



STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The National Council
Parliament of Bhutan



2015-2019



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Preface

When the National Council was established in 2008, it had to make its beginning from scratch relying on, among others, the experiences of the erstwhile National Assembly. In order to chart out a holistic development plan, an Organizational Development (OD) Plan for the period 2010-2015 was developed in 2010, outlining for the first time its Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Framework, Strategic Goals/Objectives and Implementation Strategies. The National Council has, after seven years, already made remarkable strides in fulfilling its legislative, oversight and representational roles. It is now time to revisit the achievements made, challenges faced and based on the experiences it had gained thus far, to redraw a futuristic and realistic Strategic Plan that would foster further development of the institution.

It is with great pleasure that I present the new Strategic Development Plan of the National Council for 2015-2019. This strategic document is an outcome of several consultative meetings, workshops and discourses that took place among the members, secretariat staff and between the members and secretariat staff. In particular, the strategic planning and visioning exercise the members did at Paro in 2014 contributed substantially. The document outlines the direction in which the National Council will move in the next five years. The strategic objectives and activities in the plan reflect the National Council's commitment to be responsive and proactive to the needs and aspirations of the people and the country.

As the core of its contents, the Strategic Development Plan has five strategic objectives and a host of strategic activities under each objective to be implemented in order to achieve the National Council's Vision:

"To be a principal apolitical institution of a vibrant democracy that shall promote the wellbeing of the people while safeguarding the security and sovereignty of the Kingdom".

The strategic objectives are to: build the institutional capacity of the secretariat, strengthen the legislative capacity and processes, improve the oversight and review functions, develop the representational and outreach capacity, and strengthen the National Council's non-partisan character. The strategic activities outlined in the plan range from activities geared toward improving the professional capacity of members and staff, building knowledge products on core mandates, and providing conducive working environment to strengthening parliamentary diplomacy.

The strategic plan will serve as a roadmap for preparing periodical plans to achieve the National Council's goals in a phased manner. Since it was developed based on the experiences and challenges the House faced as a parliamentary institution, the strategic plan is expected to help the National Council grow as an organization and enable it to contribute toward deepening and sustaining democracy in the country.

However, the National Council is dependent on many of its stakeholders to implement the planned strategic activities. I am confident that the Royal Government and the donor agencies will continue to support the House in the effort to strengthen its institutional and professional capacity. The National Council is, particularly, grateful to UNDP Bhutan for fielding a national consultant to develop this strategic plan.



Tshewang Norbu
Secretary General
National Council of Bhutan





Executive Summary

The National Council of Bhutan developed this Strategic Development Plan (2015-2019) as a sequel to its Organizational Development Plan (2011-2015). The Organizational Development Plan was reviewed to frame this Strategic Plan. It had provided the National Council a strategic direction for the last five years. Most strategic objectives and activities had to be included again as the House is still in the phase of strengthening itself as an institution. Especially, the secretariat needs to be equipped with adequate resources to shoulder its mandates effectively.

This Strategic Development Plan contains strategic objectives and activities that are geared toward achieving the House's Vision: "To be a principal apolitical institution of a vibrant democracy that shall promote the wellbeing of the people while safeguarding the security and sovereignty of the Kingdom". It will guide the National Council in realizing its Mission: "To fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people through review

of public policies, legislations, scrutiny of state affairs, and render advice to the Druk Gyalpo, Prime Minister and the National Assembly on matters of national importance”.

There are six sections in this Strategic Plan. Section 1 has a brief background on the National Council of Bhutan and the context of the development of this Strategic Plan.

Section 2 contains the House’s Vision, Mission and Values. Section 3 forms the heart of this strategic document. It outlines the five strategic objectives and strategic activities that need to be implemented and achieved in the stipulated time-frame to accomplish the House’s Vision and Mission.

Section 4 talks about resource mobilization to implement the strategic activities to achieve the strategic objectives. To ensure effective implementation of this Strategic Plan, section 5 outlines how the Plan will be implemented using its Implementation Roadmap.

The final section mentions ways in which it will be monitored and evaluated with clear reporting and accountability mechanisms to ensure successful implementation.

Annex 1 is the Implementation Roadmap of the Strategic Development Plan. It is a tabular representation of the summary of the document that will guide its implementation. It outlines timelines and committees/ sections/units/divisions responsible to execute the strategic activities that will help achieve the strategic objectives, which in turn, will help attain the House’s Vision and Mission.





Background

Bhutan made a historic transition to Democratic Constitutional Monarchy in 2008. The National Council is one of the chambers of Bhutan's Parliament, which includes the Druk Gyalpo [His Majesty the King of Bhutan] and the National Assembly.

The National Council has 25 members. Voters directly elect one member each from 20 Dzongkhags in the country. The Druk Gyalpo nominates five eminent members. The primary mandate of the House is to legislate, provide oversight functions to the executive and represent the people.

Also, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states: "Besides its legislative functions, the National Council shall act as the House of review on matters affecting the

security and sovereignty of the country and the interest of the nation and the people that need to be brought to the notice of the Druk Gyalpo, the Prime Minister and the National Assembly".

The Chairperson is the head of the National Council, who is supported by the Secretary General and the staff of the Secretariat.

In order to persevere in fulfilling parliamentary duties to serve the people of Bhutan, the National Council reviewed its existing organizational strategic document to develop this Strategic Development Plan (2015-2019). The Strategic Plan charts out the direction that the National Council will take to realize its Vision and Mission.



Vision, Mission & Values

To be a principal apolitical institution of a vibrant democracy that shall promote the wellbeing of the people while safeguarding the security and sovereignty of the Kingdom.



To fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people through review of public policies, legislations, scrutiny of state affairs, and render advice to the Druk Gyalpo, Prime Minister and the National Assembly on matters of national importance.



Patriotism - With profound reverence to the Tsa-Wa-Sum, the Druk Gyalpo, the people of Bhutan and Drukyul, our professional and personal conduct shall always be guided by the need to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of the Tsa-Wa-Sum.

Professionalism - With commitment to excellence, teamwork and complete professional dedication, we shall seek to discharge our duties through the highest standards of professionalism.

Humility - In the realization that we have been provided the good fortune to serve the people of Bhutan, we shall discharge our duties with empathy and deep sense of humility.

Integrity - Knowing its importance in public service, we shall demonstrate the highest standards of integrity and honesty in all our dealings and conduct.

Fairness - We shall work together to embed principles of equality and diversity and promote a culture of openness and fairness in everything we do.

