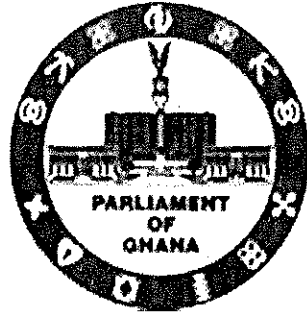


**IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF GHANA**



REPORT OF THE SPECIAL BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON THE 2023 ANNUAL BUDGET
ESTIMATES OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA
COMMISSION (NMC)

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2023 financial year was presented to Parliament by the Hon. minister for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta on 24th November 2022 in accordance with Article 179 of the 1992 Constitution and Section 21(3) of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921).

Pursuant to Order 140(4) of the Standing Orders of the House, the Rt. Hon. Speaker referred the Estimates of the National Media Commission to the Special Budget Committee for consideration and report.

1.1. DELIBERATIONS

The Committee met with the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Mr. George Sarpong and other technical officials of the Commission and the Ministry of Finance and considered the Estimates. The Committee is grateful to them for their inputs into the dissuasions.

2.0. REFERENCE

The Committee referred to the following documents during its deliberations:

- i. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.
- ii. The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana.
- iii. National Media Commission Act 1993, Act 449
- iv. Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921)
- v. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2023 Financial Year
- vi. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2021 Financial Year and;
- vii. National Medium Term Development Policy Framework (NMTDPF) in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2020 - 2023; and
- viii. Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for 2023 - 2026.

3.0. VISION AND MISSION

The National Media Commission exists to foster responsible, independent, and free media in support of democracy. NMC is required to take action as part of its basic duties to make sure that those in charge of state-owned media give fair opportunities and facilities for the dissemination of opposing viewpoints and dissident perspectives.

4.0. THE POLICY OBJECTIVE AND THE GOAL OF THE COMMISSION

3.1. Policy Objective

The main policy objective of the Commission

- To Improve the participation of civil society (Media, Traditional authorities, religious bodies, etc.) in national development
- To ensure responsive government and citizen participation in development dialogue

3.2. Goal

The Commission by the above objectives intends to maintain a stable, united and safe society.

3.3. Core Functions of the Commission

To achieve the above stated Goal, the Commission is enjoined by Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution, as well as the National Media Commission Act (Act 449), to carry out the following functions:

- i. promote and ensure the freedom and independence of the media for the mass communication and information;
- ii. take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in mass media, including investigating, mediating, and resolving complaints made by or against the press or other mass media;
- iii. take measures to ensure that persons responsible for state-owned media afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent view and dissenting opinions;
- iv. appoint in consultation with the President, the Chairmen and other members of the governing bodies of public corporates managing the state-owned media;

- v. make regulations by constitutional instrument for the registration of newspapers and other publications, except that the regulations shall not provide for the exercise of any direction or control over professional functions of a person engaged in the production of newspapers or other means of mass communication; and
- vi. To perform such other functions as may be prescribed by the law not inconsistent.

4.0. PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW IN 2022

4.1. Operational Performance

In the year under-review, the Commission in accordance with Article 168 of the 1992 Constitution and section 2(1) (e) of the National Media Commission Act, 1993 (Act 449), carried out the following activities:

a) Coordinated Mechanism on the Safety of Journalists

In order to address regionally reported media-related offenses and issues relating to journalists' safety, the Commission also held regional hearings on the state of the media in the regions. To look into reports of assaults on journalists in the nation, the Secretariat collaborated with a number of parties, including the Ministry of Information, the Ghana Police Service, the Attorney- General's Office, and journalist organizations.

b) Complaints Settlement

In accordance with Article 167[b] of the 1992 Constitution and sections 12 to 15 of Act 449 of 1993, and the NMC (Complaints Settlement Procedure) Regulations, 1994, L.I. 1587, the Commission continued to mediate complaints that were received from aggrieved persons against the media during 2022. In all, a total of twenty-1 (21) complaints were received. Seven of the 21 complaints the

Commission received were addressed, while the remaining 14 are still being processed.

