

Standing Committees

- 1) House Committee;
- 2) Legislative Committee;
- 3) Good Governance Committee;
- 4) Economic Affairs Committee;
- 5) Social & Cultural Affairs Committee; and
- 6) Natural Resources & Environment Committee.

Joint Committee

- 1) Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

Passing of Bills

- A Bill shall be introduced by a member with the concurrence of the National Council;
- Money Bills and Financial Bills shall not originate in the National Council;
- A Bill pending in the National Council shall not lapse by reason of prorogation of the National Council;
- A Bill in the National Council shall be passed by a simple majority of the total number of members of the House or by not less than two-third of the total number of members of both Houses present and voting, in the case of a joint sitting;
- Where a Bill has been introduced and passed by the National Council, it shall present the Bill to the National Assembly within 30 days from the date of passing;
- Where the Bill is subsequently passed by the National Assembly, the Bill shall be submitted to the Druk Gyalpo for Royal Assent within 15 days from the date of passing such a Bill;
- Where the National Assembly does not pass the Bill, it shall be returned to the National Council with amendments or objections for re-deliberation. If the Bill is then passed, it shall be submitted to the Druk Gyalpo for Royal Assent within 15 days from the date of passing such a Bill;

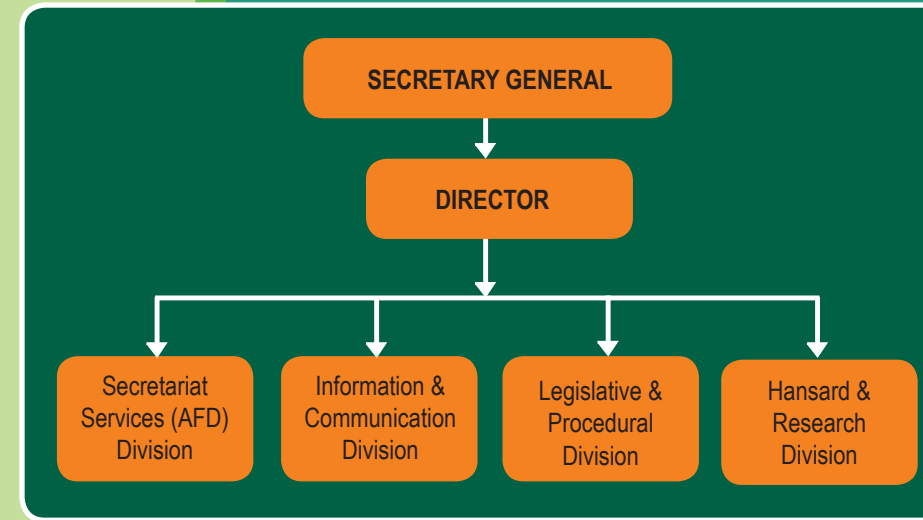
- Where the National Council refuses to incorporate the amendments or objections of the National Assembly, it shall submit the Bill to the Druk Gyalpo, who shall then command the Houses to deliberate and vote on the Bill in a joint sitting;
- Where the National Assembly neither passes nor returns the Bill by the end of the next session from the date of presentation, the Bill shall be deemed to have been passed by it and the National Council shall present the Bill within 15 days to the Druk Gyalpo for Royal Assent;
- In case of Budget and Urgent Bills, these shall be passed in the ongoing session of the National Council.

The Secretariat

The National Council is assisted in the discharge of its parliamentary functions by a Secretariat headed by the Secretary General who is appointed by the Druk Gyalpo on the recommendations of the Royal Civil Service Commission.

The Secretariat comprises four divisions, namely, Secretariat Services Division, Information & Communications Division, Legislative & Procedural Division and Hansard & Research Division. These divisions provide legislative, research and other professional services as hereunder:

- Provide advice to the Chairperson and Members on the operation of the National Council, interpretation of standing orders, parliamentary practices and precedents;
- Provide administrative, financial and research services to the House;
- Draft/Review Bills, Acts, Rules and other legislations;
- Prepare and safeguard records of decisions & proceedings (verbatim) of the House;
- Plan, develop and maintain physical infrastructure;



- Carry out Human Resource Development & Management of the Secretariat including training/orientation programme for the newly elected members;
- Carry out civic education and public awareness programmes on the principles and values of parliamentary democracy; and
- Build institutional linkages with other Parliaments, International Parliamentary Union (IPU) and related associations/forums to learn from the international best practices.