Empathy - Guided by the values of democracy, we shall encourage tolerance, different opinions, views, aspirations and interests through a deep sense of empathy in the professional discharge of our duties.



Strategic Objective 1

Build the institutional capacity of the secretariat

The National Council Secretariat is just as old as the institution of democracy in Bhutan. As a new organization, it faces a host of challenges that are multi-dimensional in nature: organizational, procedural, human resource and structural. The secretariat is central to the effective functioning of the National Council. The efficiency and effectiveness of the House as a parliamentary institution depends on the ability of the secretariat to support it to carry out its constitutional mandates. Given the importance of the secretariat in the life and success of the National Council, the first Strategic Objective of this Strategic Plan is to build its capacity. The following strategic activities will be carried out to realize this Strategic Objective.



Strategic Activities

1.1 Provide adequate physical space

The existing National Council Hall is small. It cannot accommodate more than a few people interested to attend the deliberations. It has no proper press gallery. The offices of the members are small and located in the attic of the Convention Center. There are hardly any decent committee conference rooms despite the existence of seven standing committees. Besides, there is no space to conduct public hearings. The secretariat also does not have good office spaces. The lack of proper office space for both members and secretariat staff is not conducive for work.

During this Strategic Plan period, the National Council will discuss with the government and explore means to address the problem, including the possibility of constructing a new building for the House. The Secretariat will ensure that childcare needs of working mothers are inbuilt in the spatial design of the new National Council building or integrated in the present premises.

1.2 Develop human resource

The secretariat does not have adequate staff in critical areas. It does not have division heads to guide the staff and support the management. Most of the existing staff are young with a lot of potential but lack experience, especially in research, legislative drafting, preparing policy briefs and recording committee proceedings. Not a single official is trained in parliamentary affairs.

A human resource capacity development plan will be developed. The secretariat will discuss with the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) to look into the possibility of carrying out direct appointment of staff with relevant background, particularly in the field of research in different subjects.

1.3 Improve secretarial support services

The secretariat recognizes its mandate and the importance of secretarial support to enable the members in fulfilling their constitutional duties. The National Council's vision to fulfill the aspirations of the Bhutanese people through effective discharge of its mandates largely depends on the ability of its secretariat to support the members. Therefore, the secretariat is committed to improving its support services to the members.

It will be a priority to deploy (in consultation with RCSC) sufficient staff to provide secretarial support services to the members. The secretariat will ensure the implementation of the amended provisions of the NC Act (2014) on human resource requirement.

1.4 Strengthen research capacity

The research support capacity of a parliamentary institution such as the National Council is critical. The members require research support services almost all the time to carry out their mandates effectively. At the moment, the secretariat is not in a position to render adequate research support services to members. The existing research officers are untrained and lack the skills and experience in rendering parliamentary support services.

During this plan period, the secretariat will strengthen its research capacity. It will address the current gaps in providing research support services to the members. The research division will be strengthened to be able to provide hands-on training on research techniques and methodologies to parliamentarians. Further, the National Council will be linked up with national research institutions and colleges under the Royal University of Bhutan to collaborate in research activities.

1.5 Human and financial resource autonomy

The National Council Act 2014 (amended) addresses concerns of human resource requirement of its secretariat. The House will now have to put a strategy in place to retain the staff. However, the National Council has no autonomy over its financial resources. The Finance Ministry allocates its budget. The lack of financial autonomy hampers its ability to plan activities based on priority befitting a parliamentary institution's requirements.

The National Council will re-open discussion with the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister concerning financial autonomy of the two houses of Parliament and their secretariats. The financial autonomy will enable the National Council to plan and implement activities based on importance and priorities.

1.6 Parliamentary Training Institute

Parliamentary democracy is new to Bhutan. So there is an acute need for enhancing skills and experience to enable elected members and their support staff to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Training members and staff abroad on parliamentary affairs is both expensive and not always appropriate as parliamentary practices and processes differ from others owing to specificities of culture, politics and the constitution. The House believes that Bhutan must have its own parliamentary training institute in the near future.

In consultation and collaboration with the National Assembly, the National Council will plan the establishment of the Parliamentary Training Institute of Bhutan (PTIB).

1.7 Build collaborations with international parliamentary institutions

Parliamentary process and practices constantly evolve. It is important the National Council remain abreast of global parliamentary developments to be contemporary, especially in terms of rendering secretarial support services to the members.

The secretariat will make conscientious efforts to establish new collaborations with parliamentary institutions with similar systems and settings, and build existing relationship with institutions such as Inter Parliamentary Union and other regional parliamentary bodies.

1.8 Improve recording and archiving systems

The secretariat recognizes the need to improve the National Council's systems of recording and archiving the deliberations. At the moment, there is no proper system. Though the existing law requires the deliberations to be ready for public in a month, the need will arise in future to make them accessible even earlier.

Therefore, training officials in recording (especially short-hand techniques for those responsible for documenting), improving the system to record and archive deliberations, introduction of voice recognition machines, other software programs and buying required equipment will be prioritized.

