

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2008) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

53RD Sitting

14:00h

Friday 13 June 2008

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (70)

Speaker (1)

The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (41)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (40)

The United Force (1)

The Hon. Samuel A A Hinds MP (Absent)

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Prime Minister and Minister of

Public Works and Communications

Performing the functions of the Office of the President

The Hon. Clement J Rohee MP

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. Shaik K Z Baksh MP

Minister of Education

The Hon. Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP - (AOL)

Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

The Hon. Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

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The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Essequibo)

Minister of Foreign Affairs

*The Hon. Dr Ashni Singh MP

Minister of Finance

The Hon. Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon. Robert M Persaud MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Agriculture

The Hon. Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP

(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Minister of the Public Service

The Hon. Kellawan Lall MP

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh SC, MP *(Absent)*

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon. Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. B H Robeson Benn MP

Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir MP *(AOL)*

Minister of Labour

The Hon. Priya D Manickchand MP *(AOL)*

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Dr Desrey Fox MP

Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon. Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

Minister in the Ministry of Health

*Non-elected Minister **Elected Member from TUF

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The Hon. Jennifer I Webster MP

Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon. Manniram Prashad MP

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

*The Hon. Pauline R Sukhai MP

Minister of Amerindian Affairs

Mr. Donald Ramotar MP

Ms. Gail Teixeira MP

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal MP, Chief Whip

Ms. Bibi S Shadick MP

(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr. Albert Atkinson JP, MP

(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr. Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

- (AOL)

(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr. Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

- (AOL)

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomereroon/Supenaam)

Mr. Odinga N Lumumba MP

- (AOL)

Mr. Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr. Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr. Neendkumar JP, MP

(Absent)

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

*** Mr. Steve P Ninvalle MP

Parl'y Sect'ry in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

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Mr. Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj MP - (AOL)

Mr. Norman A Whittaker MP

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

***Non-elected Member

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)

Mr. Robert HO Corbin - (AOL)

Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Winston S Murray CCH, MP - (AOL)

Mrs. Clarissa S Riehl MP

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. E Lance Carberry MP - (AOL)

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr. Anthony Vieira - (Absent)

Mr. Basil Williams MP

Dr. George A Norton MP

Mrs. Volda A Lawrence MP - (AOL)

Mr. Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP

Mr. Dave Danny MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Aubrey C Norton MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Ernest B Elliot MP - (Absent)

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE 13 JUNE 2008

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Mervyn Williams MP

(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Ms. Africo Selman MP

Dr. John Austin MP

(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms. Jennifer Wade MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms. Vanessa Kissoon MP

- *(Absent)*

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Mr. Desmond Fernandes MP

(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

Mr. James K McAllister MP

- *(Absent)*

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr. Raphael G Trotman MP

- *(Absent)*

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan MP

- *(Absent)*

Mrs. Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms. Latchmin B Punalall, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. David Patterson MP

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)

Mr. Everall N Franklin MP

- *(Absent)*

OFFICERS

Ms. Lilawatie Coonjah

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Ms. Hermina Gilgeours

Assistant Clerk of the National Assembly

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PRAYERS

[The Deputy Clerk reads the Prayers]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Posting of Profiles of Members of the National Assembly on the Parliamentary Website Profiles

Honourable Members, You have been circulated with some profiles of yourself. I hope that they are flattering enough for your egos, but it is intended that these profiles will go on the website. If you wish to make any corrections on them, could you please do so and submit them to the Clerk within one week. There are eleven Members whose profiles have not been circulated, they are not ready yet and those will be sent very shortly to those Members. Thank you.

PRESENTATIONS OF PAPERS AND REPORTS:

- (1) By the *Minister of Finance*:
 - (i) The Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Offices (Emoluments) (No.2) Order 2008 - No. 32 of 2008.

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- (ii) The Constitutional Offices (Remuneration of Holders) (No. 2) Order 2008 - No 33 of 2008

- (2) By the *Minister of Education*:

The Upper Corentyne Industrial Training Centre (Board of Governors) Order 2007 - Order No. 13 of 2007.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

- (3) By *Ms Gail Teixeira MP (Chairperson of the Committee of Appointments)*:

- (i) Fourth Report of the Committee on Appointments in relation to the Appointment of Members of the Rights of the Child Commission.
- (ii) Fifth Report of the Committee on Appointments in relation to the Appointment of Members of the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

- (i) **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MOTION

1 - IMPACT OF GLOBAL FOOD PRICE INCREASES

WHEREAS globally there is an increase in food prices caused mainly by four factors namely; increase in the price of fossil fuels, effects on Climate Change, increase in production of bio-fuels and growing demand for food in large emerging economies;

AND WHEREAS that the increase of food prices, amounting to over eighty percent over the past year and a half, is having a devastating effect on the supply and affordability of food for population in both developing and developed nations;

AND WHEREAS that various multilateral and regional institutions, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Bank, the World Food Programme and CARICOM, have already called for urgent action and heightened collaboration to tackle the global crises;

AND WHEREAS Guyana, having recognised this crisis and its impact within the CARICOM region, is working with its sister CARICOM partners to transform GUYANA into a major player in the development of Food security in the region;

AND WHEREAS the Government has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Food Prices tasked

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with monitoring this emerging situation on a constant basis and to make recommendations on action that may be needed to be taken to cushion the impact on the Guyanese population, especially the poor and vulnerable;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly takes note of the impact of Global rising food prices on the cost of living in Guyana and supports the intervention taken by the Government to cushion the impact of these global price increases on our population especially for the vulnerable groups;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly undertaken to follow the implementation of these governmental interventions that include increasing the disposable income of ordinary Guyanese, subsidising the cost of accessing utility services, implementing the Ministry of Agriculture's GROW MORE campaign and its commitment budgetary interventions zero rating of all essential food items, diesel and

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agricultural inputs, monitoring exports of some essential agricultural commodities to ensure adequate local supply and monitoring of prices and supply of various food commodities and assistance to single-headed households;

**AND BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED:**

That this National Assembly be provided with the deliberations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Food Prices on a quarterly basis, set up by Cabinet to review the impact of rising food prices on Guyanese and make recommendations intended to cushion the impact;

**AND BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED:**

That this National Assembly recognizes that the situation requires national action and sustained efforts and engagement with critical sectors and groups to confront this challenge locally and regionally

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

...

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mr Speaker, I beg to defer the Motion captioned Impact of Global Price Increases to a future date.

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

[Motion Deferred]

The Speaker: We will now move to the next item on the Order Paper.

(ii) COMMITTEE BUSINESS

MOTIONS

5. ESTABLISHMENT OF A RIGHTS OF THE CHILD COMMISSION

WHEREAS Article 212U of the Constitution provides for the establishment of a Rights of the Child Commission;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with Article 212U (2)(a) of the Constitution, the Rights of the Child Commission shall consist of -

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(a) *Not less than five or more than fifteen members, with expertise in issues affecting children, nominated by entities, by a consensual mechanism determined by the National Assembly, after the entities which shall include the Ministry with responsibility for children's affairs, the Ministry of Education and organisations representing the interests of youth are determined by the votes not less than two-thirds of all elected members of the National Assembly, and*

(b) *A member who shall be a nominee, without the right to vote, chosen by and from each of the following Commissions, the Human Rights Commission, Ethnic Relations Commission, Women and Gender Equality Commission and Indigenous People's Commission."*

AND WHEREAS the Committee on Appointments, having deliberated on the identification of the entities for nomination to the Rights of the Child Commission unanimously

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agreed and proposed that the Commission be comprised of fifteen nominations from the list of entities in the First Schedule in the following categories:

<i>Service</i>	-	2
<i>Religion</i>	-	3
<i>Youth</i>	-	3
<i>Women</i>	-	3
<i>Other</i>	-	1
<i>Ministry of Education</i>	-	1
<i>M of LHS&SS</i>	-	1
<i>NC on ROC</i>	-	1

AND WHEREAS the Committee also unanimously agreed on the consensual mechanism to guide the process for consultation and nomination of Members to the said Rights Commission herein at the Second Schedule;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the proposed representation of

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*the above-mentioned categories form the
list of entities;*

*That this National Assembly
approves the entities to nominate Members
of the Rights of the Child Commission, in
accordance with Article 212U (2)(a) of the
Constitution as set out in the First Schedule
attached;*

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

*That this National Assembly
approves the consensual mechanism
outlined in the Second Schedule attached.*

The Honourable Member Ms Gail Teixeira

Ms Gail Teixeira: I wish to move the Motion on behalf of the Committee of Appointment in relation to the unanimous agreement of the Committee. I must say we unanimously agreed; underline that, Mr Speaker for this House and for the historical records, and it is with great hope and optimism that I present today the Motion and the work of this Committee in reaching agreement on the composition of the Commission in terms of the list of entities that would be consulted to comprise the very important Human Rights Body. The Motion gives the idea of the categories that we will be approaching and

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the list for each category as well as the numerical representation for each category. So Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure and we hope that this Motion will successfully go through this House and we will be able to celebrate the first Human Rights Commission being appointed for this Ninth Parliament, the most important one, I believe, on the Rights of the Child.

The Speaker: Honourable Member Mrs Holder, you have to second the Motion. You are speaking, are you?

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Yes

The Speaker: Well could you please second the Motion before moving on.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: I will happily do so, Mr Speaker.

After twenty-five meetings, I am pleased to be associated with the efforts expended thus far that the Committee on Appointments in advancing the establishment of the Rights of the Child Commission is directed by our Constitution.

Be that as it may, Mr Speaker, it is necessary for me to note that the mandate for getting the Commission up and running dates back some seven years. More recently the Stakeholders' Agreement signed on 12 March obligated the Committee to expedite its work within the timeframe of ninety-days. We made a valiant effort so to do.

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However, clearly this has not been achieved, but interestingly I have to agree with the views expressed publicly thus far that the work on this particular Commission has been less contentious than previously experienced.

The Report before this House provides a sketch of how the Committee arrives at the point of agreeing on the methodology for appointing members to serve on the Rights of the Child Commission. However, the point has to be made that essentially the Parliamentary Committee on Appointments is functioning in un-chartered waters. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I believe, it has a duty to open up to the views of the stakeholders. This has not been structurally possible given the Parliamentary Standing Order No. 9 (b) that restricts the Committee from sitting in public. Take for instance, Item 13 in the Report that speaks to the decision to allocate a representative from the National Commission on Children to sit on the Rights of the Child Commission. Is this decision of ours likely to lead to duplication of effort and how should government proceed to have this issue examined given the national, human, technical, administrative and financial limitations which our faced. I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Backer

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Mrs Deborah J Backer: Sir, I must confess that I was dumbfounded that my colleague and Chairperson of this Committee got up, spoke and sat down within five minutes, *[Laughter]* unlike how she performed at the Committee. Indeed, Mr Speaker, the Committee worked well, I think, because there is a large amount of women on that Committee *[Laughter]* and Dr Ramsammy, he does not want to be left out, Sir.

