



Reform should begin from within
– Report



Constitution sets rules for incoming Parliamentarians

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A study commissioned by the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) has intimated that the professional conduct of journalists is a critical ingredient in reforming the sector amid revelations of rampant violations of the ethics guiding the profession.

The report titled “***The State of Journalism Ethics in Zimbabwe***” contends that there is widespread consensus over the fact that the journalism profession in the country is in a state of “moral and ethical degeneracy” as evidenced by the rise of “propaganda journalism” and hence the recommendation that:

“To reclaim its lost ethical ground, journalists need to go beyond just introspection. They need to follow this up with creating and fully subscribing to self-regulatory mechanisms which have ‘teeth’.”

The report also noted that despite the constitutional protections of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, the policy and regulatory environment remained a key impediment to journalism practice – a fact which has led to repeated calls for media reforms.

The Report cites the Director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Nhlanhla Ngwenya emphasizing on the need to adhere to ethics by journalists and commitment to conducting

themselves in a professional manner so as not to undermine the efforts being made by media reform activists.

“Once you entrench non-professionalism, it becomes the norm. The problem is so serious that it makes it difficult for us as media reform advocates when we approach state authorities to lobby for self-regulation. They remind us of just how rotten the profession is and justify their reluctance to endorse self-regulation,” says Ngwenya.

The Report optimistically notes that despite the messy state of affairs within the media sector, the respondents in the study expressed confidence that the situation was salvageable as long as there was a strong commitment to ‘introspect’ and engage in a ‘profession-wide’ dialogue to inform a positive change in professional conduct.

Like charity that is said to begin at home, the reform agenda of the media sector will most likely be realized if it begins from within as journalists align their conduct with the ethics guiding their profession. In its concluding remarks, the Report reiterates that:

“The profession needs to demonstrate that it can clean the ethical mess itself and use that as a strategy to leverage the state to fully accede to self-regulation”.

Constitution sets rules for incoming Parliamentarians

INCOMING Parliamentarians – set to be sworn in on 3 September 2013 - will find themselves operating under a new rule book given that the new Constitution is now fully in force according to the Veritas Bill Watch report of 27 August 2013.

Despite having been postponed from the initial date of 27 August, the new date for the swearing in still complies with section 145(1) of the Constitution, which states that the first sitting of Parliament after a general election must “not be later than thirty days after the President-elect assumes office”.

Under the new rules set out by the Constitution, the annual Presidential proclamations that marked the beginning and end for the former annual Parliamentary “sessions” are no longer provided for.

Instead the two Houses of Parliament – apart from the first sitting after a general election - will decide for themselves when they will sit and when they will recess with a stipulation that they do not go into recess for more than 180 days.

Under the Constitution, sections 146 and 140, the President, does, however, have the power to summon Parliament to meet at any time “to conduct special business”, and must at least once a year address a joint sitting of both Houses on “the state of the nation”.



File Picture : Parliamentary session

Furthermore, MPs in both Houses of Parliament are required within thirty days of their election, to relinquish any public office they were holding when elected as outlined in Section 129(1)(h) of the Constitution, which stipulates that:

“ If when elected a member was a “public officer” [e.g. a serving member of the Public Service or the uniformed services or the holder of any other paid office in the service of the State] or a member or employee of a statutory body, a Government-controlled entity, a provincial council or a local authority, he or she must relinquish that office, membership or employment within 30 days of being declared elected.”

Consequently, failure to relinquish will entail automatic and immediate forfeiture of an MP-elect’s Parliamentary seat.

More details: <http://www.veritaszim.net/>