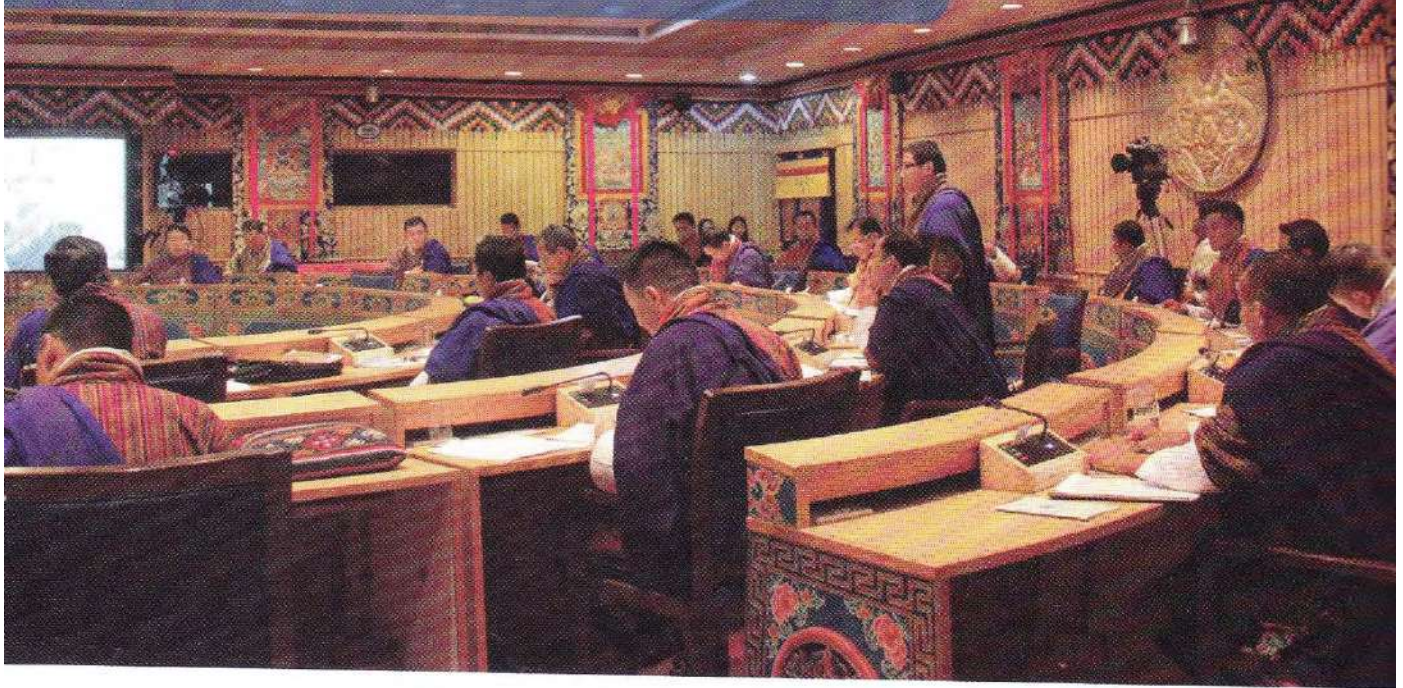
1.9 Develop the library resource

To ensure access by members to quality information required for evidence-based debates and decisions, the secretariat will improve the existing library both in terms of its quality and quantity. Also, since the members have to be on the move visiting their constituencies and on official travel, the development of e-library will be considered urgent. Collaboration with the Institute for GNH Studies (iGNHaS), Royal University of Bhutan will be established at the earliest possible to share library resources. The secretariat will also seek financial support for subscription of institutional membership to reputed online resources such as JSTOR.



Strategic Objective 2

Strengthen the legislative capacity



Making laws is one of the core mandates of the National Council. The House believes that the quality and soundness of legislation reflects a country's level of political maturity and social advancement. The House is committed to improving its legislative capacity to ensure that the laws it enacts are holistic, practical and mirror the aspirations of the people. Toward this end, numerous strategic activities will be undertaken during this Strategic Plan period.



Strategic Activities

2.1. Build the legislative research capacity

The legislative research capacity is critical to ensuring sound and effective legislation. It ensures that resolutions of the deliberations are substantive and research-based. The House recognizes that the research capacity of both the secretariat staff and the members needs to be strengthened. The legislative capacity of secretariat staff will be built with proper succession planning. However, as shown by the past experience of high turnover of the members, their legislative capacity will be built through appropriate trainings at the beginning and regular intervals of their tenure.

The secretariat will arrange to roll out legislative training sessions both for the staff and members during this plan period.

2.2. Recruit more legal professionals at the secretariat

The lack of adequate number of legal professionals at the secretariat is a bottleneck to providing quality and sufficient legislative support to the members. The existing legal professionals cannot cater to all the members. Therefore, the secretariat needs additional legal counsels at the earliest possible to ensure the members are able to avail required legislative support services from the secretariat. It will be taken up on priority basis with RCSC when the organizational development exercise for the NC secretariat is conducted. The secretariat will involve the members during the exercise.

2.3. Improve committee functions

It is common knowledge that the quality of parliamentary deliberations and debates and thereafter the resolutions depends on the effectiveness of the parliamentary committee system. The parliamentary committees act as a filter for scrutinizing laws and policies before they are enacted. They are mandated to conduct thorough investigations of policy and legislative proposals which are to be tabled for deliberations. The National Council accords utmost importance to the committees.

The House will make concerted efforts to improve the effectiveness of the committees. Some of the strategic activities will include those toward improving inter-committee functions, public hearing system and training committee chairpersons and members to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the committees.

2.4. Legislative drafting expertise

Only a few members and secretariat staff have legal background. The prevailing practice is the agencies concerned and Office of the Attorney General draft the bills. However, it will be a significant achievement if members and secretariat staff

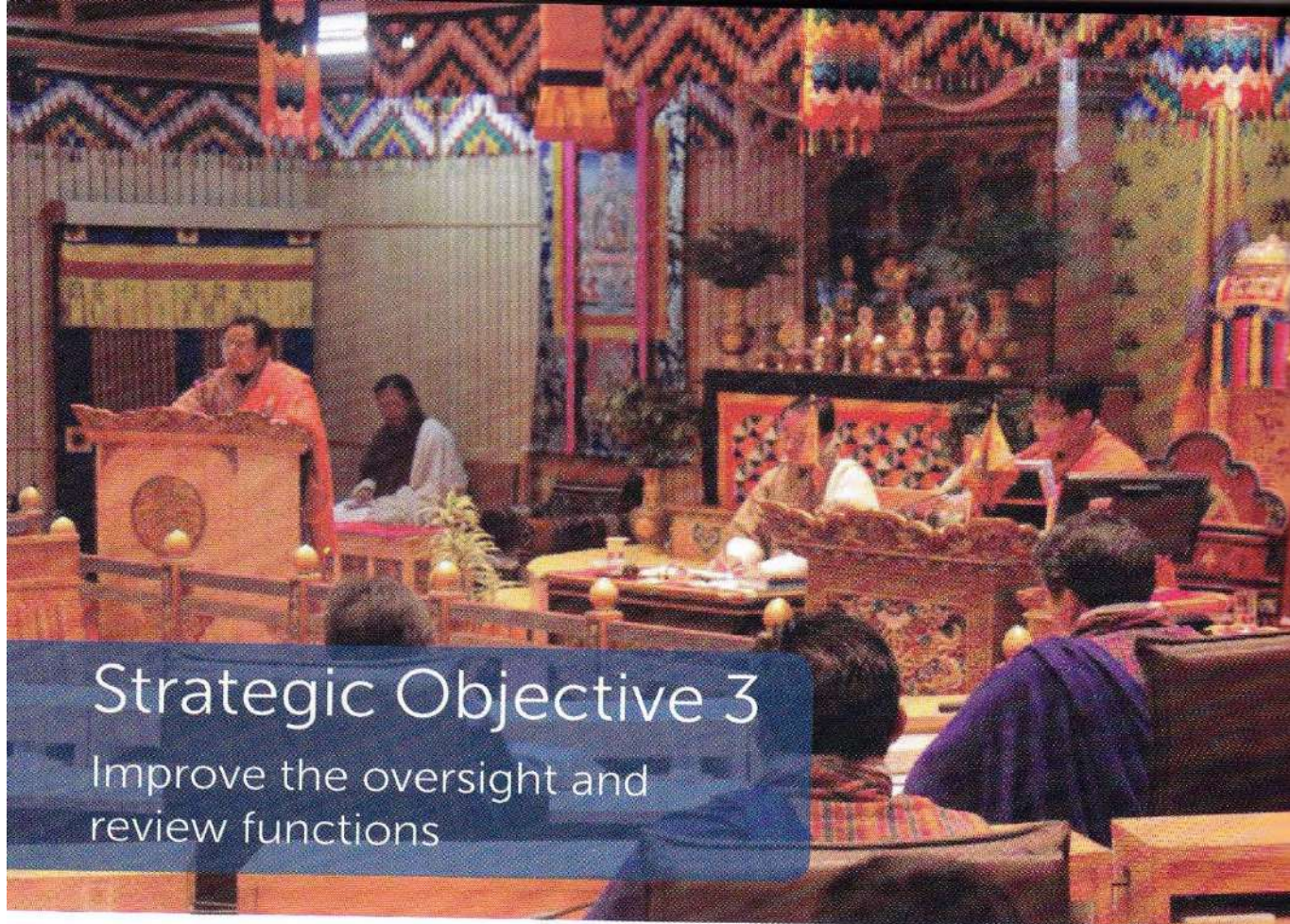
are also able to draft legislation to reflect the expectations and aspirations of the people they represent. The secretariat staff dealing with drafting of amendment bills before and during sessions and those responsible for private members bills (if any) should also be competent in legislative drafting as well as preparing legislative and policy briefs. The secretariat is committed to enhance the legislative drafting skills of both members and staff. Legislative drafting trainings by experts will be arranged.

