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ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES
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COMMUNICATION

by

Mr Ahmed Abd ELGHANI
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on

**“Mechanisms for the Appointment of Secretaries-General of Parliaments, and the
Determination of their Roles and Competencies”**

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Mr. Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

At the outset of my speech, I am pleased to convey my sincere appreciation to you all. It is a distinct honor to address this esteemed gathering convened by the Association of Secretaries-General of National Parliaments ASGP, on the sidelines of the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This meeting plays an important role in enhancing joint coordination and cooperation among the Secretaries-General of national parliaments, and exchanging experiences which, in turn, contributes to the enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of work within these parliaments.

Our meeting today addresses a matter of great importance, namely: “Mechanisms for the appointment of Secretaries-General of parliaments and the determination of their roles and competencies.” This topic reflects the core of institutional parliamentary work and highlights the significance of the administrative and technical functions in supporting legislative and oversight roles.

It should be noted that the General Secretariat of parliament in all countries, headed by the Secretary-General, constitutes one of the fundamental pillars underpinning the institutional structure of the legislative authority. It serves as the administrative and technical body that ensures the regularity and continuity of parliamentary functions. Its role goes beyond the provision of logistical support, extending to active participation in organizing legislative procedures and facilitating members' constitutional duties.

Distinguished attendees,

As you are well aware, countries' constitutions in most cases generally do not include detailed provisions specifying the procedures regarding the appointment of the Secretary-General of parliament. This matter is usually left to the rules of procedures or the organizing laws enacted by the parliament itself, which provides the legislative institution with a degree of flexibility in managing its internal affairs, in accordance with the nature of the political system and the surrounding legal environment.

Consequently, there is a noticeable variation among countries regarding the mechanisms for appointing Secretaries-General of parliaments, whether in terms of the competent authority, the procedures followed, or the criteria applied in selecting candidates. In some parliaments, appointment is carried out by the parliamentary

bureau, where the Speaker of the chamber proposes a suitable candidate for the position, and this nomination is then submitted to the bureau for approval.

This is the approach adopted by the Egyptian Senate, where Article 279 of the Senate's Rules of Procedures stipulates that "The Secretary-General shall be appointed by a decision of the Bureau of the Senate upon the nomination of its Speaker, and the Speaker shall inform the Senate at the next session."

In other cases, the parliamentary assembly itself may play a role in the appointment process, either through a direct vote or by approving a nomination submitted by the parliamentary bureau. In some systems, the executive authority participates in the appointment of the Secretary-General, either directly by issuing the appointment decision or indirectly by influencing the nomination process, reflecting the state's desire to select individuals with extensive administrative or legal expertise, particularly when the position requires advanced skills in public administration

Dear Colleagues,

Despite the variation in the mechanisms for appointing the Secretary-General across different systems, there exists a set of conditions and criteria that all such systems consistently seek to ensure in any candidate. Foremost among these is academic qualification, with a preference generally accorded to candidates possessing a legal specialization, given the nature of parliamentary work, which demands a thorough understanding of legislative texts and legal procedures. Practical experience also constitutes an essential requirement, as the candidate is typically expected to have previously held administrative or legal positions that equip him/ her to navigate through the complexities inherent in parliamentary work.

In addition, professional competence and integrity constitute fundamental requirements for holding this office. The Secretary-General must possess a good reputation and demonstrate the capacity to take objective decisions, free from political pressures.

Political neutrality is also an essential element, as the Secretary-General must be able to engage with the full spectrum of parliamentary groups and currents without bias, thereby ensuring the maintenance of balance within the legislative institution.

With regard to the term of office of the Secretary-General, this varies across political systems. In some states, the term is fixed for a specified period, which may be renewable once or multiple times. In other states, it is linked to the parliamentary session, concluding with the end of the legislative term. There are also systems in

which no specific term is specified, with the Secretary-General remaining in office until a decision is issued to conclude his/ her appointment.

This diversity reflects differing perspectives on the nature of the office, and on the extent to which priority should be given either to ensuring administrative stability or to allowing for rejuvenation.

Distinguished Attendees,

A close examination of the mandates of Secretaries-General across various parliaments, as set forth in their respective rules of procedure and internal regulations - despite differences in drafting, whether detailed or concise - reveals a set of common principles. Among these is that the Secretary-General serves as the leader of a work team tasked with ensuring the orderly and efficient functioning of the Senate. In this capacity, the Secretary-General bears primary responsibility for translating the Parliament's mission into action and for overseeing the execution of all activities necessary to support the Senate's organs in the exercise of their roles and responsibilities.

The principal function of the Secretary-General of Parliament is to oversee the conduct of all parliamentary business, to provide the services and facilities necessary for the members of parliament to perform their duties, and to supervise the work of all departments of the General Secretariat.

In this capacity, the Secretary-General acts as the higher authority and direct head of all staff, exercising full financial and administrative powers in relation to them.

The Secretary-General also attends the Senate sittings, monitors the draft agenda of its meetings, and oversees the preparation of plenary sittings, including the recording of their minutes, while ensuring the provision of the necessary technical and logistical support. Furthermore, the Secretary-General supervises the work of the standing committees in preparing their meetings, drafting their reports and formulating the draft laws referred to them and follows up on the implementation of their recommendations as approved by the Senate.

The Secretary-General acts as a vital link among all departments operating within the Senate. He oversees both strategic and operational plans to ensure their coherence and integration, verifies the effective execution of tasks and the achievement of intended objectives, as well as the development of the capacities and skills of staff by identifying their needs, providing appropriate guidance and monitoring their performance.

At the external level, the Secretary General oversees the communications conducted by the Secretariat of the Senate with national parliaments and international parliamentary bodies. He participates in conferences and events, in accordance with the decisions of the Senate's Bureau, and undertakes the proposal and implementation of parliamentary visit programmes. He also supervises the preparation of draft resolutions, working papers and studies related to items on the agendas of international parliamentary conferences, follows up on the participation of the Senate's delegations in such events, and ensures the preparation of reports on their outcomes.

Mr. Chairman,

The rapid and successive political, economic and social developments, at both the domestic and international levels, have placed increasing demands on the Parliament as a unique institution which simultaneously embodies the expression of the citizens' aspirations and concerns, while also discharging its core functions of legislation, oversight and participation in the formulation of public policy, in addition to the important role the Parliament plays within the diplomatic and international sphere.

With the growing complexity and interdependence of the issues under consideration, greater efforts are now required from the Secretary-General and the supporting team to effectively address these matters. This, in turn, necessitates the continuous development of the capacities of those serving within the parliamentary Secretariat, and the provision of extensive training and specialized knowledge.

In this context, we look forward to a more prominent role for the Association of Secretaries General of National Parliaments in deepening cooperation, coordination, and sustained communication among its members, with a view to exchanging perspectives, ideas, and information on ways to further advance parliamentary institutions and strengthen the capacities of their staff.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your kind attention. I am confident that our current meeting will fulfill our shared objectives and aspirations, particularly in view of the participation of this distinguished group of Secretaries-General, who possess extensive experience in institutional parliamentary work.

I extend to you all my best wishes for continued success and sound judgment in all your endeavours.