I just want to make two points on it. We have reached a unanimous decision which is somewhat of a feat and I think while we congratulate ourselves we accept that we still have a long way to go. But Sir, having now agreed on establishing the modality to establish the Commission, we have to go further, because it is not only just the appointment by His Excellency the President of the Commissioners that will in itself give these Commissions life, because I would want to think that what we all want to see is that for someone having a problem on women and gender issues or on rights of the child issues or Indigenous Peoples, when it comes hopefully very soon to the House, there is a Commission well staffed with Commissioners and support staff that can hear their complaints and that can carry out the functions that it was intended to do. I say that, Sir to remind the House that Article 212 1 speaks about the Secretariat. The Human Rights Secretariat will be the Secretariat of all the Commissions. What has to be done is that we will have to have a Secretariat, something

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along the lines of the Ethnic Relations Commission's Secretariat with a CEO, because the Constitution speaks about that - each of the Commissions will have a CEO and they will have staff. So while we are happy that we have reached here for the PNCR-1G this is step one and I am sorry that the Minister of Finance is not here, but we look forward very soon to a Motion being brought seeking supplementary provisions to give these Commissions life, because the appointment in itself will not give it life. But saying that Sir, I want to keep very positive; we are particularly pleased to be associated with this Motion and it is our expectation that it will acquire the necessary two-thirds so that we could move forward. I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Ms Teixeira

Ms Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker, Mrs Holder is correct in saying the un-chartered waters in the sense that the only Human Rights Commission that was established was the Ethnic Relations Commission and that we are experimenting in terms of how to find the right balance in the Human Rights Commissions as guided by the Constitution. It has taken a lot of political will and I believe that we have arrived at a stage where two important Human Rights Commissions are being passed today. We hope as Mrs Backer said that we will be bringing the Indigenous People's Commission shortly to

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this House. I am still positive and hopeful that we will overcome the issues in the Ethnic Relations Commission. Well I think we have learnt over the many years, because it has taken us six/seven years to reach this stage. It is learning how to really grasp the balance within the rights commission of geography, of gender, of ethnicity, of culture, of religious diversity and so on. So the formulae that we tried to play with are reflected in this Motion present to the House today. It will be the first Commission on children and certainly for the next Committee on Appointments when the terms of this Commission is over, we will learn from that experience, what worked and what could work better. I do not think that we have the perfect formula, but certainly one that we can live with.

I wish to assure the Honourable Member Mrs Backer as well that the Government is committed to the operationalising of the Human Rights Secretariat once the Commissions are set up and appointed and we are in the first step which has taken such a long time to reach and that is, we will now be inviting as the Motion clearly says from the list of entities; they will meet now and they will come up with their nominees. The Committee on Appointments does not have the power under this Committee to elect or select anybody for the Commission. So that each of the entities, service, youth, women, cultural, ethnic, religion will each submit their nominees to the Committee and we will then return to

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this House with those names for your approval. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry Labour, Human Services and Social Security as defined in the Constitution will also have to give us their nominees on the National Commission on Children, which is an operative body that has been in existence for quite a long time.

So Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure I put to this House and look for the support of the two-thirds required by the Constitution so that we can move to the second round in the appointment of persons to this Commission. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Question put

Now since this requires a special majority, I will ask the Clerk to take a division please.

FOR

Ms Budhan

Mrs Holder

Mr Fernandes

FOR

Mr Whittaker

Mrs Sahoye-Shury

Mr. Parmanand
Persaud

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Ms Wade	Mr Nandlall
Ms Selman	Mr Nagamootoo
Mr Mervyn Williams	Mr Khan
Mrs David-Blair	Mrs Edwards
Mr Elliot	Mr Atkinson
Mr Norton	Mr Ali
Mr Danny	Ms Shadick
Mr Ally	Mrs Chandarpal
Mr Scott	Mr Nokta
Dr Norton	Ms Teixeira
Mr Basil Williams	Mr Ramotar
Mrs Backer	Mr Prashad
Mrs Riehl	Ms Webster
	Dr Ramsaran
	Dr Fox
	Mr Benn
	Dr Anthony

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Mr Lall

Dr Westford

Mr Robert Persaud

Mr Nawbatt

Mrs Rodrigues-Birkette

Dr Ramsammy

Mr Baksh

Mr Rohee

Mr Hinds

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Honourable Members, forty-five persons have voted in favour of the Motion. So it has obtained the required majority. *[Applause]*

4. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE

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PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF GUYANA FOR
THE YEARS 2002 AND 2003.**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on its examination of the Public Accounts of Guyana for the years 2002 and 2003 respectively be adopted and refer the Report to the Government for consideration.

Honourable Members I inadvertently omitted to call the Motion which is listed on your Order Paper before this one and this is the Motion relating to the adoption of the Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly of the Public Accounts of Guyana for the years 2002 and 2003. This is in the name of the Honourable Member Mrs Volda Lawrence. Has anybody been authorised to move this Motion. I notice Mrs Lawrence is not here or you wish to have it deferred, or I can strike it out?