2.5. Involvement of government agencies and people in law-making

The National Council strongly believes in collective wisdom. The existing practice of involving government agencies and the people in the law-making process will be professionalized and institutionalized. It will make more efforts in bringing stakeholders onboard for soliciting inputs and feedback for bills and other issues on National Council's agenda. This will ensure that the laws that the House enacts are reflective of the needs and aspirations of the people and the country. It will give utmost importance to stakeholder consultations.







Strategic Objective 3

Improve the oversight and review functions

The Constitution of the country assigns great importance to the National Council concerning its oversight and review functions. It states that besides its legislative functions, the House shall act as the House of review on matters affecting the security and sovereignty of the country and the interest of the nation and the people that need to be brought to the notice of the Druk Gyalpo, the Prime Minister and the National Assembly.

Given the importance of the oversight and review functions of the House, it is important to carry out strategic activities that will enable members to fulfill the mandate effectively. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008, Article 10 states: "Parliament shall ensure that the Government safeguards the interests of the nation and fulfills the aspirations of the people through public review of policies and issues, Bills and other legislations, and scrutiny of State functions".



Strategic Activities

3.1. Strengthen the working relationship with the National Assembly & the Executive

The National Council strongly believes in the ideals of democracy and acknowledges the importance of institutions responsible for promoting transparency, accountability and efficiency in the workings of the system. It also recognizes the significance of the roles of each institution in deepening a democracy that fulfills the aspirations of the people.

To carry out one of its most important mandates – oversight and review functions – the House needs professional collaboration with two important institutions in our polity – the National Assembly and the Executive. The National Council will make concerted efforts to strengthen its working relationships with them.

A clear mechanism for the House to work with the two institutions will be developed and institutionalized.

3.2. Improve the review process

To carry out review functions, the National Council has to work with various agencies. It is important to have a clear channel and means through which the House will conduct its review activities. There were incidents where a few organizations refused to share information preventing the House from carrying out its review work efficiently. The mechanism should include the procedures and system to summon agencies that do not provide satisfactory answers to the questions the House asks. Also, it will have the means to carry out review functions through questions at the House's session. The mechanisms have been included in the amended National Council Act 2014. The House will ensure its effective implementation.

3.3. Revisit the existing procedure on resolution follow-up

After the adoption of every resolution, it is important to follow up to ensure its implementation. The House is aware that the current procedure on resolution follow up is inefficient which leads to ineffectiveness of the resolution itself. Therefore, to ensure the resolutions are followed up and implemented properly, the House needs to improve the current system. The new procedure will ensure that every resolution of the House is followed up properly and receives due consideration of implementing agencies.

3.4. Training members and staff on oversight and review functions

As Bhutan is new to parliamentary democracy, knowledge and skills necessary for conducting oversight and review functions need to be enhanced for both

members and the secretariat staff, who are responsible for supporting the members in undertaking their duties. Also, because of the high turnover of new members following elections to the House, trainings on core functions of legislative, oversight and representation need to be prioritized and rolled out at regular intervals.

The secretariat will organize training sessions for the members and secretariat staff on oversight and review functions. Experts from international parliaments that have similar parliamentary structure and arrangement will facilitate the trainings. The secretariat also recognizes the need and importance of using the expertise of senior Bhutanese National Councilors to facilitate knowledge-sharing with new members.

3.5. Build knowledge products on oversight and review functions

Currently, there are a number of mechanisms through which the National Council carries out its oversight and review functions. They include written and oral questions to the government and head of agencies when necessary.

However, not many members are experienced enough to carry out the oversight and review functions professionally and effectively. On the other hand, apart from the rules on how to undertake oversight and review functions, there are no useful materials on the subject that the members could use. To ensure that the House is able to fulfill its oversight and review mandates effectively, training programs on professional and effective conduct of oversight and review roles will be arranged. Also, an easy-to-use and substantive manual on the subject will be developed for the members.

3.6. Procedure to deal with constituency issues

The National Council Act states: "The National Council shall not be bound by voters or interest groups and shall function in a non-partisan manner in their parliamentary work". However, members themselves agree that constituency issues often take primacy over national ones. This could be a result of the mismatch between people's understanding and expectations of NC in developmental perspective vis-a-viz its legislative and review mandates. The constituency issues ranging from administrative, development and socio-cultural issues cannot be ignored. They need to be scrutinized at various levels by individual members as well as in-house plenary meetings.

To ensure the House remains and functions within its mandates with regard to constituency issues, the Rules of Procedure to handle constituency issues need to be developed. This will prevent NC members from overstepping the roles of local government officials, party-based MPs and civil servants in future.

