Policy on Media Relations Management

Approved

MJ MAHLANGU
CHAIRPERSON: NCOP

Date: 26/08/09

MY SIBULU
 SPEAKER: NA

Date: 02/08/07
1. Introduction and Background:

Parliament acknowledges that the existing media relations arrangements in terms of media accreditation, access to facilities, media relation and media protocol must be streamlined.

In terms of sections 59 and 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Parliament must conduct its business in an open manner and hold its sittings and those of its committees in public. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides that reasonable measures may be taken to regulate public access, including access of the media to Parliament and its committees. Parliament may however not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society.

This policy seeks to strengthen the relationship between Parliament and the media and provide guidelines on managing media relations in Parliament.

2. Definition of Terms:

- **Employee**
  - A person employed, including a manager, to a permanent position, temporary and/or fixed-term employment contract in the Parliamentary Service of Parliament

- **House**
  - The National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

- **Journalist**
  - A member of the media accredited by Parliament

- **Media**
  - National and regional print and broadcast media, private radio stations, community news stations, news agencies, international media, online media, the specialist press including newspapers, magazines, journals and publications

- **Parliament**
  - The National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
Precinct of Parliament — The area or land and every building or part of a building under the control of Parliament, including:

i. the chambers in which the proceedings of the Houses are conducted and the galleries and lobbies of the chambers;

ii. every part of the buildings in which the chambers are situated, and every forecourt, yard, garden, enclosure or open space connected thereto;

iii. committee rooms and other meeting places provided or used primarily for the purpose of Parliament; and

iv. every other building or part of a building provided or used in connection with the proceedings of Parliament, while so used.

Presiding Officers — The Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces

Public areas — Entrances to buildings, passages, toilets, underground parking areas, restaurants, cafeterias, cantines, offices, balconies and stairways

Secretary — Secretary to Parliament

— Head of Administration of Parliament

— Accounting Officer

3. Policy Statement:

Parliament will provide access to, and maintain professional relations with, the media.

4. Purpose:

To ensure that the business of Parliament is conducted in an open and transparent manner by providing reasonable access to the media, and to manage the relationship between Parliament and the media.

5. Scope of Application:

This policy applies to representatives of the media, employees and former employees of Parliament.
6. Objectives:

a) To encourage effective communication between the media and Parliament;
b) To ensure that Parliament is accessible to the media;
a) To promote accountability and transparency through the media; and
b) To facilitate accurate reporting on activities of Parliament.

7. Legislative Framework and Mandate:

b) The South African Broadcasting Act (Act No. 4 of 1999)
c) The Electronic Communication Act (Act No. 36 of 2005)
d) The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (Act No. 132 of 1999)
e) The Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) Act (Act No. 13 of 2000)
g) Security Policy of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2006
i) The Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act no. 2 of 2000)
j) The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication Act (Act No. 70 of 2002)
k) Rules of the National Assembly, National Council of Provinces and Joint Rules of Parliament
l) The National Strategic Intelligence Act (Act No.39 of 1994)

8. Policy Provisons:

8.1 General guideline:

a) The rights of journalists to privacy shall be respected and the constitutional principles of freedom of expression shall be adhered to. At the same time the responsibility of Parliament to ensure the security of the precinct of Parliament and elected representatives shall be recognised.

8.2 Media accreditation

In order to report proceedings of a House, journalists must obtain accreditation from the Presiding Officers.

8.2.1 First level (full-time) media accreditation:

(a) The Presiding Officers may approve applications received for media accreditation of representatives of generally recognised media organisations disseminating information to the public, who cover the proceedings of Parliament on a full-time basis.

8.2.2 Second level (temporary) media accreditation:
(a) The Presiding Officers may approve applications received for media accreditation of representatives of organisations who wish to cover Parliament for their specific publications/journals, which are distributed to the broader public.

(b) Foreign journalists and media representatives who do not cover proceedings on a full-time basis or could for other reasons not be granted first-level accreditation may be considered for second-level accreditation.

8.2.3 Security clearance

(a) Potential accredited media must pass a minimum level of security clearance. Should a journalist fail to secure clearance, this will be communicated to him/her first, and if need be, his/her editor, by the Secretary. Such a journalist will have the right to appeal.

(b) Accreditation may only be granted if a positive security clearance is obtained.

8.3 Access to facilities

Accredited journalists and media personnel will have access to the precinct of Parliament as described below:

8.3.1 The media shall have access to the following areas:

(a) media rooms and offices;
(b) all public areas and entrances;
(c) press gallery;
(d) cafeterias used by employees; and
(e) committee rooms where open meetings are conducted.

8.3.2 The media shall have no access to the following areas:

(a) the floor of the chamber unless agreed by the Presiding Officers;
(b) Members’ restaurants and dining halls unless by invitation;
(c) Presiding Officers’ offices unless by invitation;
(d) Members’ offices unless permission has been granted by the Member;
(e) Employees’ offices unless permission has been granted by the Secretary; and
(f) committee rooms where closed meetings are conducted.

8.3.3 Access Permits:

(a) Applications received from monitors/lobbyists, who wish to cover the proceedings of Parliament for their specific publications/journals, which are geared solely for their own membership, must obtain visitor’s permits as they are permitted to take notes on the public galleries and in the committee rooms.

(b) Accredited journalists will be granted access permits that allow smooth entry to the precinct of Parliament without filling a daily attendance register which is a requirement for non-parliamentary employees.
(c) Access permits must be returned to the Permits Office of Parliament upon termination of employment or redeployment of a journalist by the media house through which accreditation was obtained.

(d) Accreditation for a replacement of the person described in (c) above will be subject to him/her returning his/her access permit.

(e) An access permit issued to a journalist shall at no stage be used by another journalist or person, except the journalist to whom accreditation was granted.

8.4 Media protocol:

8.4.1 Accredited journalists must adhere to policies, rules and regulations of Parliament regarding access, security, safety, health and environment, including the policies on smoking and sexual harassment.

8.4.2 Journalists must treat Members and employees of Parliament with due courtesy, and consideration, and respect their rights to privacy.

8.4.3 Journalists should not approach party support staff or employees of Parliament to seek information on parliamentary matters. All enquiries are to be made through the Media Relations Office.

8.4.4 Journalists should not behave in anyway that is disruptive and prevents Members and employees of Parliament from performing their duties.

8.4.5 Parliament reserves the right to cancel, revoke or review accreditation of a journalist, should the policies, rules and regulations of Parliament be breached by the journalist.

8.5 Media relations

8.5.1 The Manager: Parliamentary Communication Service shall act as an intermediary between Parliament and the media.

8.5.2 No employee may speak to the media in their capacity as an employee of Parliament or give press releases or statements on behalf of Parliament, except employees assigned to do so.

8.5.3 All applications or enquiries by the media in relation to interviews, filming, statements, and accreditation must be directed to the Media Relations Office.

8.5.4 All requests from the media must be communicated through the Media Relations Office.

8.6 Employees

8.6.1 An employee may only communicate with the media on parliamentary matters if he/she is authorised to do so by the Secretary.
9. Roles and Responsibilities:

(a) Employees of Parliament and the media share the responsibility of adhering to and putting into effect this policy.

(b) The Manager: Parliamentary Communication Service is responsible for the implementation of this policy and to ensure that information provided to the media is appropriate, accurate and prompt.

(c) The Manager: Parliamentary Communication Services is also responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated to members of the media.

(d) The Presiding Officers are responsible for granting media accreditation.

10. Breach of Policy:

(a) Any breach of this policy by an employee of Parliament may lead to a disciplinary action in terms of the Disciplinary Procedures of Parliament, up to and including termination of employment.

(b) Any breach of this policy by a member of the media may lead to accreditation being revoked and/or the person being removed from the precinct of Parliament.

11. Communication:

This policy must be made available upon request to employees of Parliament and members of the media in any of the eleven (11) official languages, sign language and Braille.

12. Dispute Resolution:

(a) A party that feels aggrieved by the decision of the Secretary may submit its complaint to the Speaker of the National Assembly or the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces.

(b) An employee not satisfied with the application of this policy may follow the Grievance Procedure and/or Dispute Resolution Procedure.

13. Review of Policy:

This policy must be reviewed as and when the need arises.

14. Date of Effect:

The policy will be effective on the date on which it is signed by the relevant authority.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation:

The Policy Management Unit (PMU) must monitor the implementation and evaluate the impact of this policy.