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal: Mr Speaker, as a Member of the Public Accounts Committee, I

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would like to crave your indulgence so that I can move a deferment of this Motion.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder please?
[Pause] Come on, there are so many of you; can someone second the Motion?

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I second the Motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried

Motion Deferred

The Speaker: Honourable Members we can now move on to the next Item on the Order Paper.

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF A WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION

WHEREAS Article 212Q of the Constitution provides for the establishment of a Women and Gender Equality Commission;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with Article 212Q (2)(a) of the Constitution, the Women Gender Equality Commission shall consist of -

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- (a) *Not less than five nor more than fifteen Members with expertise in women's and gender equality issues nominated by entities, by a consensual mechanism determined the National Assembly, after the entities which shall include Women's Advisory Committee of the Trade Union Congress, are determined by the votes of not less than two-thirds of all the elected Members of the National Assembly; and*

- (b) *The Administrator of the Women's Affairs Bureau by whatever name that office is designated; and*

- (c) *A Member who shall be a nominee, without the right to vote, chosen by and from each of the following Commissions: the Human Rights Commission, Ethnic Relations Commission, Indigenous People's Commission and Rights of the Child Commissions."*

AND WHEREAS the Committee on Appointments having deliberated on the

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identification of the entities for nomination to the Women and Gender Equality Commission unanimously agreed and proposed that the Commission be comprised of fifteen nominations as provided for in (a) form the list of entities in the First Schedule in the following categories.

Women - 3

Professional Bodies - 1

Private Sector - 1

Labour Movement - 2

TUC Women's Advisory Council - 1

Cultural/Ethnic - 2

*Regional Representative
from 10 WAC* - 3

Women's Progressive

Organisation - 1

National Congress of Women - 1

*(b) Administrator of the Women's Affairs
Bureau*

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AND WHEREAS the Committee also unanimously agreed on the consensual mechanism to guide the process for consultation and nomination of Members to the said Women and Gender Equality Commission herein at the Second Schedule;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the proposed representation of the above-mentioned categories from the list of entities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the entities to nominate Members of the Women and Gender Equality Commission in accordance with Article 212Q (2)(a) of the Constitution as set out in the First Schedule attached;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the consensual mechanism outlined in the Second Schedule attached

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Honourable Members, the Motion is in the name of Ms Gail Teixeira. You can now proceed.

Ms Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker it is an honour for me and the Committee on Appointment to move this Motion for the appointment of the Women and Gender Equality Commission. As you will know in the previous Parliament we did try and did not succeed, but this time we reached an agreement on a formula that we can live with at all levels. So we have before this House the categories of bodies that we will be approaching and the list of entities for each of those as well as the numerical representation that will come from each of those.

I must underline also that the concern of the earlier Committee on Appointments and this one was the geographic representation to make sure that we had geographic, ethnic, cultural and also gender equality. We wanted to make sure that we had men on this Commission, because it is gender equality and so we did try hard in the formula to accommodate and to ensure that there is male representation. So this is not a Commission only dealing with women's rights.

Secondly, the other innovation of the commitment of the Committee on Appointments was to have two guaranteed positions:

- (i) For the National Congress of Women; and

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(ii) For the Women Progressive Organisation.

Both are Women Organisations with a long history in Guyana; the WPO is fifty-five years old; I believe the National Congress of Women is in the late forties as well, I could be corrected. We felt that these two bodies will bring to the Commission a lot of experience and representational issues.

It is important to note too in this Commission that the Constitution ensures that the Commission the TUC - the Women's Advisory Council - had a guaranteed spot on this Commission. So Mr Speaker, we have devised a formula, which we believe will answer to the concerns of the broader society to make sure that there is balance.

I must also record in fairness to the AFC and in the Report at Paragraph 9.6, the AFC Member did not agree that the Women's Arm of the PPP/C and the PNCR-1G should be given guaranteed seats and I am sure that Mrs Holder will speak in her own right on that issue, but it would be remiss of me not to point that out in the Committee's Report.

So Mr Speaker, we have reached a point where in our work that we now need this House's endorsement for us to now go to the list of entities to invite them to consult among themselves and to submit their nominees to the Committee on Appointments after which we will then return to this House and then further on to the President

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for the appointment of the members of the Women and Gender Equality Commission. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Sheila Holder

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Mr Speaker, if there is any need for me to second the Motion, I so do again, because without hesitation I want to record that the Motion will receive our full support. However, it is no secret that the bone of contention over a protracted period in the Parliamentary Committee on Appointments has been between the PPP/C and the PNCR-1G in agreeing to the list of entities to be consulted in a consensual mechanism process for the purpose of nominating persons to serve on the Ethnic Relations Commission.

In the case of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the reverse has played out in that there has been collaboration between the two in arriving at an agreement with respect to the size of the Commission, the categories of entities which would nominate the required twelve members to the Women and Gender Equality Commission. Perhaps such an agreement could be better understood when Item 9.5 of the Report is highlighted, which virtually stated what the Chairperson just indicated, the guaranteed seats being allocated to the two Women's Political Organisations of the PPP/C and the PNCR-1G. That the two political Women's

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Organisations have been in existence for several decades, over fifty years, is not being disputed by me at all. However, I have submitted that in the absence of a system to verify their claims to having the largest membership among women's organisation in this country they are being accused of having made a self-interested decision that excludes and indeed discriminates against other civil society organisations outside of the political ambit that meets their definition of large. That was the rational for my dissenting voice in this matter.

So Mr Speaker, at Item 9.6 of the Report, I consider it necessary to so state. Now I submit that just in case there are other non-political organisations that have large membership; we do not know the size of these two political organisations, but I happen to know that there are other private organisations that have very large memberships as well and I believe that they should be afforded similar treatment. That is the basic rational.

In crafting Article 212A (2) (a) of the Constitution through Z and beyond, I believe that Article 212FF of the Rights of the Commissions, the framers of the revised Constitution undoubtedly gave serious considerations to the challenges anticipated in managing these entities. No doubt because of this, they propose administratively that there be an interlocking mechanism, yet Mr Speaker, we cannot help that we alerted to the anticipated

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administrative nightmare that the forum on effectiveness and solidarity, FES, suggests is likely to be experienced that may require some amount of redesigning if these Rights Commissions are to fulfil their constitutional mandate to provide the observance and respect for and to protect and investigate violations of the rights recognised in the Constitution and any other law relating to equality of opportunity and treatment.

To their credit, the PNCR-1G has been trying to direct attention beyond the establishment of the Rights Commissions to focussing some attention on how they will operate. In this regard the forum is to be commended for their thorough analysis and recommendations of the relevant constitutional provisions. The document which they have circulated addressed the constitutional deficiencies evident with respect to the broad range of civil and political rights and obligations imposed on Guyana as a Member of the United Nations as well as those under international human rights treaties within the Guyana Government which they have ratified.

Mr Speaker, this civil society group has pointed out that all the rights Commission has been entrusted with functions, but has been assigned with no powers thereby making them toothless and ineffective. I hereby urge my colleagues on the Appointive Committee to examine the submissions by this group with a view to recommending

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if found to be necessary that the relevant positions be reviewed by the Committee on Constitutional reform. I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Ms Amna Ally

Ms Amna Ally: Mr Speaker, I wish to associate the PNCR-1G with this Motion as tabled by the Honourable Member Ms Gail Teixeira and to record that this Motion will receive our full support. However, Mr Speaker, I wish to point out a few facts.

Ever since we recognised the importance of Rights Commissions and setting these Commissions has procedures and cannot be set up by any beck and call of anyone and I had said that procedures must be followed.

Our country is guided by a Constitution and our Constitution stipulates how the selection ought to be done, the composition, membership and even the role of these Commissions and towards this end I wish to refer you to Article 212 G which points us to the establishment of the Women and Gender Equality Commission and I also wish to point out to Article 212Q (2) which alludes to the composition and membership of the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that the last report brought to this Assembly on Women and Gender was stymied and

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this is because we had issues with the Government with regards to regional bodies in particular as against national bodies and while we believe that we should have regional representation, we cannot subscribe to the domination of regional women's affairs committees over national bodies. But Mr Speaker, with time and leading up to this Fifth Report our deliberations and battles bore fruit.

As at this stage, we have agreed on at least the entities to be consulted, hence for example we have grouped the regions in clusters and I wish to really point that out that we have been able to agree on grouping the regions and clusters.

We have agreed to group Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 where they will meet and nominate one representative for those regions.

We have grouped Regions 2, 5 and 6 and those regions again will meet and nominate one representative and the third cluster will be Regions 3, 4 and 10.

So we will have Regional Women's Affairs Committees represented, but a lesser number with the scope to nominate more national bodies.

This, Mr Speaker, is a more acceptable formula for the consultative process to move forward. Mr Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I do not refer to the

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Commitment of the National Stakeholders' Forum of 12 March 2008 to appoint five Constitutional Rights Commissions within ninety days. But all of us in the Appointive Committee took this matter very seriously and agreed and did meet on a weekly basis to treat with as a matter of urgency and priority the pathway for the establishment of these Commissions. But how do you set up without a conceptual framework of a Secretariat to implement its programmes, but maybe the Honourable Chairperson may wish to tell us how soon maybe the supplementary budget will be tabled to establish a secretariat, staff the secretariat to provide the necessary tools for implementation. My colleague Mrs Backer in dealing with the Rights of the Child Commission also alluded to this Secretariat.

Mr Speaker, the functions, rules, et cetera, are articulated in the Constitution at Article 212 R and while I will not necessarily itemise them, I find it my duty to advocate that establishing the Commissions is one thing, but of greater importance is carrying out its functions. Let us not only focus on putting on paper that we have travelled the path of establishing the Commissions, but let us work towards the fruits of all the Rights Commissions.

I therefore wish to proffer that the same anxiety and urgency with which we worked towards the establishment of this Commission the Government must

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work with the same anxiety and urgency to make the Commission workable. I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Ms Teixeira

Mr Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker, as I said earlier we travelled a long road to reach this point. There are four Human Rights Commission and one overarching Human Rights Commission, which can only be set up after the Women, Children, Indigenous, Ethnic Relations are all set up and when the Leader of the Opposition presents six names to the President that are not unacceptable. I agree with the concerns to do with the concerns of operationalising of the Commissions and certainly this House will have an interest in the functioning of the Commissions once they are appointed, but at this stage we are still at the toddler stage. We have a long road and it has taken a long time to get here and so I am sure that all the Members of this House are quite aware that supplementary budgets are brought here and is no use putting aside money when the Commission has not appointed as yet. We are at stage one which is agreeing to the list of entities to consult; they have to go into their own consultation process and give us names; we return to this House; we get approval; the second round, we go to the President and he appoints and so forth. The money will be available. The Ethic Relations Commission is fully financed by the Government and

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that will be done with the other Commissions. Once all the four commissions are in place, my understanding is and I am not a constitutionalist, but that the Human Rights Commission will go into operation and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition who is not here unfortunately today, will start thinking of the six names of honourable men and women he would like to propose to the President as the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, because that overarching secretariat cannot be created until those pieces of the jigsaw are all put to place. This was the drafters of our Constitution and a number of persons in this House were a part of the law reform or the constitutional reform process of 1998 to 2003. So while I appreciate the points being made, we can only go as fast as we reach consensus on each one of those stages.

Ninety days is certainly the point that has been raised; we all wanted to reach it, but we have not; but we got two out of four and you know, maybe I am just being practical, *one one dutty build dam* - fifty percent is better than nothing. We would like to have reached all, but you are well aware in this House and our views are that we came here just a few weeks ago on the ERC pointing out that we were still in a stalemate in relation to that. And so the process is going on and I think as I said earlier, we are in known waters on how the Constitution and the drafter of the Constitution gave us the overarching guidelines - the numbers within which the Committee

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could appoint between five and ten; between five and fifteen. It outlined in certain cases which bodies must be on the Commission, but it did not. It also pointed out what each Commission was supposed to do, but it did not prescribe for the Committee of Appointments the procedural points of how we reach from A to point B. We have to lean to devise that and it is the political will; it is also a political compromise; it is also just learning how to make this thing work in a Parliamentary Committee level.

Mrs Holder pointed out the issue on the forum on effective ... whatever it is called. I have not seen the document; I glanced at it, but I have not studied it. They have as right to their views and it is unfortunate that at no point in the process did they think it fit to ask the Committee on Appointments for some procedural issues and how the thing works, but that will have to be sorted out at some other level. I assume that the report has been sent out; the proposals are sent to the Committee on Appointments. I am not aware that they have formally addressed by the Committee on Appointments; I know that they have been publicised. I take two differences, a technical point on that, but if they the Committee of Appointment to seriously consider their points, they should do the decent thing and submit to the Committee on Appointment for discussion and furthermore if that is required to this House for further discussion.

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I believe that I must respond to the point raised by Mrs Holder to do with the two Women's Organisations. There are fifteen members on this Commission:

- One will be given to NCWU; and
- One for WPO.

I challenge anybody to say which women's organisation is larger than these two. I challenge and I feel on very secure grounds when I say that with great respect to you, Mrs Holder, because you have been an anchor in the Committee of Appointments; you have stood there for a long time, but the National Congress for Women formerly the Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement - WPO - have brought women's rights issues into this country; into this House from the 1950s onwards, maybe they are not as well known; at least I will talk to the WPO, it is grass-root organisation that is involved all over this country, but it is not just political convenience. It is about time in this country where we give credence and recognition to legitimate non-governmental civil society organisation, because I can guarantee you there can be organisations formed tomorrow and they can get a seat on a Commission and organisations that have been there for a long time may not. And so it is the recognition; this is a Women's Commission. What is wrong if two of the fifteen positions are given to the two oldest Women's Organisations? When the next Commission is set up in

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several years' time that Committee on Appointment may decide that they do not like this formula; they may want to change it; they do not like it that is their work, because nothing in the Constitution tells us that we can or cannot do it this way. Therefore, I think, that there are too many women in this country who are passed, who are no longer with us, women who came into this House in the 1950s; the first Deputy Speaker in the world comes from this Parliament and some of the earlier women who were MPs and Senators in the world were from this little tiny country called Guyana. So let us give what is their recognition and honour. I am saying this for both the Congress on Women and for the WPO. So I think that while Mrs Holder has her view and she has a right to it that I feel that it would be remiss of me to not make that point that both organisations have played a role in the last forty to fifty years in the struggles in this country for women's rights.

We must also point out in the Motion that we included professional bodies that were not included before, the private sector, because we believe that we must also have representation from the business community and the labour movement and as Ms Amna Ally pointed out the concerns of the regional women's representation, which we feel strongly about; we do not want a domination of Georgetown persons.

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We have also gone far in the Committee to even say that we are trying to get, as I said, the more female balance better, to indicate in the Report as you will see, we are asking that we encourage the private sector and the professional bodies in their nominees, one nominee each that they try to ensure that there is one male and one female.

With the Trade Union body, we are trying to encourage and there will be in the letter as the Report says that we would like to have one male and one female, because we cannot achieve women's rights in this country if we do not have men there with us. On the onset we recognise that there are issues relating to male and especially young male areas of feeling problems with self-esteem called marginalisation and we feel that we must address those issues as well particularly the young males.

The Constitution advises what the task of the two Commissions will be and lastly to point out that the Commissions are both required by the Constitution to prepare Guyana's State Party Reports in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the CEDAW. So that by the time these Commissions are set up those two State Party Reports will then be emanating from the Commission, which I assume will go through a process of consultation and preparation so that the Reports will then represent a State Report that includes civil society and non-governmental actors in the

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presentation. And hopefully Sir, there is greater trust and confidence in the process of democracy building and consolidation of our country. Thank you very much.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Honourable Members, please allow me to put the Motion and then this will also require a special majority.

Question put

Mde Clerk, could you take the Division please?

The Clerk takes the Division

FOR

Mr Patterson

Mrs Budhan-
Punalall

Mrs Holder

Ms Wade

Dr Austin

FOR

Mr Whittaker

Mrs Sahoye-
Shury

Mr Parmanand
Persaud

Mr Nandlall

Mr

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Ms Selman	Nagamootoo
Mr Mervyn Williams	Mr Khan
Mrs David-Blair	Mrs Edwards
Mr Elliot	Mr Atkinson
Mr Norton	Mr Ali
Mr Danny	Ms Shadick
Mr Ally	Mrs Chandarpal
Mr Scott	Mr Nokta
Dr Norton	Ms Teixeira
Mrs Backer	Mr Ramotar
Mr Basil Williams	Mr Prashad
Mrs Riehl	Ms Webster
	Dr Ramsaran
	Dr Fox
	Mr Benn
	Dr Anthony
	Mr Lall
	Dr Westford

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Mr Persaud

Mr Nawbatt

Mrs Rodrigues-
Birkett

Dr Ramsammy

Mr Baksh

Mr Rohee

Mr Hinds

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The Speaker: Thank you. There is no Member voting against; forty-seven Members have voted in favour. The Motion is therefore carried. *[Applause]*

Motion carried.

Thank you Honourable Members, this brings us to the end of our business for today.

The Honourable Prime Minister ...

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, I rise to move the adjournment of the House, but may I crave your indulgence to make a few observations to register the achievements we have made here together today; to

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come together and to pass the arrangements for these two Commissions. I would like on behalf of the Government's side to extend our appreciation to the Members on the other side for us coming together and to pass today these Motions, which will enable the Commissions to go in place. Thank you.

The Speaker: I move that the House be adjourned until Thursday, 26 June 2008 at 14:00H

Adjourned Accordingly At 15:25H

APPENDIX 1

**STANDING COMMITTEE TO APPOINT
MEMBERS OF COMMISSIONS PURSUANT TO
ARTICLE 119C OF THE CONSTITUTION**

(FIRST SHCHEDULE)

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Proposed entities to be consulted for the Nomination of
Members of the Rights of the Child Commission

SERVICE

Community Based Rehabilitation Programme

Friends of the Needy

Georgetown Legal Aid Clinic

Guyana Girl Guides Association

Guyana Lions District Governor

Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association

Help and Shelter

Kids First Foundation

Radio Needy Children's Fund

Rotary District Governor

Salvation Army

Scouts Association of Guyana

The Guyana Red Cross Society

Young Men's Christian Association

Young Women Christian Association

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RELIGION

Central Islamic Organisations of Guyana

Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha

Guyana Council of Churches

YOUTH

AFC Youth Arm

Central Baptist Youth Fellowship

Church of Christ Youth Group

Dharmic Naujawan (Dharmic Youth)

Diocesan Youth Centre

Full Gospel Youth Fellowship

Gandhi Youth Organisation

Guyana Congregational Young People's Union

Guyana Junior Chamber (Jaycee)

Guyana Network of Schools Health Clubs

Guyana Youth Challenge

Guyana Youth Development Association

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Guyana Youth and Student Movement

Hauraruni Full Gospel Youth Training Centre

Hinterland Students Council

Methodist Youth Club

Moravian Youth Club

Muslim Youth Organisation

National Youth Commission

President's Youth Award: Republic of Guyana

Progressive Youth Organisation

Rights of the Child

Roman Catholic Youth Office

Seventh Day Adventist Pathfinders

The United Force Youth Arm

Trades Union Youth Movement

University of Guyana Student's Society

Volunteer Youth Corps

Working People's Alliance Youth Organisation

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Youth Ambassadors First Assembly of God

WOMEN

AFC Women's Arm

Anglican Mothers' Union

Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (Women's Arm)

Church Women United

Congregational Women's Union

Federation of AME Women

Guyana Association of Women's Lawyers

Guyana Federation of Women Institutes

Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha - Mahila Mandale

Guyana Nurses' Association

Guyanese Women in Development (GUYWID)

Lutheran Church Women

Methodist Women's League

National Commission on Women

National Congress of Women

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Police Wives' Association

Red Thread Women's Development Project

Rural Women's Development Network

The United Force Women's Auxiliary

TUC Women's Advisory Council

Women Across Differences

Women's Progressive Organisation

OTHER

African Cultural Development Association

Amerindian People's Association

Guyana Association of Professional Social Workers

Guyana Human Rights Association

Guyana Organisation of Indigenous Peoples

Indian Arrival Committee

Ministry of Health

National Amerindian Development Fund

National Commission on Disabilities

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The Amerindian Association of Guyana

The Rastafarian Council

SECOND SCHEDULE

**Consensual Mechanism for the Nomination by
Entities for Members of the Rights of the Child
Commission**

All of Entities in each Group, immediately on the passage
of this Motion, shall be written to by the Clerk of the
National Assembly inviting them to meet as a group to

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select their nominees and to send a representative/s on an appointed day/date, time to appear before the Parliamentary Standing Committee to appoint Members of Commissions at the Parliament Buildings to present the name/s of their nominee/s for Membership on the Rights of the Child Commission.

A deadline shall be set by the Clerk of the National Assembly on the advice of the Standing Committee, by which time it would be formally notified of the names and other requested particulars of the Nominees/s, the process used for the selection of the Nominee/s by the entity, and a statement to the effect that the Nominee/s is/are appointed and appointed by that entity.

The Nominee/s chosen to represent the Group must be person/s who are competent to contribute positively to the work of the Commission and who are committed to ensuring that it discharges all of its functions. They should have earned public respect and be of unquestionable honesty and integrity.

The process used must be demonstrated to be unbiased and transparent. It is important that the nominee/s obtain the unquestioned support and acceptance of the Entity nominating them as well as the Entities within the Group.

Where there is a recognised “*umbrella organisation*” in the list of entities for that Group, the Clerk shall write to

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that organisation and copy his letter to each of the
“*constituent entities*” within the Group.

APPENDIX II

FIRST SCHEDULE

**Group of Entities within each Group to Nominate
Members of the**

Women and Gender Equality Commission

Women Bodies

AFC Women's Arm

Anglican Mothers' Union

Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (Women's Arm)

Church Women United

Congregational Women's Union

Federation of AME Women

Guyana Federation of Women Institutes

Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha -Mahila Mandale

Guyanese Women in Development (GUYWID)

Lutheran Church Women

Methodist Women's League

National Commission on Women

National Congress of Women

Police Wives' Association

Red Thread Women's Development Project

Rural Women's Development Network

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The Salvation Army Women's League

The United Force Women's Auxiliary

Women Across Differences

Women's Progressive Organisation

Young Women's Christian Association of Guyana

(a) Regional Women's Affairs Committee

Regions 1 - 10

(b) Administrative Women's Affairs Bureau

Trade Union Congress - Women's Advisory Committee

Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union

Clerical and Commercial Workers' Union

General Workers' Union

Guyana Agricultural Workers' Union

Guyana Labour Union

Guyana Local Government and Officers' Union

Guyana Postal and Telecommunication Workers' Union

Guyana Public Service Union

Guyana Teachers Union

National Mining and General Workers' Union

Printing Industry and Allied Workers' Union

Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers

The Labour Movement

Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union
(AT and GWU)

Associated of Masters and Mistresses (AMM)

Clerical and Commercial Workers' Union (CCWU)

Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana

General Workers' Union (GWU)

Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union
(GAWU)

Guyana Bauxite and General Workers' Union (GBSU)

Guyana Labour Union (GLU)

Guyana Local Government Officers' Union (GLGOU)

Guyana Mining, Metal and General Workers' Union
(GMMGWU)

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Guyana Postal and Telecommunication Workers' Union
(GP and TWU)

Guyana Public Service Senior Staff Association
(GPSSA)

Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU)

Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU)

Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC)

National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and
Industrial Employees (NAACIE)

National Mining and General Workers' Union (NM and
GWU)

National Union of Public Service Employees (NUPSE)

Printing Industry Allied Workers Union (PIAWU)

Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers (UAAW)

University of Guyana Senior Staff Association (UGSSA)

University of Guyana Workers' Union (UGWU)

Private Business Sector Bodies

Association of Non-traditional Exporters

Association of Regional Chamber of Commerce

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Bankers' Association of Guyana

Bartica Chamber of Commerce

Berbice Chambers of Commerce and Development Association

Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry

Corentyne Chamber of Commerce

Essequibo Chambers of Commerce

Georgetown Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Guyana Forest Products Association

Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners' Association

Guyana Manufacturers and Services Association

Guyana Private Sector Commission

Guyana Rice Millers and Exporters Development Association

Guyana Rice Producers' Association

Guyana Trawlers and Seafood Processors

Linden Chamber of Commerce

New Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce

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Private Aircraft Owners' Association of Guyana

Rupununi Chamber of Commerce

Shipping Association of Guyana

The Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana

Professional Group

Guyana Association of Chartered Accountants

Guyana Association of Medical Laboratories
Professionals

Guyana Association of Optometrists

Guyana Association of Professional Engineers

Guyana Association of Professional Social Workers

Guyana Association of Women Lawyers

Guyana Association of Women Artists

Guyana Bar Association

Guyana Dental Association

Guyana Medical Association

Guyana Nurses' Association

Guyana Pharmacists' Association

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Guyana Press Association

The Berbice Medical Association

Cultural Ethnic

African Cultural and Development Association

Amerindian People's Association

Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples

Indian Arrival Committee

National Amerindian Development Fund

National Tashaos Council

The Amerindian Association of Guyana

The Rastafarian Council

SECOND SCHEDULE

**Consensual Mechanism for the Nomination by
Entities for**

**Members of the Women and Gender Equality
Commission**

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All of Entities in each Group, immediately on the passage of this Motion, shall be written to by the Clerk of the National Assembly inviting them to meet as a group to select their nominees and to send a representative/s on an appointed day/date, time to appear before the Parliamentary Standing Committee to appoint Members of Commissions at the Parliament Buildings to present the name/s of their nominee/s for Membership of the Rights on the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

A deadline shall be set by the Clerk of the National Assembly on the advice of the Standing Committee, by which time it would be formally notified of the names and other requested particulars of the Nominees/s, the process used for the selection of the Nominee/s by the entity, and a statement to the effect that the Nominee/s is/are appointed and appointed by that entity.

The Nominee/s chosen to represent the Group must be person/s who are competent to contribute positively to the work of the Commission and who are committed to ensuring that it discharges all of its functions. They should have earned public respect and be of unquestionable honesty and integrity.

The process used must be demonstrated to be unbiased and transparent. It is important that the nominee(s) obtain(s) the unquestioned support and acceptance of the Entity nominating them as well as the Entities within the Group.

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Where there is a recognised “*umbrella organisation*” in the list of entities for that Group, the Clerk shall write to that organisation and copy his letter to each of the “*constituent entities*” within the Group.