



USAID | **IRAQ**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Legislative Strengthening Program

PUBLIC HEARING MANUAL FOR THE IRAQI COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 2011

Contract No. 263-I-03-06-00015-00 (REDI Task Order No. 3)

June 2011

This document was produced for review by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by AECOM. The authors' views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Legislative Strengthening Program

Contract No: 263-I-03-06-00015-00
REDI Task Order No. 3

USAID/Iraq SO10: Capacity of National Government Institutions Improved
Program Area: Good Governance
Program Element: GJD 2.1- Legislative Function and Process

PUBLIC HEARING MANUAL FOR THE IRAQI COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 2011

Submitted by:
AECOM
2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201, USA

T: +1.703.528.7444
www.aecom.com

In association with:
Management Systems International

DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Government.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS..... | 2 |
| WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEARING?..... | 3 |
| PART ONE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS | 3 |
| IRAQ’S PARLIAMENT’S RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS | 4 |
| GOALS OF PUBLIC HEARINGS | 4 |
| VARIOUS TYPES OF PUBLIC HEARINGS..... | 5 |
| <i>Legislative or Regulatory Public Hearing</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Investigatory Public Hearing.....</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Field or Public Outreach Hearing.....</i> | <i>5</i> |
| PART TWO: PLANNING AND HOLDING A PUBLIC HEARING | 7 |
| PRE-HEARING STAGE | 7 |
| <i>Timing for the Hearing</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>Venue and Setting for Hearings.....</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>Inviting Participants</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Suggested Participants for Public Hearings.....</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Essential Components of Good Media Coverage and Preparation</i> | <i>9</i> |
| COMMITTEE STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES PRIOR TO A HEARING | 10 |
| DAY BEFORE THE HEARING | 11 |
| DAY OF THE HEARING | 12 |
| <i>Registration of Witnesses, Media and Guests</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Preparing the Hearing Room.....</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Committee Chair and Committee Responsibilities During the Hearing</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Committee Chair Responsibilities.....</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Beginning the Hearing and Opening Statements</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Time Limits for Presentations</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Record and Transcript of Proceedings</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Responsibilities of Secretariat Staff during Public Hearing</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Committee Chair and Committee Responsibilities During the Hearing</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Key Actors and Roles</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Closing the Hearing</i> | <i>16</i> |
| <i>After the Hearing</i> | <i>16</i> |
| <i>Writing and Issuing a Committee Report.....</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Evaluation of a Public Hearing</i> | <i>18</i> |
| PART THREE: ANNEXES AND SAMPLES | 18 |
| ANNEX #1: SAMPLE STRUCTURE FOR PUBLIC HEARING REPORT ON DRAFT LEGISLATION | 19 |
| ANNEX #2: SAMPLE REPORT STRUCTURE FOR BUDGET LAW | 21 |
| ANNEX #3: GUIDELINES ON PUBLIC NOTICE FOR A HEARING ON A DRAFT LAW | 22 |
| ANNEX #4: SAMPLE AGENDA | 23 |
| ANNEX #5: SAMPLE TESTIMONY FACTS (TAKEN FROM “HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN IRAQ” BY THE HEARTLAND ALLIANCE FOR HUMAN NEEDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS – MAY 2007) | 24 |
| ANNEX #6: GUIDELINES FOR A PRESS RELEASES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS | 25 |
| SECTION FOUR: PUBLIC HEARING PLANNING CHECK LIST..... | 27 |
| PUBLIC HEARING WITNESS NAME AND MATERIALS CHECK LIST | 32 |

Acronyms And Definitions

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Committee Clerk | The term “Committee Clerk” refers to the senior most non-political staff person serving a parliamentary committee. With respect to the COR, the “committee clerk” is the “Secretary of the Committee”, referring to the senior most staff Secretariat staff person within a standing committee’s office. |
| COR | Council of Representatives – the legislative branch of the Iraqi Republic, which is the highest elected decision making body in the country. |
| CSO/NGO | Civil Society Organizations – these are formal organizations that are not part of the government. CSOs and/or NGOs may be tasked with providing services or representing particular groups and thus have a vested interest in a particular topic or policy item. CSOs and/or NGOs can be found in any number of sectors and are important stakeholders to be consulted when the COR holds or conducts a public hearing. |
| DG | Director General – a senior manager that oversees an operational or functional directorate within the secretariat of the COR |
| Directorate | An operational or functional division within the COR’s administrative structure. 8 directorates exist including: <i>Parliamentary Affairs; Research and Library; Administration; Finance; Media and Communications; Legal; Public Affairs; and, Information Technology.</i> |
| GOI | Government of Iraq as in the executive branch of the Iraqi Government |
| LSP | Legislative Strengthening Program – the USAID funded and AECOM/MSI administered program building capacity of staff and elected officials within the COR. |
| MP | Member of Parliament (an elected member of the COR) |
| NGO/CSO | Non-Governmental Organization – see CSO definition |
| PC | Presidency Council of the COR – the executive entity that consists of the Speaker, the 1 st Deputy Speaker and the 2 nd Deputy Speaker. |
| Secretariat | The non-partisan bureaucracy within the COR that supports the elected officials in their primary tasks as MPs |
| Stakeholder | A generic term for a person, group of persons or entity that has a particular and/or vest interest in a specific file or matter |

What is a Public Hearing?

