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PARLIAMENT

OF THE

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ANNOUNCEMENTS,
TABLINGS AND
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Assembly

The Speaker

1. Rule on Virtual Meetings in terms of National Assembly Rule 6 (Unforeseen Eventualities)

Part A – Purpose

The purpose of this rule is to enable the National Assembly and its committees to hold compliant virtual meetings using technological platforms.

Rule 6 of the National Assembly Rules provides that the Speaker may give a ruling or frame a rule in respect of any eventuality for which the rules or orders of the House do not provide, having due regard to the procedures, precedents, practices and conventions developed by the House and on the basis of constitutional values and principles underpinning an open, accountable and democratic society. A rule framed by the Speaker remains in force until the House, based on a recommendation of the Rules Committee, has decided thereon.

The Rules of the National Assembly remain in operation and are supplemented by this rule in order to provide for virtual meetings.

Part B - Application of rule

This rule applies to –

- (a) sittings of the National Assembly in the event a physical sitting is not possible, as determined by the Speaker;
- (b) meetings of committees in the event a physical meeting is not possible, as determined by the chairperson.

Part C - Notice and venue of meeting

In terms of this rule –

- (a) the Speaker or chairperson of a committee shall issue a notice and agenda for a virtual meeting, which must include the date and time of the meeting;
- (b) all documents of the meeting shall be distributed by electronic means to which Members have access; and
- (c) the venue of a virtual meeting shall be deemed to be Cape Town as the seat of Parliament.

Part D - Privilege and order in meetings

In a virtual meeting –

- (a) members shall have the same powers, privileges and immunities which they ordinarily enjoy in parliamentary proceedings; and
- (b) where relevant, current rules on order in public meetings and order in debate shall apply.

Part E - Presiding Officers

In a virtual meeting the Presiding Officer or Chairperson of a committee shall have all the powers as provided for in the current Rules.

Part F - Quorum

In a virtual meeting –

- (a) the quorum requirements shall be those as determined by the Constitution and the Rules; and
- (b) members who have accessed the meeting via the secure link sent to their email address shall be deemed present for the purposes of establishing a quorum, taking a decision or voting on a matter.

Part G - Voting

In a virtual meeting –

- (a) members shall be entitled to cast their votes either electronically, by voice or by having their vote recorded by their respective whips;
- (b) the procedure to be followed is predetermined by the Speaker and directives are announced in the meeting by the Presiding Officer or Chairperson of a committee;
- (c) only members who are present when a vote is called shall be permitted to vote;
- (d) the results of a vote are announced and, where possible, the names of members and how they voted are recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings; and
- (e) members must ensure that their votes are correctly recorded.

Part H– Public involvement

Access to proceedings must be facilitated in a manner consistent with participatory and representative democracy and wherever possible a virtual meeting must be livestreamed.

Addendum: Process Guidelines

1. The Secretary to Parliament together with authorized officials and technical teams are responsible for technical support to facilitate virtual meetings.
 2. The Secretariat must be given at least 3 days' notice of a meeting.
 3. Pre-conference testing must take place at least a day before the meeting.
 4. Technical support must be available during a virtual meeting.
 5. The Secretariat must maintain the minutes and records of the proceedings.
 6. The Secretariat must maintain a system that is capable of verifying the votes cast either electronically or manually.
 7. Political parties must provide a signed copy of the votes cast for or against a question by their members, to the Secretariat within an agreed timeframe to ensure verification of results. This record may be submitted electronically
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