3.7. Strengthen committee system for oversight functions

Effective committee systems of the National Council are vital for fulfilling its oversight and review mandates. The existing committee systems are effective but need drastic improvement.

Recognizing the importance of the committees, committee chairs and members will be trained on effective ways of undertaking investigations and developing annual committee work plans. Committee secretaries will also be trained to be able to render efficient support services to the committees. The secretariat will explore the possibility of developing a handbook for members on oversight through committees.

3.8. Improve systems to conduct public hearings

Public hearings are crucial to the Parliament's legislative, oversight and representational functions. The quality of public hearings determines the effectiveness and relevance of legislation to the needs of the people and the country. At the moment, the National Council neither has a proper procedure, expertise nor experience to conduct effective public hearings both in the run-up to the enactment of laws and polices and during discussion of issues of importance.

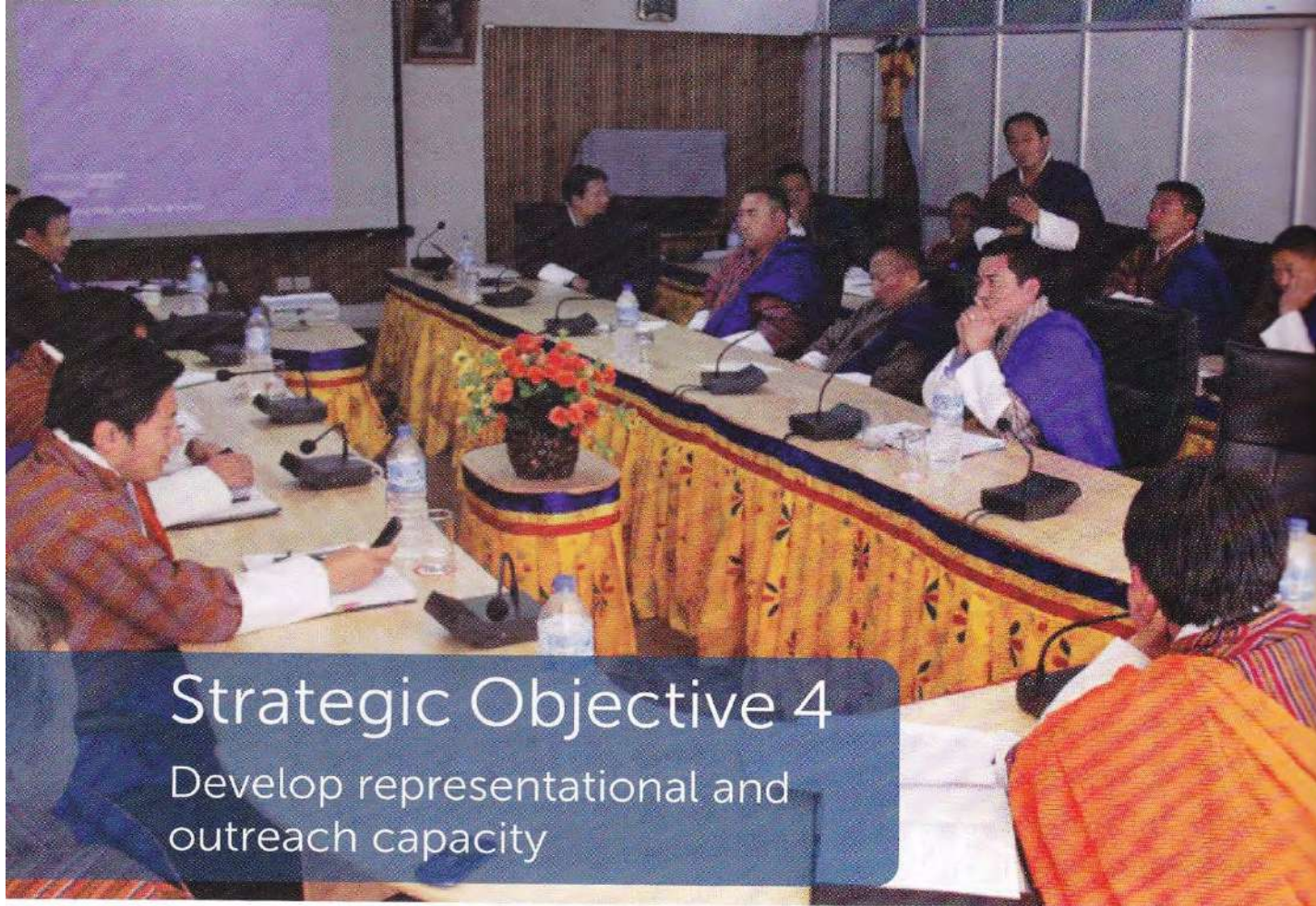
The House will improve its system in conducting public hearings. A proper Rules of Procedure to conduct public hearings has to be in place and the expertise of members and staff in the area will be developed through relevant trainings.

3.9. Strengthen budget and financial analysis capacity of members

Providing oversight to the government over its public money spending is one of the primary functions of a Parliament. The National Council as the House of review is mandated to provide recommendations and advice concerning issues that are of national importance – be they economy, budgetary or financial.

It is important that members have capacity and expertise to carry out financial and budgetary analysis to provide oversight to the government and political parties in Parliament. Therefore, the National Council will arrange rolling programs for the members on budget and financial analysis.





Strategic Objective 4

Develop representational and outreach capacity

The National Council is an epitome of popular representation and democratic leadership. Thus, apart from its legislative, oversight and review functions, the House has the representational and outreach mandates. It must strengthen linkages with the people and institutions which are central to promoting and sustaining democratic values and culture. They include the media, civil society organizations, judiciary, local governments, and international parliamentary organizations. The National Council will undertake the following strategic activities to fulfill its representational and outreach mandates.



Strategic Activities

4.1. Promote a culture of healthy public discourse

The National Council accords utmost importance to healthy public debate and discourse on issues that are of significance to the people and the country. The House is committed to fostering informed discussions both within and outside Parliament to contribute toward creating an enabling environment for democracy to flourish and consolidate. To engage the people during the legislative process for informed deliberations, the House will use digital media to interact with the people on issues of their concern in real time. The members will be trained to use digital media platforms.

4.2. Strengthen constituency relations

Many NC members represent people in Dzongkhags whose settlements are sparse and scattered. It is difficult for the members to be with the constituents often and for a long time at a stretch. They have to juggle their constituency works with parliamentary mandates at the headquarters.

