

ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN



Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates during National Council Elections, 2018

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Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates During National Council Elections, 2018

Background

Public Debates for the Candidates contesting the National Council elections are found necessary in view of the importance of the posts and the electorate's right to information for an informed choice.

Therefore, conduct of the Debates is required to be sponsored by the Election Commission under Section 78(a) of the Public Election Fund Act 2008.

The Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation (BBSC) shall be responsible for production and airing of the Public Debates within the parameters set out in the Electoral Laws and these Guidelines.

Principles

1. A Public Debate is to facilitate voters to hear the vision, ideology and strategy of the Candidates and help voters assess the possession of the leadership potential and qualities.
2. A Public Debate provides opportunity to Candidates to project their capabilities to address, express and manage a situation.
3. A Public Debate provides Candidates the opportunity to interact with other Candidates face to face, witnessed by voters.
4. A Public Debate provides Candidates the opportunity to reveal the merit (or lack of it) of the beliefs and ideals of their opponents through questioning/critiquing.
5. A Public Debate would exhibit time management and effective communication skills of the Speaker.
6. A Public Debate would allow voters to have a comparative understanding of the capability of the Candidates.
7. A Public Debate is neither a regular TV programme, or a Radio talk show, or entertainment and commercial activity, nor an academic Debate with pros and cons session for or against a motion.

Objectives

8. The Objective of the Debates is to help people know more about the Candidates contesting the National Council Elections, who will, upon being elected, be responsible to guide the course of the Nation.

Rules

9. The Public Debates between the National Council Candidates at Dzongkhag Level will be conducted in a single round.

10. A moderator, appointed by the Commission shall be responsible for conducting the Debate in an unbiased manner.
11. The Candidate must always be respectful to one another and observe proper decorum.

Public Debates for National Council Election

12. The Candidates nominated from *Gewogs* and Dzongkhag Thromdes for the National Council Elections shall participate in one Public Debate conducted in respective Dzongkhag.
13. There shall be standard allocated time depending on the number of Candidates in each Dzongkhag.
 - 13.1. If there is only one Candidate the maximum time allocated shall be 30 minutes.
 - 13.2. If there are two Candidates the Debate shall be only for 60 minutes.
 - 13.3. If there are three Candidates the Debate shall be only for 90 minutes.
 - 13.4. If there are four Candidates the Debate shall be only for 120 minutes.
 - 13.5. If there are more than five Candidates the Debate shall not exceed 180 minutes which shall be divided equally amongst the candidates.
14. Each Candidate will be given three minutes to make his/her statement.
15. The moderator shall ask three questions, one each from introductory note, Dzongkhag related and National related issues.
16. Three minutes each shall be provided to answer the three questions.
17. Each Candidate shall choose questions through draw of lots.
18. All Candidates shall be given two minutes each to pose a question to one other Candidate chosen through draw of lots.
19. Each Candidate shall be given three minutes each to respond to the questions.
20. Each Candidate shall again be given three minutes to make his/her final statement.
21. A Dzongkhag with only one Candidate, instead of the Public Debate, shall make public presentation with three questions to be asked by the Moderator as in section 15 above.

Air Time

22. The Public Debate shall commence LIVE from 6 p.m. with 10 minutes news break at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. respectively without any commercial breaks.

Venues

23. The Public Debate shall be conducted in respective Dzongkhag for National Council Candidates.
24. The Commission and Candidates shall jointly decide on the venue of the Debate.

25. A Public Debate shall not be organized inside a Dzong, *lhakhang* or any religious institution.
26. The venue of the Debates should preferably be in a public auditorium with adequate seating capacity for the public to witness the Debate and if necessary extend close circuit viewing facilities.
27. The Commission shall ensure that the information related to the venue, date and time of a Public Debate is notified to the public in advance.

Setting

28. The setting and ambience of the place must augment and be conducive for serious discourse.
29. The atmosphere must evoke confidence and seriousness.
30. There shall be a formal portrait of His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo provided by the Commission as in **Annexure A**.
31. The banner of the particular Debate shall be placed below the portrait as in **Annexure B**.

Qualifications of Moderators

32. An official who has the experience of conducting a Debate of high standard shall be appointed as the Moderator.
33. The Moderator must be proficient in Dzongkha and have sound knowledge and understanding of issues.
34. The Moderator must be a person who is known to be sensitive to the socio-cultural nuances of the society.
35. An official who is appointed as a Moderator to conduct the Debate in a *Demkhong* shall be one whose *Mitsi* is not registered in that place.
36. All the team members assigned to conduct debate shall declare conflict of interest as in **Annexure D**. A Moderator shall, where it is evident or he/she considers his/her role entails conflict of interest, immediately notify the Election Authorities of the fact.

Role of Moderators

37. A Moderator shall ensure that there is an atmosphere of civility and not tolerate rude or disrespectful behavior from the Candidates. He/she must intervene if and when the code of conduct is breached.
38. A Moderator shall start the Debate by greeting the participants, audience, stating the objective of the Debate and setting the tone for the Debate.
39. A Moderator shall allow the Candidates to complete the sentence after the last bell is sounded by the Time-Keeper.

Debate Schedule

40. The Moderators shall conduct the Debates as per the Schedule issued by the Commission.

Broadcast

41. All the discussions shall be broadcast LIVE. There shall be simultaneous broadcast on BBSC TV Channel 2 and Radio Channel 2. If, due to some unforeseen reasons, the LIVE telecast is hampered, then the recorded debate shall be re-broadcast at the earliest.

42. Debates shall be conducted as soon as possible to facilitate postal voters to make an informed choice.

43. The BBSC shall be required to re-broadcast these Debates once on both TV channels and radio, before the end of the election campaign period.

44. The BBSC shall provide recorded copies of the Debate to the radio stations and cable TV networks for re-broadcast.

45. The local cable network operators shall be directed to rebroadcast the recorded Debates at least 2 times a week during hours specified by the Media Arbitrator, till the campaign period ends.

Introduction of the Candidates

46. The Moderator shall prepare a standard introduction of each Candidate stating the name, main academic qualification, the last three positions occupied based on information provided by the respective Candidate.

47. The Moderator shall inform the audience that applauding or deploring a Candidate shall not be allowed.

48. A Moderator shall announce in his/her introductory remarks that any disturbance, by anyone at the time of Debate will be considered an offence under the Electoral Laws and the law enforcing authorities are empowered to deal with it accordingly.

49. The Moderator shall reserve the right to reject any questions, which is not in line with the code of conduct of candidate.

50. A Moderator can make concluding remarks acknowledging the participants, organizers, audience and the technical team.

Media Coverage

51. The recording of the Debates shall be out of bounds for the other media so that no biased story is run before the broadcast of the programme.

Orientation for Moderators

52. There shall be an orientation arranged for Moderators.
53. The Commission shall conduct the Orientation for the Moderators.

Questions

54. Questions shall be asked by each Candidate to test or reveal the real qualities of the opponents and the content of the Manifesto.
55. The Commission shall put in place a digital Question Bank where questions are compiled, including from the general public, for use during the public debate.
56. There shall be a Research Team formed by BBSC to ensure that all the background documents and information are available to the debate conducting team in advance for preparation.
57. Both the Moderators and the Candidates must take note that there shall be no questions asked that would jeopardize the nation's security, sovereignty or foreign relations, including those relating to religion or regionalism.
58. Questions must confine and be relevant to the purpose of the Debates.
59. Questions must be brief and direct.

Audience

60. The audience for the Debates must be the voters of that *Demkhong* and persons authorized by the Commission.
61. The audience shall serve as public witness to the Debate and to become more informed about the Candidates to enable a sound voting decision on the Poll Day.
62. The audience shall maintain proper decorum.
63. Members of audience shall not ask questions to prevent distortion of the level playing field.
64. The Chief Election Coordinators and Returning Officers shall oversee and ensure that Law and Order is maintained at the places of Debate.

Order of Speakers

65. The speaking and seating order of the Candidates shall be determined by draw of lots.

Final Focus

66. The Final Focus shall be a persuasive final re-statement by the Candidates focusing on why voters should vote for him/her.

67. The Candidate shall summarize key arguments in his/her speech and may refute the important arguments of the opponent.

Time Keeping

68. The maximum time allotted to each Candidate and turns must be spelt out right at the outset by the Moderator.

69. The Dzongkhag Electoral Officer shall be the Time-Keeper for the Debate.

70. A digital time keeping device will be used for the Debates and where it is not available an appropriate clock or bell must be used.

71. The Time-Keeper shall give a warning buzz when there is one minute left indicating that the Candidate should conclude and a final buzz when he/she must stop.

Rostrum

72. There shall be standard Rostrum in all debates issued by the Commission and Dzongkhag Electoral Officers shall make it available as per the schedule drawn.