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National Council of Bhutan



National Council

Background

Bhutan emerged as one of the youngest democracies in the world with the adoption of the Constitution in 2008 marking a major political change in the country. The drafting of the written Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan was initiated on the command of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 2001. It was His Majesty's belief that the principles and ideals of democracy were inherently good and a democratic system was desirable for Bhutan to advance the aspirations of a rapidly modernizing state. Democracy would help ensure the country's security, sovereignty, peace, prosperity, justice and promote the fundamental rights and well-being of the people.

The Constitution provides a plan for creating and organizing a new government including the separation of power of the three organs of the State, namely, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Parliament of Bhutan is the highest legislative body in the country. It consists of the Druk Gyalpo, the National Council and the National Assembly.

Establishment

- National Council was established in 2008 under Article 11 of the Constitution of Bhutan.
- The first Parliament started with a Joint Sitting of the two houses from (8-30) May 2008.
- The first session of National Council was held in the Banquet Hall at Langjophaka from June 17 to July 24, 2008.

Vision

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

Mission

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

Values

National Council shall be guided by the core values of patriotism, professionalism, humility, integrity, fairness and empathy.

Functions

National Council has both legislative and review functions and is also referred to as the House of Review.

a) **Legislative functions:**

- Initiate or prepare legislation except Money and Financial Bills;
- Review and amend existing laws; and
- Consider, pass, amend or reject any legislation passed by the National Assembly.

b) **Review functions:**

- Review and comment on the policies, plans and programmes of the Government;
- Review performance of the Government;
- Review implementation of resolutions and laws passed by Parliament; and
- Review issues of national importance.

Composition

National Council has 25 members:

- 20 members are directly elected by the people, one from each of the 20 dzongkhags; and
- 5 members are appointed by the Druk Gyalpo.

Eligibility for elected Members

- Is a citizen of Bhutan as evidenced by the citizenship identity card;
- Is a registered voter of a constituency;
- Is of the minimum age of 25 years and maximum of sixty-five years at the time of filing nomination;
- Possesses a formal university degree; and
- Does not belong to any political party.

Term of National Council

- National Council shall continue for five years from the date of its first sitting; and
- Elections shall be held so that the House is re-constituted on the date of expiry of its term.

Office & Privileges

- All members are equal in the National Council;
- Enjoy freedom of speech and immunity from arrest during the session; and
- Receive pay and allowances as prescribed under the Parliamentary Entitlement Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Presiding Officer

The Chairperson, elected from amongst the members of the National Council, is the Presiding Officer.

Frequency & duration of the Session

- The National Council meets twice a year;
- Special sessions may also be convened on command of the Druk Gyalpo. However, the House shall consider only those matters for which it is convened in such sessions;
- Duration of the session is fixed according to the length and issue of the agenda.

Procedure

The proceedings are regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the National Council and Rules of the Committees.

Committee System

The enormous volume of work before a Legislature and the limited time at its disposal make it impossible that every matter should be discussed at length on the floor of the House. If the work is to be done expeditiously and with reasonable care, some of its responsibilities have to be entrusted to some other agency in which the whole House has confidence. The most practical method so far devised for this purpose is the Committee System, composed of a small number of members of the legislative body.

The power to appoint committees has been recognized under Article 10(11) of the Constitution of Bhutan and Section 145 of the National Council Act. The Committees are classified into three categories, namely, Standing Committees, Ad hoc Committees and Joint Committees.

The Standing Committees are constituted through Standing Orders or Resolutions passed by the National Council. These Committees continue to remain in office irrespective of the completion of work and deal with specific business of the House.

The Ad hoc Committees are mostly temporary and cease to exist after completion of their task. These Committees perform such specific functions as are assigned to them from time to time. They may also be called Select or Special Committees.

The Joint Committees are established by an Act of Parliament or by concurrent resolution of the National Council and the National Assembly comprising members from both the Houses.

Accordingly, following Committees have been formed: