

**IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SIXTH
PARLIAMENT OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF
GHANA**

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL BUDGET COMMITTEE

ON

**THE 2016 ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF THE
NATIONAL MEDIA COMMISSION**

DECEMBER, 2015

**IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT OF THE FOURTH
REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Minister for Finance, Hon. Seth E. Terkper presented the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government for the year ending 31st December, 2016 to Parliament on Friday, 13th November, 2015 in accordance with article 179 of the 1992 Constitution.

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

- 1.2 Subsequently, the Committee met with the Executive Secretary, Mr. George Sarpong and officials of the Commission. Representatives from the Ministry of Finance were also present to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

The Committee extends its appreciation to the Executive Secretary and all officials present at the Committee sitting for their input.

2.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The following documents were used by the Committee as reference materials:

- a. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.
- b. The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana.
- c. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2015 Financial Year.
- d. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2016 Financial Year.

3.0 MISSION STATEMENT

The role of the Commission is to promote free, independent and responsible media to sustain democracy and national development.

4.0 PERFORMANCE IN 2015

4.1 For the year 2015 an amount of Two Million, Eight Hundred and Ninety Nine Thousand, Six Hundred and Forty Eight Ghana Cedis (**GH¢ 2,899,648**) was allocated to the National Media Commission to enable it undertake its programmes and activities. The breakdown is as follows:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount GH¢</u>
Compensation of Employees	GH¢1,646,896.00
Goods and Services	GH¢602,752.00
Assets	<u>GH¢650,000.00</u>
Total	<u>GH¢2,899,648.00</u>

4.2 ACHIEVEMENTS FOR YEAR 2015

Media Regulations Management Programme

- The Commission scaled up efforts towards media and peace building by improving policy and legislation on media regulations, as well as establishing effective monitoring systems to track and address professional defects in the media landscape.
- The Commission continued the sensitization of journalists and media owners across the country to deepen its partnership with other stakeholders and to ensure professionalism in the media.
- Series of dialogues were held with the Ghana Community Radio Network, Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana and the political parties on national development and peace efforts.
- The Commission also commenced the process of decentralization by establishing media monitoring centres in all the regional capitals

starting with Ashanti, Volta and Northern regions to ensure proper monitoring of the media.

- The Constitutional Instrument on Content Authorization which seeks to regulate the content of the electronic media, especially the television when Ghana migrates onto the digital platform was developed by the Commission and pushed through the enactment processes in Parliament.

5.0 OUTLOOK FOR 2016

- The Commission will review existing guidelines for the operations of the media to strengthen its regulatory role taking into consideration the 2016 elections and the development of regulations to provide appropriate remedies for media infractions.
- In 2016, the Commission will establish Regional Advisory Councils to collaborate with the Regional Security Councils to deal with issues of media responsibility in the regions.
- In collaboration with the Regional Media Advisory Councils, Members of the Commission will be deployed to the regions to assess media activities before, during and after the general elections.

6.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Provision for 2016 Budget

For the implementation of the above programmes and activities, an amount of **One Million, Seven Hundred and Fifty-Five Thousand, Nine Hundred and Seventy-Five Ghana Cedis (GH¢1,755,975.00)** has been allocated from GoG. The breakdown is as follows:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount GH¢</u>
Compensation of Employees	1,454,599
Goods and Services	301,376
CAPEX	-
	<u>1,755,975</u>

6.2 Budgetary Analysis

The Committee noted a 39% reduction in the 2016 total budgetary allocation from that of year 2015. The Committee also noted that only 50% of 2015 Goods and Service Vote was allocated to the Commission for implementation of the planned programmes of Year 2016. No allocation has been made for expenditure on Capex for 2016.

Table 1
Budget Analysis of Year 2015 and 2016

Items	Approved Budget 2015 GHC	Approved Budget 2016 GHC	Variance GHC	% of Variance
Compensation of Employees	1,646,896	1,454,599	192,297	11.7%
Goods and Services	602,752	301,376	301,376	50%
Capex	650,000	-	650,000	-
Totals	2,899,648	1,755,975	1,143,673	39%

6.3 The Committees Reports

It was pleasing to note that over the years, the Special Budget Committee's reports on the Annual Budget of NMCs to plenary have garnered certain relieves to some of the challenges which had been bedeviling the Commission for some time now. These are:

- Attainment of Financial support

The Committee was also informed that, it was through its report on the 2013 Budget Estimates of NMC and positive contributions on the floor of Parliament that, the need for financial assistance was highlighted to draw the European Union's attention to offer further assistance to the Commission's monitoring programme.