The National Council recognizes the need to improve its members' constituency relations. The need to work hard on this is reflected in people's poor knowledge and understanding of the core mandates of the House. Its roles are often confused with developmental ones. Toward this end, the House will look into establishing parliamentary electoral constituency office at the Dzongkhag level. The office can be named as the member's constituency relation's office. It could also serve as the NC's Dzongkhag Information Center. Some immediate benefits of the office could be to help avoid constituency issues taking precedence over national ones. The office will also build institutional linkages with local governments by coordinating public hearings at the grassroots level.

4.3. Engaging teachers to educate students on parliamentary affairs

As a non-partisan parliamentary institution, the National Council recognizes its important mandate to educate the people on parliamentary affairs without being driven by voters and interest groups. The House believes that schools and educational institutions are the right platform. They are sacred places of learning. As agents of change and role models for thousands of current and future students, the House is committed to engaging teachers to educate students on parliamentary affairs. The secretariat will carry out a needs assessment and find out appropriate ways to engage teachers.

4.4. Advocacy on the role of NC

The National Council is aware that proper advocacy needs to be undertaken on the roles of the House. Most people including educated ones and those especially in rural areas are not clear what NC mandates actually are. The roles of its members are often confused with that of the members of the National Assembly.

Activities aimed at increasing public awareness of the National Council's role and rights of citizens in a democracy will improve the people's understanding of its mandates and strengthen its institutional legitimacy. The secretariat is committed to supporting the House and its members in carrying out public education campaigns on its roles.

4.5. Partner/liaise with the media and CSOs

Democratic institutions such as the media and civil society organizations are crucial platforms through which the National Council could provide information to the people about its work. The media is a vehicle that could be partnered with to represent the people and their concerns. The institution now is increasingly referred to as the fourth leg of democracy after Parliament, the executive and the judiciary. The National Council will strengthen its professional working relationship with the media. The secretariat will spearhead in developing the House's media strategy. The strategy will include, but not limited to, providing trainings to members and secretariat staff on effective use of media platforms to take Parliament to the people. The strategy will also have programs on training members on talking and giving effective interviews to journalists.

On the other hand, the House will engage civil society organizations in its efforts to create awareness among the people of decisions and the work it undertakes. The secretariat will arrange programs to foster interaction between the members and CSOs.

4.6. Effective use of Virtual Zomdu facility

The Parliament, with support from UNDP Bhutan, is installing video-conferencing facility in most of the 47 constituencies. The facility will enable MPs to interact with their constituents in real time even when they are not able to be in their constituencies. It is expected to address problems that some MPs face owing to their constituencies being located in far-flung areas – that often demand days of travel on foot.

The National Council will make the best use of the facility. The secretariat will facilitate members to interact with the people to engage them in the legislative process when the House is in session. Also, the National Council will explore the

possibility of holding committee meetings using the Virtual Zomdu facility when some members are out of office.

4.7. New website

A new state-of-the-art website has been developed for the House. It is interactive. It has Intranet and discussion forum. The secretariat will assist members in making the best use of it. ICT officials of the secretariat will be trained to ensure effective management of the website. The ICT officials will help members use the website through training sessions.

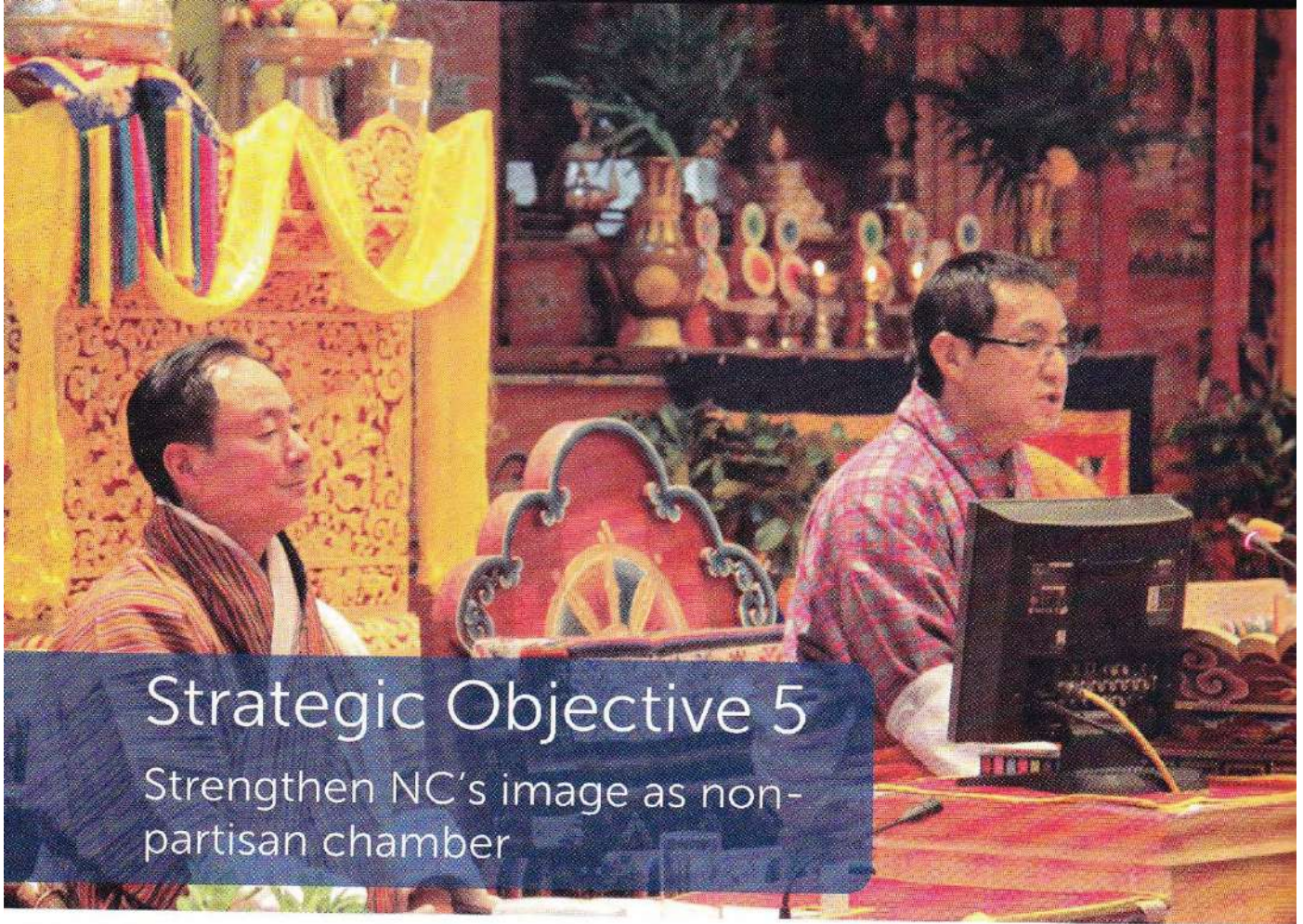
4.8. Strengthening parliamentary diplomacy

The National Council is aware that global parliamentary traditions and best practices are constantly evolving. It has become important for a parliamentary institution such as the National Council to keep itself abreast of international parliamentary affairs. Therefore, the National Council will work toward expanding its parliamentary diplomacy network. It will facilitate members and secretariat staff to attend regional and international parliamentary meetings and conferences. The expanded parliamentary diplomacy network will help the National Council remain globally contemporary and relevant to the needs of the people and the country while undertaking its mandates.