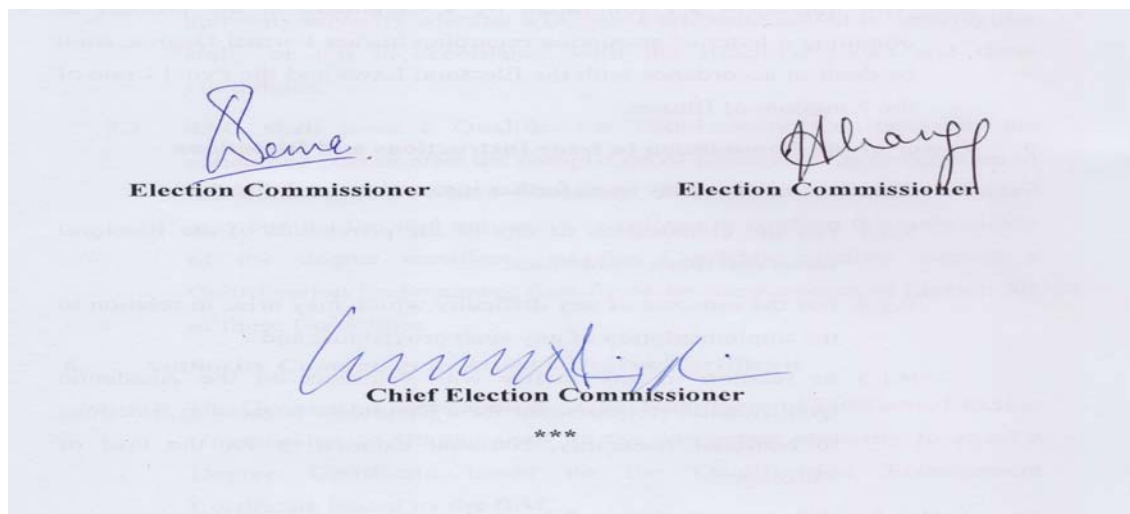
73. The Rostrums shall bear the logo of the Commission.

74. The setting shall be as per the layout provided by the Commission as in **Annexure B**.

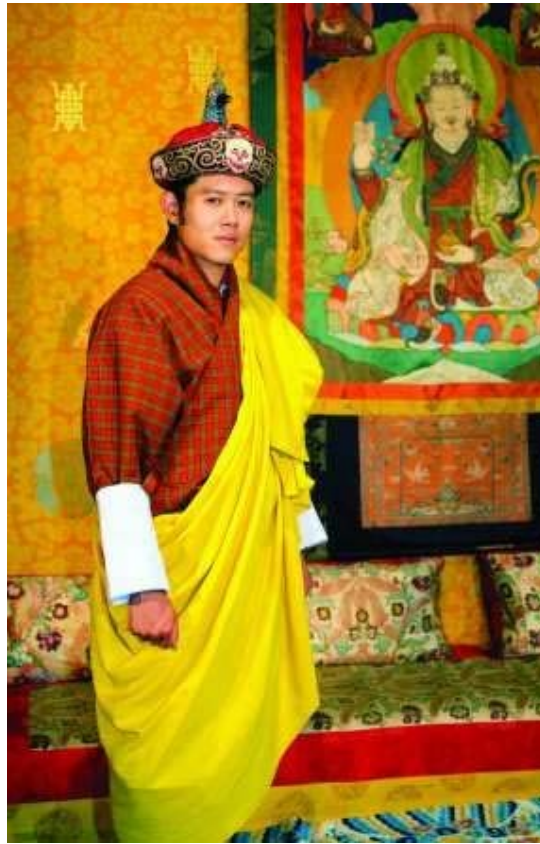
Judges

75. The community of voters in the audience, television viewers and radio listeners are the judges of the Debates with the judgment being passed on the Poll Day.

Done under the seal of the Election Commission of the Kingdom of Bhutan on this 13th Day of the February Month of the Year 2018 corresponding to the 28th Day of the 12th Month of the Fire Female Bird Year in the Bhutanese Calendar.



The image shows three handwritten signatures in blue ink on a light-colored background. The top left signature is for an Election Commissioner, the top right is for another Election Commissioner, and the larger signature in the center is for the Chief Election Commissioner. Below the Chief Election Commissioner's signature are three asterisks (***) indicating the end of the document.



“Today, in the womb of a strong and peaceful monarchy, we have begun to nurture the hopes of a vibrant democracy. It is this endeavour that we must henceforth uphold as our greatest priority – the success of democracy. For in the success of democracy lies the consolidation of our nation’s achievements and the future happiness and wellbeing of Bhutan.” **His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck 17th December 2007**

Parliamentary Elections 2018

The Public Debate of *Galyong Tshogde* Candidates

(Name of Dzongkhag to be displayed on the screen not on banner)

Portrait of His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo on the Wall

ECB Logo **Prescribed Banner for the Debate** *BBSC Logo*

Moderator

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Audience



**Election Commission of Bhutan
Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

I,(name), bearing CID No.....,
(Position Title)(Agency) declare, that as per
Section 36 of the Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates during National Council
Elections 2018, in serving as a member of Public Debate Conducting Team from BBSC:

I do not have or anticipate any Conflict of Interest. I shall notify the Authorities concerned
immediately in the event such interests arise in the course of or before discharging my
duty; OR

I do have Conflict of Interest in view of the following reason(s):

- Family Member:
- In-Laws:
- Close Relative:
- Close Friend:
- Adversary:
- Others:

I hereby confirm that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge. In the event
the above declaration is found to be incorrect, I shall be liable for legal action.

Signature:

Place:

Date: DD/MM/YY