- Office Accommodation

The release by H. E. the President to the NMC, the old office building of the National Communications Authority to accommodate the staff and the State of the Art Media Monitoring Equipment which has been stored in deplorable conditions for the past four years. The Executive Secretary could not hide his joy and stated his gratitude to the Committee for constantly throwing attention on the plight of the Commission in its Reports and H. E. the President for the allocation.

The Committee was informed that, because it is an old building, it will need some work to refurbish the place, especially to upgrade the electrical works to enable the Commission install the sophisticated monitoring equipment. However, the Committee realized that, no allocation has been made for Capex expenses in the Commissions 2016 Budget to cater for the refurbishment.

The Committee is therefore appealing to the Ministry of Finance as a matter of urgency to look for funds for the National Media Commission to get the old office building allocated to it refurbished at the earliest possible time to enable the Commission install and put the Media Monitoring Equipment in operation.

6.5 Regulations, 2015 (LI 2224)

The Committee was pleased to note that the National Media Commission Content Regulations, 2015 (LI 2224) has come to force with the support of the European Union and other stakeholders. The Legislation sets clear and

enforceable standards in media content based on international best practice. It would keep in balance the natural harmony, which must exist between freedom of expression as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution and obligations for responsible behavior in the electronic communications and broadcasting field.

In addition, the Committee was informed that, the Commission also needs to revise other subsidiary legislations and guidelines such as, Guidelines on Political Journalism, Political Advertising, Guidelines for Local Language Broadcasting; and Guidelines for Broadcasting and Print Media to set clear standards for media practice and guard against any undesirable reportage that could act as a trigger especially in the run-up to the 2016 electioneering period. The Commission will require adequate financial resources to undertake stakeholder consultation, publication and sensitization of media personnel, politicians and other stakeholders on tenets of the new legislations and guidelines.

However, considering the fact that, the 2016 Goods and Service Vote to the NMC has been slashed, there is no way the Commission can undertake these important programmes in 2016 if MOF does not find additional resources for the Commission.

As a matter of urgency, the Committee is calling on the Ministry of Finance to make resources available to the Commission to enable them sensitize the media on the requirements of the law as well as hold consultation with stakeholders on the other legislations in preparation towards the 2016 general elections.

8.6 Media content

The Committee shared in the NMC's uneasiness with regard to abusive political discourses that characterize the media landscape before, during and after general elections in the country. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee that, with over 400 authorised radio stations, 100 registered newspapers, 31 television channels plus a myriad of social media news applications in the country, their proliferation present clear challenges for ensuring that, standards are maintained especially during an election year when political parties begin to turn the heat on each other to gain political points.

Another concern noted by the Committee was the Over-the-top news services offered by cellular telephone companies in the country. According to the Commission, sms or text messages are key to spreading hate speech. The Executive Secretary gave the caution that, a little spark in an election period can be very volatile. He gave examples that, only one Station in Rwanda was credited with inciting the atrocities that occurred in the country, and so also is the bloodshed that occurred in Kenya after the last elections attributed to hate speech on a local Radio station. The Committee was of the view that some interventions are required immediately, to avert volatile communication from unprofessional practice in the media.

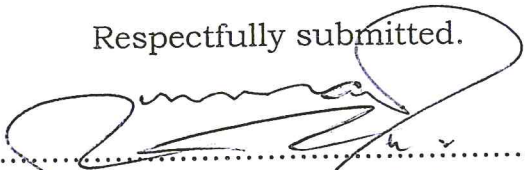
The Committee strongly recommends to the Ministry of Finance to make additional funds available to resource NMC to enable it enforce Regulations 2015 (LI 2224) and other legislations to avert pervasive propagation of hate speech and incitement in the country.

9.0 CONCLUSION


The Committee recommends to the House, the approval of the sum of ***One Million, Seven Hundred and Fifty Five and Nine Hundred and Seventy Five Ghana Cedis (GH¢1,755,975.00)*** allocated to the National Media

Commission for the implementation of its programmes and activities in the financial year 2016.

Respectfully submitted.



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HON. ALBAN S. K. BAGBIN
(MAJORITY LEADER &
CHAIRMAN, SPECIAL BUDGET COMMITTEE)



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AKUA DUROWAA OWUSU AGYEKUM (MRS)
(CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE)

14th December, 2015