4.9. Develop a handbook on representation and outreach

As a young parliamentary institution, the National Council does not have required materials on core functions of a Parliament. The need of the hour is to have an easy-to-use guide for the members on representation and outreach. A handbook on the mandate will be developed. A parliamentary expert will prepare the guidebook.



Strategic Objective 5

Strengthen NC's image as non-partisan chamber

As a non-partisan parliamentary chamber, the National Council has the mandate to carry out parliamentary functions whose outcomes are not influenced by voters' pressure and interest groups. The House recognizes the importance of its non-partisan views, judgments and decisions while undertaking its legislative, oversight, review and representational responsibilities. At the moment, the House enjoys moral authority as an independent and non-partisan parliamentary institution. The loss of moral authority has the potential to weaken the institution leading to the loss of public trust and confidence. Therefore, the House is committed to remain apolitical and set the right precedent for the future members to follow.



Strategic Activities

5.1. Strengthen people's trust and confidence in NC

The National Council is aware that people often misunderstand its legislative and review roles with expectations of developmental roles. And some even at times label the House as opposition. Thus it is important for the House to make efforts to dispel such misunderstandings among the people through appropriate means and strategies. The amended National Council Act (2014) states: "A member of the National Council shall neither be influenced by any political party in the performance of his/her function nor or will he/she campaign for any political party or candidate".

To start with, members will include educational and advocacy programs on the roles of the House and how it differs from the National Assembly when they visit their constituencies. In the medium term, the House will develop a strategy to strengthen its apolitical image and reputation to strengthen its moral authority.

5.2. Improve understanding and cooperation among members

The National Council members come from different academic backgrounds with different expertise. The House is committed to realizing a 'unity in diversity'. However, the House also acknowledges the possibility of members getting factionalized and the severity of its consequences. Therefore, there is a need to develop mechanisms to foster understanding and cooperation among the members. A strong bonding coupled with confidence-building measures will make 'consensus-building' easy through transparent decision making processes. Activities to foster cooperation and understanding among the members will be organized from time to time.

Resource Mobilization

It is of paramount importance for the National Council to ensure there is sufficient resource to implement this Strategic Development Plan to achieve its vision and mission. The secretariat will include the strategic activities outlined in this plan in its Five-Year Plan and annual planning for the Ministry of Finance and the Gross National Happiness Commission to be aware of during budget allocation. On the other hand, the National Council will develop and strengthen partnership with international organizations that assist in parliamentary development.

The existing human resource at the National Council Secretariat is far from sufficient both in quantity and quality to ensure effective implementation of this Strategic Plan. The secretariat will table its human resource requirement to RCSC when it does the organizational development exercise.

Implementation

The implementation roadmap will guide the implementation of this Strategic Plan. The roadmap outlines the strategic objectives and strategic activities with their time-line for implementation and divisions/units responsible. It is a detailed yearly implementation plan of the strategy aimed at achieving the vision and mission of the House. Considering the difficulty in long term planning in a legislative setting, the implementation roadmap will be a flexible and dynamic document to ensure accommodation and incorporation of priorities that might arise during the plan period.

The Office of the Chairperson, supported by Committees, will have the overall responsibility to guide the implementation of this Strategic Plan. The NC secretariat led by the Secretary General will implement it.

Monitoring & Evaluation

To ensure a successful implementation of the plan, the progress in undertaking strategic activities to achieve the strategic objectives will be monitored by the secretariat on a quarterly basis. The secretariat will lead and ensure the implementation of the activities. The directorate of the secretariat will update the Secretary General on the status of the implementation of the plan. The secretariat will produce an annual report reflecting the progress of efforts and activities aimed at achieving the strategic objectives. The report will be submitted to the Chairperson and the House Committee. Also, it will be posted on the House's website for the public to read.

At the end of the plan period (2015-2019), the Strategic Development Plan will be reviewed and evaluated. A new plan will be framed based on the evaluation results

and new requirements of the House. It will also reflect a new (if any) strategic vision of the National Council of Bhutan to fulfill its constitutional mandates and the hopes and aspirations of the people and the country.



Implementation Roadmap

Implementation Roadmap for the Strategic Development Plan of NC, Parliament of Bhutan 2015-2019

Activity	Inputs	Responsible Division/Unit	Timeframe			
			2015	2016	2017	2018
Strategic Objective 1: Improve the institutional capacity of the National Council Secretariat						
1.1. Provide adequate physical space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Discuss with the government to improve the physical work environment. Explore the possibility of constructing a new building for NC 	Secretariat Services Division,	X	X	-	-
1.2. Develop human resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Human resource capacity development plan in place ii. Discuss with RCSC on direct deployment of staff with relevant background and skills 	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
1.3. Improve secretarial support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In consultation with RCSC, deploy sufficient staff to render support to the members. Implement the amended provisions of the NC Act (2014) on human resource. ii. Develop clear job descriptions of the staff 	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	X	-
		Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-

1.4. Strengthen research capacity	i. Strengthen the research capacity of the research division and the House as a whole	Research Division	-	X	X	X	X
	ii. Train members and staff in research techniques	Hansard & Research Division, DoLS	-	X	X	X	X
	iii. Establish linkages with colleges under the Royal University of Bhutan to collaborate in research activities	Secretariat	X	X	-	-	-
1.5. Financial and human resource autonomy	i. Discuss with the Finance Ministry and the NA Speaker on financial and budgetary autonomy	House Committee & Secretariat	-	X	-	-	-
	ii. Implement the amended NC Act (2014) on human resource	Secretariat	-	X	X	-	-
1.6. Establishing Parliamentary Training Institute	i. Discuss with NA on parliamentary training institute and come up with an action plan	Secretariat & House Committee	-	X	X	-	-
	i. Improving and building collaborations with the existing and new international parliamentary institutions	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	X	X	X
1.8. Improving recording and archiving systems	i. Prepare a list of new equipment required and allocate budget	Secretariat Services Division	X	X	-	-	-
	ii. Purchase new equipment	Secretariat Services Division	-	-	X	X	X