Additionally, the Commission made many trips to Bawku where it collaborated with local media figures to address concerns and transgressions relating to the safety of journalists and the enhancement of gatekeeping duties while providing free technical support to local radio stations.

c) In-house Interaction with Staff of Media Houses Across the Country

During the years under review, in order to combat the threat of false news, propaganda, disinformation, increased incitement, and hate speech in media content, the National Media Commission (NMC) established interactions with media owners. Senior management employees from media organizations across the nation were also interacted with internally as part of the engagement. The NMC increased its surveillance efforts, particularly in areas where there were no NMC offices.

4.2. Financial Performance

National Media Commission was allocated a total budget of Nine Million and Twenty-Six Thousand (GH¢9,026,000) for its activities in 2022. The budget was initially allocated among the three cost main centres as follows:

<u>Cost Centre</u>	<u>2022 Allocation (GH¢)</u>
Employee Compensation	- 6,342,000.00
Goods and Services	- 1,879,000.00
Capital Expenditure	- 805,000.00
Total	- <u>9,026,000.00</u>

The allocation was revised to GH¢8,462,000 during the Midyear budget review. The performance of the revised budgetary allocation as of November, 2022 is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: NMC Budget Performance as at November, 2022

ITEM	2022 Revised Appropriation (GH¢) (A)	2022 Releases 31-11-2022 (GH¢) (B)	Actual Expenditure (C)	Variance (GH¢) (D) D=A-B	% Released
Compensation	6,342,000.00	1,850,851.18	1,850,851.18	4,491,148.82	29.18
Goods and Services	1,315,000.00	702,436.04	102,436.04	612,563.96	53.42
Capital Expenditure	805,000.00	805,000.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Total	8,462,000.00	3,358,287.22	1,953,287.22	5,103,712.78	29.29

5.0. OUTLOOK FOR 2023

5.1. Operational Outlooks

For the 2023 financial year, the National Media Commission intends to undertake the following activities amongst others;

5.1.1. Media Monitoring

The Commission plans to intensify its efforts to tackle hate speech, incitement, fake news, and character distortion in an effort to restore integrity to the information environment. To ensure media adherence to norms, the Commission plans to step up regulatory enforcement and initiate national conversation on media, governance, and peacebuilding.

In addition, the Commission intends to build a media monitoring system that tracks media content in order to put in the needed

interventions to address hate speech and offensive language in the media space. The Commission consider this as critical to securing a decent information ecosystem that sustains progressive debate, nurtures public dialogue and engenders national development.

5.1.2. Guidelines Review on Publication

The Commission plans to examine the rules governing the release of rebuttals, local language broadcasting, political advertising, fair representation of all political parties and candidates by state-owned media, political journalism, print media, religious broadcasting, and broadcasting standards. The laws affecting media will also be reviewed by the Commission to reflect a contemporary outlook and also to bring them in line with the Constitution. Legislative intervention may will also be initiated to address institutional and policy lapses in media regulation.

5.1.3. Recruitment of Professional Staff

The technology and delivery methods used in media are evolving, necessitating new regulatory tools and skills on the part of regulatory staff. However, the Commission lacks a professional workforce. In this regard, the Commission plans to hire and train 400 professionals.

5.1.4. Safety of Journalists

The Commission intends to modernize the National Coordinated Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists' Secretariat by implementing LUCENT HubCheq, a technology enabler that employs GPS and time-authenticated video, audio, and text technology for evidence-based tracking of incidents relating to the safety of journalists for action by the NMC, Ghana Police Service, and the Attorney-Department General's to enable the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of perpetrators of media abuse.

5.2. 2023 Budget Allocation for 2023

To implement the above programmes, an amount of Nine Million, Two Hundred thousand, nine hundred and Seventy Ghana Cedis (*GH¢9,200,970.00*) have been allocated to the National Media Commission (NMC) for the 2023 financial year. The 2023 allocation to NMC saw an increase of *GH¢738,970* representing 8.73% compared to the 2022 allocation of *GH¢9,026,000.00*. The summary of the 2023 allocation compared to 2022 is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of 2022 and 2023 Allocations

SN	Cost Centre	2022 Allocation (GH¢)	2023 Allocation (GH¢)	Variance (GH¢)
1	Compensation of Employee	6,342,000.00	6,722,520.00	380,520.00
2	Goods and Services	1,315,000.00	1,181,850.00	(133,150)
3	Capital Expenditure	805,000.00	1,296,600.00	491,600.00
	TOTAL	8,462,000.00	9,200,970.00	738,970.00

6.0. OBSERVATIONS

The Committee after a careful examination of the 2023 estimates of the NMC made the following observations:

6.1. Capacity of NMC to Monitor Media

The Committee noted that, following the adoption of media freedom in Ghana, the number of media houses has increased considerably. The proliferation of media houses coupled with the upsurge in social media requires a strong and vibrant content regulation to control abuse and curtail the use of media platforms to defame individuals and for the circulation of harmful content.

However, the National Media Commission, the state institution mandated to regulate media content has not been adequately resourced to effectively regulate media content in Ghana. The Committee noted that the Commission is seriously underfunded and understaffed. The Commission currently has a total staff strength of eleven (11) of which only three (3) are technical staff.

In effort to address the low staff strength, the Committee noted that the Commission has made provision in the 2023 budgetary allocation to recruit 400 staff.

The Committee is of the view that the staff strength is exceedingly inadequate for the effective discharge of the mandate of the Commission. The Committee is hopeful that the engagement of the additional staff will help the Commission expand its presence across the country and also monitor social media in addition to traditional media. Accordingly, the Committee urges the Ministry of finance to grant financial clearance to the Commission to recruit the projected staff to support its operations.

6.2. Increase in Budgetary Allocation

The Committee noted that the budgetary allocation to NMC has increased by GH¢**738,970.00.00** or 8.73% from an amount of Eight Million, Four Hundred and Sixty-Two Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢**8,462,000.00**) appropriated in 2022 to Nine Million, Two Hundred thousand, nine hundred and Seventy Ghana Cedis (GH¢**9,200,970.00**) allocated in 2023. The Committee noted that the increase was largely in respect of Compensation for Employees and Capital Expenditure.

Compensation for employees increased by GH¢380,520.00 from GH¢6,342,000.00 in 2022 to GH¢6,722,520.00 in 2023 and Capital Expenditure increased by 491,600.00 or 23.39% from GH¢ 805,000.00 in 2022 to GH¢ 1,296,600.00 in 2023. However, the

increase in both compensation and capital expenditure is negated by significant decrease in the allocation for Goods and Services which decline by *GH¢697,150* from *GH¢1,879,000.00* in 2022 to *GH¢1,181,850.00* in 2023 representing 37.1% reduction.

The Committee was informed that, the increase in compensation is to enable the Commission recruit more personnel to augment its staff strength.

Additionally, the Capex allocation is to enable the Commission procure mobile monitoring equipment for media content monitoring.

The Committee urges the Ministry of Finance to release the capital budget allocation to enable the Commission acquire the monitoring equipment to ensure responsible media content ahead of the 2024 general elections.

6.3. Regulating Social Media Platforms


The Committee noted that Social Media platforms has become a very important and integral part of the media landscape circulating information to a wider audience and a faster speed. The platforms are however unregulated leading to the circulation of toxic content. The unregulated nature of social platforms leads to the abuse of the platforms by unscrupulous individuals to spread offensive contents. There is therefore the need for policies that prohibit graphic violence, child sexual exploitation, and hateful content or speech on social media platforms. The National Media Commission however does not have the capacity and mandate to regulate this sensitive section of the media.

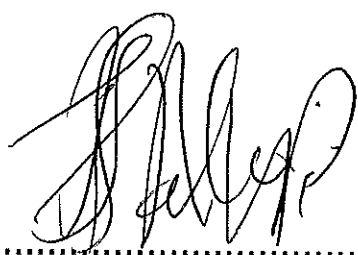
The Committee recommends to the NMC to initiate discussions aimed at securing the requisite mandate and capacity to be able to sanitize content in the entire media landscape including social media platforms.

7.0. CONCLUSION

The Committee, after careful examination of the 2023 Estimates of the National Media Commission recommends to the House to adopt this report and approve the sum **Nine Million, Two Hundred thousand, nine hundred and Seventy Ghana Cedis (GH¢9,200,970.00)** to enable the National Media Commission to implement its programmes for the 2023 Financial Year.

Respectfully submitted


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HON. PATRICIA APPIAGYEI
(VICE-CHAIRPERSON,
SPECIAL BUDGET COMMITTEE)


.....
JOANA A. S. ADJEI (MRS.)
(CLERK, SPECIAL BUDGET
COMMITTEE)

19th December, 2022.

