of attendance.

The biometric register of Members' attendance to plenary sittings is forthwith suspended. The Clerk to Parliament shall ensure that each Member is manually recorded (and his or her seat number) present at the relevant Sitting.

7. Access of plenary documents

Plenary documents shall only be accessible through the parliamentary intranet (Alfresco) and the parliamentary website to avoid the use of paper documents.

8. Access to the House.

Every Member shall while, entering, within and when exiting the House, observe the social distancing requirements, together with such sanitization measures in place.

9. Exiting the House.

Where a member exits the House, his or her seat shall be promptly disinfected by the SAA before that seat is occupied by another Member.

B. COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

10. Restriction on committee meetings.

- (1) All Committee meetings are suspended except;
 - (a) the budget committee meetings on consideration of the budget estimates for the FY 2020/21;
 - (b) the finance committee meetings on consideration of the tax bills; and
 - (c) any other committee approved by the Speaker to consider matters or proposals aimed at actualizing measures to address the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- (2) A sitting of a Committee for any other purpose shall require prior approval of the Speaker.
- (3) All committee meetings shall end by 05:00pm.

11. Place for committee meetings.

Committee sittings shall only be held in the Conference Hall or any other

place designated by the Sergeant At Arms and the sitting arrangement shall adhere to Social distancing measures set by the Government.

12. Conduct of meetings.

Committees shall conduct paperless meetings through the use of the Members' Ipads and video conferencing where necessary. Where Video conferencing is required, the Clerk to Parliament will be notified at least 24hrs before the time scheduled for the meeting to enable her make the requisite arrangements.

13. Committee secretariat.

A committee meeting shall be facilitated by one Clerk Assistant, one Legislative/Legal Counsel, Research officer, Budget Officer and one Sergeant-at-Arms at a given time. Other members of the secretariat shall offer background technical support from offices or at home as may be determined by the Clerk to Parliament.

14. Access of the Media and public to Committee Meetings.

- (1) The media and the public shall not be allowed to physically access Committee meetings.
- (2) The Clerk shall make arrangements to enable the Media and the public to access the committee meetings electronically.
- (3) Every submission to a committee shall be in soft form through the official e-mail of the Clerk (clerk@parliament.go.ug).

C. GENERAL

15. Restriction of entry to the Precincts of Parliament.

- (1) A member or staff of Parliament who travelled out of the country and returned on or after 7th March 2020 shall not be allowed on the precincts of Parliament unless he or she presents evidence of negative COVID-19 status.
- (2) Where the travel was funded by Parliament, the Clerk shall communicate to all affected members and staff of Parliament.

16. Catering Services.

During this period, there shall be no catering services within the precincts of Parliament. However, the Clerk shall ensure that drinking water is provided during plenary and committee Sittings. i.

17. Communication to members.

The Clerk shall use a bulk SMS and Email System for sending any alerts and updates to members and staff using their known telephone contacts on record. The Clerk is further directed to ensure that every member's email and telephone contact is updated and confirmed by the member.

18. Access to offices in Parliament.

Members and staff are encouraged to seek assistance or make enquires through telephone calls rather than physically visiting leadership and staff offices within the Parliament Buildings.

19. Access of parliamentary proceedings by the Public.

Parliament shall not admit any visitors to its Gallery to follow proceedings until such time as it shall be safe to do so. Persons or parties desirous of following parliamentary proceedings are advised to do so remotely through;

- (a) the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) television;
- (b) Parliament YouTube Channel by subscribing to the Channel; UGParliament
- (c) by accessing the Facebook page of the Parliament of Uganda; or
- (d) Twitter account .

20. Special category of members and staff.

In accordance with the WHO advisory, Members and parliamentary staff with pre-existing medical conditions, expectant or lactating mothers more vulnerable to COVID-19, are encouraged to work from home for their safety.

21. Enforcement of hygiene measures.

- (1) Members and staff of the Parliament shall uphold hygiene measures and maintain a minimum social distance of 2 metres between themselves and any other person whenever they are within the precincts of Parliament, including when entering or leaving the House, Committees or other places within the precincts of Parliament.
- (2) The Clerk shall ensure that sanitary utilities are provided at all entry points to the facilities in the parliamentary buildings and hand sanitizers shall be placed at designated areas for use by everyone within the precincts of Parliament.

22. Personal staff of members.

Save for staff attached to members with disabilities, all other personal staff of Members are prohibited from accessing the parliamentary buildings.

23. Revision of these guidelines.

These guidelines may be revised by the Speaker from time to time and shall subsist for all Sittings of the House and Committee meetings during the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, or until suspended by the Speaker.

STAY SAFE!

Issued under my hand on this 8th day of April 2020

Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga (MP)
SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT