

ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR THE

VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS, 2020

	<i>Nomination Day</i>	<i>Polling Day</i>
VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS, 2020:	31 OCTOBER 2020	22 NOVEMBER, 2020

October 2020

CODE OF CONDUCT

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- This CODE OF CONDUCT (the CODE) aims at complementing the legal provisions in force regarding the holding and conduct of elections in the Republic of Mauritius, more specially those provisions relating to bribery, treating, undue influence, illegal practice, irregularity as well as those regulations governing election expenses, which have to be strictly and scrupulously complied with.
- Its objective is to ensure the integrity of the electoral process and to enable elections to take place freely and fairly, in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance, conducive to free campaigning, unrestricted but responsible public debate so that the electorate may make an informed choice.
- The CODE is conceived as a set of principles to be adhered to by all stakeholders and to be upheld in both spirit and letter.
- It further seeks to generally consolidate and reinforce the democratic culture of the Republic of Mauritius.

ARTICLE 1

APPLICATION OF THE CODE

- 1.1 The CODE shall apply to all participants to the forthcoming Village Council Elections 2020. These include political parties or political party alliances, groups, candidates, their agents, sub agents, employees, supporters or backers.
- 1.2 It is hereby emphasised that:
 - (a) a basic principle, inherent in all democracies, is to provide a level playing field to all participants in the electoral process;
 - (b) the duty of both public and privately owned media (print and electronic) is to provide equitable access to participants to present their programmes, and to ensure a fair and equitable balanced coverage of different political views and events;
 - (c) holders of public office shall not exercise their office or utilise or allow public resources to be utilised, in such a way as to become the subject of complaint for having been used to further or foster partisan purposes; They shall discharge their public duties reasonably, fairly and impartially;
 - (d) the same restraint and standard shall be exercised by holders of office in local authorities, and of para-statal organisations, state organisations or corporations; and

- (e) holders of delegated powers from the appropriate Service Commissions shall not utilise their powers of appointment in such a way as to give rise to complaints of their having been utilised for purposes other than the exigencies of the service.

ARTICLE 2

PRINCIPLES AND PRESCRIPTIONS

- 2.1 All participants shall observe and uphold the following principles and prescriptions:
- (a) refusal to indulge in bribery or corruption or to unduly influence voters;
 - (b) respect for differences;
 - (c) freedom of choice;
 - (d) the right and freedom to hold meetings and to campaign freely within the limits provided by law; and
 - (e) abstention from engaging in violence or intimidation in any form or manner.

ARTICLE 3

I RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS

- 3.1 All participants acknowledge, confirm and proclaim that during campaigning each one shall have the right to unrestricted political activities, within the limits of the law, and to freely:
- (a) express his political beliefs and opinion;
 - (b) manifest publicly his electoral programme and his lines of action and canvass support for same;
 - (c) organise and convene meetings and gatherings and rallies to advocate his ideas and advance his programmes; and
 - (d) have a fair and equitable access to the public, private and electronic media to present his electoral programme and promote his political views.

- 3.2 That in the use of social media for their campaign, they undertake not to personally indulge in, nor encourage through the agency of others, the dissemination, publication and/or broadcasting of fake or inaccurate news, distorted or unverified allegations, defamatory statements, and the denigration of their opponents and that of their family or other stakeholders.

II DUTIES OF PARTICIPANTS

- 3.3 In the exercise of such political activities and campaigning, all participants shall foster a fairer gender balance. They shall also treat one another with respect and dignity.

All participants shall further, directly or indirectly, abstain from:

- (a) resorting to any form of corruption or bribery or the use of unfair means to obtain votes and shall publicly disavow such practices;
- (b) inciting the public or their supporters to violence against persons or property;
- (c) using provocative, sexist, taunting, reviling and offensive language at all times and in all circumstances;
- (d) publishing, causing to publish, repeating or disseminating any offensive, defamatory or inflammatory allegations against political opponents and their families by any means including social media;
- (e) disturbing or disrupting in any manner whatsoever the legitimate political activities of other participants;
- (f) destroying, disfiguring, defacing other political opponents' campaign display posters, placards, buntings, banners and any other election material; and
- (g) resorting to any electoral promises which are untrue and are unrealizable.

- 3.4 All participants shall, in particular, refrain from:

- (a) organising any meeting or gathering where access is restricted to a section of the electorate on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, caste or race;
- (b) making any appeal to the electorate on grounds of religion, ethnicity, caste or race; and
- (c) disseminating material and ideas which are offensive, or which contain an appeal to sectarian or 'communal' sentiments or which advocate violence.

3.5 All participants shall:

- (a) take all necessary measures to avoid holding political activities at the same time and place or in such close proximity as might result in tension between their respective supporters;
- (b) maintain at all times a line of communication with their opponents so that any source of tension may be speedily addressed and defused; and
- (c) co-operate with the election and law enforcement agencies and keep a line of communication with them at all times.

ARTICLE 4

CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION EXPENSES

- 4.1 All candidates undertake to keep their election finances and expenses transparent and within the limits provided for by law.
- 4.2 They shall at all times bear in mind the consequences of not observing the provisions governing the authorised amount of election expenditure and in particular the criminal sanctions for non-compliance.
- 4.3 They renounce any resort to underhand means to disguise such expenses or to use illegitimate means to obviate or circumvent the relevant provisions of the law.

ARTICLE 5

RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1 All participants shall conduct their campaign with utmost concern for the environment by:
 - (a) ensuring that all buntings, flags, posters and elections paraphernalia are made of biodegradable material;
 - (b) ensuring that, in accordance with law, no plastic material whether in the form of buntings, flags, or ribbons is used;
 - (c) refraining from indiscriminate placarding of posters on walls and electric poles and by restricting the display of posters to designated areas;
 - (d) refraining from placing buntings close to electrical transmission wires and other telephone or electric installation or on or near traffic islands

and roundabouts, or in any other place, which may cause a traffic hazard or any other source of danger to the public;

- (e) abstaining from using paint on the public thoroughfare and on private and public property or on traffic signs; and
 - (f) restricting political campaigning within reasonable hours and not using loud speakers to unduly disturb the peace, tranquillity and usual activities of the community at large.
- 5.2 Following the proclamation of the results, all the participants shall promptly remove all elections paraphernalia used including posters, buntings, flags and ribbons.

ARTICLE 6

CAMPAIGN QUARTERS

- 6.1 All participants shall refrain from setting up temporary and adhoc political quarters or camps commonly known as “BAZ”, where activists congregate.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding Article 6.1, nothing shall prevent participants from setting up political quarters for purposes of organising their campaigns.
- 6.3 They further undertake to communicate to the Electoral Commissioner the address of each of their campaign political quarters. They hold themselves responsible for the proper management of such political quarters.
- 6.4 All participants shall ensure that such quarters shall not constitute sources of nuisance, annoyance, conflict or tension in the locality. They shall further ensure that no alcoholic drinks are consumed on the premises and that no illicit activities take place thereat.
- 6.5 All participants shall at all times maintain control over their supporters, members and agents.

ARTICLE 7

CONDUCT ON POLLING DAY

- 7.1 All participants shall at all times:
- (a) comply with the provisions of the law and the directives of the Electoral Management Bodies to ensure that the electorate should have free and unimpeded access to exercise their right to vote;
 - (b) ensure that their agents do not subject the electorate to any form of harassment or annoyance;

- (c) instruct their agents and supporters not to indulge in any conduct which may lead to confrontation with agents and supporters of other participants;
- (d) dissuade their agents and supporters from impeding access to polling stations, from playing loud music or broadcasting messages through loud speakers or other devices and from making any show of force; and
- (e) ensure that the secrecy of the vote is respected at all times.

ARTICLE 8

CONDUCT ON PROCLAMATION

- 8.1 The successful candidate in any victory speech must set the tone and obtain from his supporters that any unsuccessful candidate should be entitled to address the gathering in a dignified manner and not be shouted down.
- 8.2 All candidates shall:
 - (a) conduct themselves in such a way as to be magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat;
 - (b) not indulge in any demonstrations of strength by loud and disorderly parades, “*defilés*”; and
 - (c) conduct themselves in such a manner as to preserve the integrity and safeguard the sincerity of the voting process.

ARTICLE 9

REPORTING OF BREACHES

- 9.1 All participants shall show respect for the law and scrupulous compliance with the electoral laws in force at all times, and with the CODE.
- 9.2 They undertake to immediately inform the relevant authorities as soon as they become aware of any event that may lead to outbreak of violence.
- 9.3 They undertake to bring information or complaints of breaches of the laws to the relevant authorities and of the CODE to the Electoral Supervisory Commission.
- 9.4 They undertake to report forthwith to the Police any act of illegal payment, bribery, treating, personation, illegal practice, breach of the authorised amount of election expenditure; these acts being prohibited by the Representation of the People Act.

- 9.5 They further undertake to pay due attention to the election returns of expenditure made to the Returning Officer by all candidates and to report any inaccuracy or anomaly therein to the Returning Officer or the Police.
- 9.6 They shall refrain from making any false, frivolous, vexatious, distorted, unverified or unsubstantiated complaints. Complaints must be of a serious nature and contain such facts and information as to enable an assessment of the validity of such complaints.

ARTICLE 10

COMPLIANCE AND OBSERVANCE OF THE CODE

- 10.1 All participants proclaim their adherence to the principles and prescriptions contained in the CODE and publicly commit themselves to adopt, promote and abide by the CODE.
- 10.2 All participants undertake to give wide publicity to the principles and prescriptions set out in the CODE and the necessity to adhere thereto.