1.9. Develop the library resource	i. Improve the existing library and develop e-library	Information and Communications Division	X	-	-	-
	ii. Establish collaboration with Royal University of Bhutan on resource sharing	Information and Communications Division	X	X	-	-
Strategic Objective 2: Strengthen the legislative capacity of the National Council						
2.1. Build the legislative research capacity of members and secretariat staff	i. Roll out trainings on legislative research for members and staff	Legislative and Procedural Division & Secretariat Services Division	-	X	X	-
	ii. Discuss with RCSC during the organizational development exercise of NC for the requirement of additional legal professionals	Secretariat Services Division	X	X	-	-
2.2. Recruit more legal professionals	i. Deploy adequate legal professionals	Secretariat Services Division	-	-	X	X
	ii. Improving inter-committee working relationships	Committees & Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	X	-
2.3. Improve committee functions	i. Training committee chairs, members and staff on effective committee functions	Secretariat Services Division & Legislative and Procedural Division	X	X	-	-
	ii. The Rules of Procedure on private bills in place	Legislative and Procedural Division & Legislative Committee	-	X	-	-
	iii. Legislative drafting trainings for members and staff	Legislative and Procedural Division	X	-	X	-

<p>2.5: Involve government agencies and people in legislative processes</p>	<p>i. Periodic workshops/learning and sharing sessions to facilitate interaction between the members and government officials involved in drafting laws. Engage people in the legislative process as much as possible</p>	<p>Legislative and Procedural Division & Legislative Committee</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	
<p>Strategic Objective 3: Improving the oversight and review functions</p>								
<p>3.1. Strengthen the working relationship with the National Assembly and the Government</p>	<p>i. Discussion on how to strengthen and institutionalize the working relationships with NA and the Government undertaken</p>	<p>Offices of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	
<p>3.2: Improve the review mechanism</p>	<p>ii. Clear mechanism for the House to work with NA and the Government in place</p>	<p>Legislative and Procedural Division & House Committee</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	
<p>3.3: Revisit the existing procedure to follow up resolutions</p>	<p>i. Mechanism to get adequate information from agencies for review functions in place. Implement the amended NC Act (2014) on the issue.</p>	<p>Legislative and Procedural Division & Legislative Committee</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	
<p></p>	<p>i. Review the procedure on resolution follow up</p>	<p>Good Governance Committee</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	
<p></p>	<p>ii. New and clear resolution follow up procedure in place</p>	<p>Good Governance Committee</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	

3.4: Training members and staff on oversight and review functions	i. Workshop for members on oversight and review functions by an international practitioner/expert	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
	ii. Workshop for staff on oversight and review functions by international practitioner/expert	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
	iii. Sharing experiences and lessons on oversight and review function by senior councilors with new ones	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	-	-	X
3.5: Build knowledge products on oversight and review functions	i. Knowledge products and materials including a handbook on oversight and review functions in place	Secretariat Services Division/ Relevant Committees	-	-	X	X
3.6: Procedure to deal with constituency issues	i. Mechanism to deal with constituency issues in place	Legislative and Procedural Division with relevant committees' advice	-	X	-	-
3.7: Strengthen committee system for oversight functions	i. Train members and secretariat staff on effective committee functions	Legislative and Procedural Division with advice of the Legislative Committee	-	X	-	-
3.8: Improve systems to conduct public hearings	i. Proper Rules of Procedure to conduct public hearings in place	Legislative Committee & Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	X	-
	ii. Develop expertise of members and secretariat staff to conduct public hearings	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	X	X

3.9. Strengthen budget and financial analysis capacity of the members	i. Trainings for members to develop budget and financial analysis capacity	Secretariat Services Division	X	-	-	X
	ii. Trainings for staff to develop budget and financial analysis capacity	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
Strategic Objective 4: Develop the representational and outreach capacity						
4.1: Promote a culture of healthy public discourse	i. Engage people in the work of NC	Committees	X	X	X	X
	ii. Workshops members on effective use of digital media for effective communication with the constituents	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	-
4.2. Strengthen constituency relations	i. Explore the possibility of establishing constituency office at the Dzongkhag level	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
	ii. Strengthen linkages with local government agencies	DOMS	-	X	-	X
	i. Needs assessment conducted	Secretariat	-	X	-	-
4.3: Engaging teachers to educate students on parliamentary affairs	ii. Develop training modules (by expert)	Secretariat	-	X	-	-
	iii. School teachers from different regions of the country engaged to educate students on parliamentary affairs	Secretariat & House Committee	-	-	X	-
	i. Public advocacy on the roles of NC conducted	Information and Communications Division/ Members	-	X	X	-

4.5: Partner with the media and CSO	i. Strengthen professional working relationship with the media	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	-
	ii. Develop media strategy of NC	Information and Communications Division	X	X	-	-
	iii. Training for members on the effective use of media and on giving effective interviews to journalists	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	X
	iv. Foster relations between CSOs and members through interactive sessions	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	X
4.6: Effective use of Virtual Zomdu facility	i. Virtual Zomdu facility used effectively by members to engage people	Secretariat Services Division	X	X	X	X
	ii. Explore the possibility of using Virtual Zomdu facility to hold committee meetings	Secretariat Services Division	X	-	-	-
4.7: Use of the new website	i. Train ICT officials on the effective management of the website	Information and Communications Division	X	-	-	-
	ii. Train members on the use of the new website	ICT officials, Information and Communications Division	X	-	-	X
4.8: Strengthening parliamentary diplomacy	i. Expand parliamentary networks	House/Secretariat	-	-	X	X
	ii. Support members and staff attend international parliamentary meetings and conferences	Secretariat	X	X	X	X

4.9. Guide book on representation and outreach	i. Develop a handbook on representation and outreach	Secretariat (by parliamentary expert)	X	X	X
Strategic Objective 5: Strengthen NC's image as non-partisan chamber of Parliament					
5.1. Strengthen the House's image as non-partisan chamber	i. Include advocacy programs on apolitical position of NC by members in their constituency visit programs	Members	X	X	X
	ii. Develop a strategy to strengthen apolitical image of the House		-	X	-
5.2: Improve understanding and cooperation among the members	i. Create space and mechanisms to improve bonding and affinity among members and between members and staff	Secretariat/House Committee	X	X	X



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