

# ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN



## **Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates during Parliamentary Elections, 2012**



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Parliamentary Elections, 2012**

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Date of Publication : January 2013

Printed at : Samden Printers

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# **Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates During Parliamentary Elections, 2012**

## **Background**

Public Debates for the Political Parties and Candidates contesting the National Assembly and National Council elections are found necessary in view of the importance and status of the posts.

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 neither a regular TV programme, nor Radio talk show, entertainment nor a commercial activity nor an academic Debate with pros and cons session for or against a motion.
2. A Public Debate is to facilitate voters to hear the vision, ideology and strategy of the Political Parties and Candidates and help voters assess possession of the leadership potential and qualities.
3. A Public Debate provides opportunity to a Political Party and Candidate to project its capabilities to address, express and manage a situation.
4. A Public Debate provides Candidates the opportunity to interact with other Candidates face to face, witnessed by voters.
5. 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.

6. A Public Debate would exhibit time management and effective communication skills of the Speaker.
7. A Public Debate would allow voters to have a comparative understanding of the capability of the Parties/Candidates.

### **Objectives**

8. The Objectives of the Debates are to help the people know more about the Political Parties and Candidates contesting the Parliamentary Elections, who will, upon being elected, be responsible to guide the course of the Nation and the *Demkhongs*.

### **Rules**

9. The Public Debates between the National Council Candidates at Dzongkhag Level will be conducted in a single round.
10. The Public Debates of the Political Parties at National level during the Primary Round will include two rounds with the first one amongst Presidents of the Political Parties and second Round amongst Presidents of the Political Parties or by nominees of the Presidents.
11. The Public Debates between the National Assembly Candidates during the General Elections shall be conducted at *Demkhong* level between the Party Candidates.
12. A moderator, appointed by the Commission, shall be responsible for conducting the Debate in an unbiased manner.
13. The Speakers must always be respectful to one another and observe proper decorum.

### **Public Debates for Primary Round**

14. The two rounds of Public Debates for Primary Round will be conducted in collaboration with the BBS and telecast live.



### **Round One: Ideology**

15. A Speaker shall be given 10 minutes to make his/her statement.
16. All other Speakers will be given 2 minutes each to pose one question or make one observation to the Speaker at the end of each presentation.
17. The Speaker shall then be given 5 minutes to respond to the questions.
18. The Speaker shall be again given 5 minutes to make his/her closing remarks.

### **Round Two: Issue based**

19. A Speaker shall be given 10 minutes to make his/her statement.
20. All other Speakers will be given 2 minutes each to pose one question or make one observation to the Speaker at the end of each presentation.
21. The Speaker shall then be given 5 minutes to respond to the questions.
22. The Speaker shall be again given 5 minutes to make his/her closing remarks.
  
23. The computation of the total time required for the Debates would be determined by the number of registered Political Parties contesting elections.

### **Public Debates for General Elections**

24. The Public Debates for General Elections between the two Candidates of the two Parties contesting in the General Elections shall be held in the Dzongkhags for each of the *Demkhongs*.

25. Each Candidate will be given 10 minutes to present the Party's programme for that particular *Demkhong*.
26. The other Candidate will be given 2 minutes to pose one question or make one observation to the Speaker at the end of his/her presentation.
27. Each Speaker will be given 5 minutes to respond.
28. The Speaker will again be given 5 minutes to make his/her final focus.

### **Public Debates for National Council Election**

29. The Candidates nominated from Gewogs for the National Council Elections shall participate in one Public Debate conducted in respective Dzongkhag.
30. Each Candidate will be given 10 minutes to make his/her statement.
31. All other Candidates shall be given 2 minutes each to pose one question or make one observation to the Speaker at the end of his/her presentation.
32. Each Speaker shall be given 5 minutes to respond.
33. The Speaker shall again be given 5 minutes to make his/her final focus.
34. A Dzongkhag with only one Candidate, instead of the Public Debate, shall make public presentation with questions asked by the Moderator.

### **Venues**

35. A Public Debate shall be conducted in respective *Dzongkhag* for National Council Candidates.
36. A Public Debate shall be conducted in the Capital for Political Parties.
37. A Public Debate shall be conducted in respective National Assembly *Demkhong* for Party Candidates.

38. The Candidates shall jointly decide on the venue of the Debate.
39. A Public Debate shall not be organized inside a Dzong, *lhakhang* or any religious institution.
40. The venue of the Debates should preferably be in a public auditorium with adequate seating capacity for the public to witness the Debate live and if necessary extend live close circuit viewing in annexes.
41. Election Commission of Bhutan shall ensure that the information and direction of the venue of a Public Debate is notified to public in advance.

### **Setting**

42. The setting and ambience of the place must augment and be conducive for serious discourse and appear as decent as possible.
43. The atmosphere must evoke confidence and seriousness.
44. The background of the podium shall have a formal portrait of His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo provided by the Election Commission as in **Annexure A**.
45. The banner of the particular Debate shall be placed below the portrait as in **Annexure B**.

### **Qualifications of Moderators**

46. An official who has the experience of conducting a Debate of high standard shall be appointed as the Moderator.
47. The Moderator must be proficient in Dzongkha and have sound knowledge and understanding of issues.
48. The Moderator must be a person who is known to be sensitive to the socio-cultural nuances of the society.

49. An official who is chosen to officiate as a Moderator to conduct the Debate in a *Demkhong* shall be one whose *Mitsi* is not registered in that place.

### **Role of Moderators**

50. A Moderator shall ensure that there is an atmosphere of civility and not tolerate rude or disrespectful behavior from Speakers.
51. 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.
52. A Moderator shall start the Debate by greeting the participants, audience, stating the objective of the Debate and setting the tone for the Debate.
53. A Moderator can intervene to rephrase, clarify questions whenever necessary.
54. A Moderator shall allow the Speaker to complete the sentence after the last bell is sounded by the Time-Keeper.

### **Debate Schedule**

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

### **Broadcast**

56. The broadcast media shall be required to re-broadcast these Debates at least 2 times a week till the end of the election campaign period.
57. The BBSC shall provide recorded copies of the Debate to the radio stations and cable TV networks for re-broadcast.
58. The local cable network operators shall be directed to re-broadcast 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**

59. 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.
60. The Moderator shall inform the Audience that applauding or deploring a Speaker shall not be allowed.
61. 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.
62. A Moderator can make concluding remarks acknowledging the participants, organizers, audience and the technical team.

## **Media Coverage**

63. 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**

64. There shall be an orientation arranged for moderators specifically when more than one is appointed.
65. The Chief Election Commissioner shall conduct the Orientation for the Moderators.

## **Questions**

66. Questions shall be asked by the Speakers to each other to test or reveal the real qualities of the opponents and the content of the Manifesto.
67. Questions must confine and be relevant for the purpose of the Debates.
68. Questions must be brief and direct.

## **Audience**

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

## **Order of Speakers**

74. The speaking and seating order of Speakers shall be in alphabetical order of their first names.

## **Topic**

75. The subject of the first Debate of the Primary Round shall be "*The Vision, Mission and Goals for the Nation.*"
76. The subject of the second Debate of the Primary Round shall be "*National Goals translated into coherent Strategy and Thematic Programmes for the Nation.*"
77. The subject of the General Election Debates shall be "*National Vision and Demkhong Action.*"
78. The subject of the National Council Debates in the *Demkhongs* shall be "*Issues for Informed and Visionary Policy and Governance in the Nation.*"

## **Final Focus**

79. Final Focus shall be a persuasive final restatement by the Speaker focusing on why voters should vote for a Party or for him/her.

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

### **Time Keeping**

81. The maximum time allotted to each Speaker and turns must be spelt out right at the outset by the Moderator.
82. An officer from the Commission shall be the Time-Keeper for the Debate at the National level and the Dzongkhag Electoral Officer at the *Demkhong/Dzongkhag*.
83. 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.
84. The Time-Keeper shall give a warning buzz when there is one minute left indicating that the Speaker to conclude and a final buzz when he/she must stop.

### **Rostrum**

85. Sets of standard Rostrum shall be issued to the Moderators by the Election Commission.
86. The Rostrum shall bear the logo of the Election Commission of Bhutan.
87. The Debate Rostrum setting shall be as per the layout provided by the Election Commission of Bhutan as in **Annexure B**.

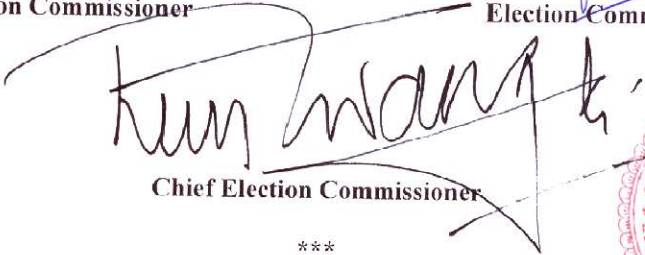
### **Judges**

88. 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 14<sup>th</sup> Day of the 9<sup>th</sup> Month of the Year 2012 corresponding to the 28<sup>th</sup> Day of the 7<sup>th</sup> Month of the Water Male Dragon Year in the Bhutanese Calendar.

  
Election Commissioner

  
Election Commissioner

  
Chief Election Commissioner

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“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 well being of Bhutan.”

**His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck**

17<sup>th</sup> December 2007

**Parliamentary Elections 2013  
The Public Debate of Political Parties**

**Parliamentary Elections 2013  
The Public Debate of *Demngos* of ..... *Demkhong***

**Parliamentary Elections 2013  
The Public Debate of *Galyong Tshogde* Candidates**

**Portrait of His Majesty The Druk  
Gyalpo on the Wall**

**Prescribed Banner for the Debate**

- |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

Moderator