A public hearing is a way for parliamentary committees to obtain information, public opinion and alternative perspectives on proposed legislation or policy matters. A public hearing can inform all Members of Parliament (MP's), the Executive and the general public of potential implications of the legislation and ways to improve proposed legislation and policy.

Public hearings make elected officials more accountable to the public by presenting all aspects of an issue, including important views from the public and interest groups. Public hearings are not the same as focus group discussions, roundtables or public forums. Hearings are a structured method to obtain public comment or testimony and record all information into the official record of business of the legislature.

PART ONE: The Importance of Public Hearings

Iraq's Council of Representatives (COR) is the highest democratically elected body in the land and plays a central role in Iraq's democracy. The primary functions of any democratically elected parliament include enacting laws, conducting oversight of the executive and government ministries/agencies and representing the people of the country effectively. One of many tools that assist parliaments is the ability of elected representatives to conduct inquiries. Public hearings are used by democratically elected parliaments around the world and considered one of the key benchmarks for a modern and democratic parliament. They can be a highly effective way to engage civil society, average students, minorities, religious and community leaders, academia or experts on a particular topic.

The benefit of holding public hearings is two-fold. First, it strengthens citizen participation in Iraq's parliamentary process for better governance and accountability. Second, and perhaps the more important issue for both the long-term success of democracy in Iraq and for MP's, it will improve the overall image of the COR as a truly responsive institution to the needs of all Iraqis and reflective of all stakeholder's input. Hearings can demonstrate outreach and responsiveness to the public's concerns and increase the accountability of elected officials to the public that elected them. The Iraqi Parliament, in its fledgling stages, must instill the public's trust that it hears the Iraqi public's concerns and responds effectively. The process of public hearings by engaged listening, documentation, follow-up and release of reports will produce better law and policy.

This manual was developed as part of the USAID-funded Legislative Strengthening Program to assure that public hearings become an integral and increasingly institutionalized part of effective public outreach by the COR's committees. It provides guidelines and useful suggestions on how to successfully conduct hearings on issues of importance such as draft laws; public policy issues; budget consultations; and fact-finding missions. It emphasizes the critical importance of proper planning, strong committee leadership and open lines of communication to assure public hearings obtain essential public input on proposed policy. The media's role is discussed to assure policy transparency to the public. Best practices and practical information are included in the manual.

The following key elements are critical when holding public hearings:

- Strong internal (communication:) between MPs and Committee Staff
- Proactive and excellent external communication with civil society organizations
- Strong committee leadership

- Strong inter-departmental collaboration
- Strong commitment by members of the parliamentary committee
- Availability of relevant and timely information to all participants

The Iraqi Parliament’s Rules of Procedure for Public Hearings

Article 32 of the Iraqi Parliament’s Rules of Procedure states that the COR can request information and documents from any governmental agency regarding any subject related to public interest, the rights of citizens, or implementing and/or applying laws by the executive agencies. The COR can request the presence of any person to give testimony or to explain certain subjects. COR members have the right to visit ministries and departments to inspect the implementation of government programs. Article 78 states that standing committees may ask to be provided with documents and information they need from government departments and civil society organizations with notification by the COR Presidency. The Rules of Procedure have provisions to empower standing committees to conduct hearings in various ways.

Goals of Public Hearings

The standing committees of the COR, each with their own area of responsibility, are an integral part of the overall functioning success of the COR.

Public hearings can accomplish the following goals:

1. Gather oral and written information, including dissenting views through expert witnesses, the public or NGO’s on a specific topic to develop future policy decisions or to draft new legislation;
2. Provide detailed and accurate information to Members of Parliament on pending legislation to assist them on future votes, amendments or revisions;
3. Promote transparency and consensus building by assuring an open dialogue between the public and Parliament, to improve future policy and to illustrate understanding and responsiveness of the public’s problems for future legislative policy-making;
4. Obtain public views and recommendations on public policy issues and government programs, and inform the public and interested parties about proposed changes and implications of public policy;
5. Assure that programs and budgeted money is effective without corruption through solicitation of witnesses, public feedback and NGO testimony;
6. Sensitize policy makers of popular public sentiments about local concerns, perspectives and suggestions for improvement through open interaction and partnership with the public through hearings in the capitol or in regional areas;
7. Gather information in various sites of the country (through field hearings) to assure a range of relevant opinions, views, issue variations and specific needed changes;
8. Issue “Special Reports” to the executive branch for consideration of particular issues, field hearing results, or budget concerns;
9. Gather crucial information to assist in the budget process, public fund requests and transparency in government spending;
10. Provide information for future legislative drafting to assure appropriate response to a problem;
11. Educate Members of Parliament on a particular issue or pressing problem.

Various Types of Public Hearings

Legislative or Regulatory Public Hearing

This hearing examines and/or reviews a proposed or existing bill. It can include a policy's past success, current problems and future considerations. A legislative hearing should be done in the early stages of a bill's consideration to receive and incorporate input from experts and the public for necessary legislative revisions.

Typically, experts and/or individuals and civil society members affected by the policy testify and provide information and background on the issue. Allowing civil society members to testify provides an excellent opportunity to voice pros and cons on the issue and offer suggestions on policy changes to effectively respond to the population affected by the policy.

Expert testimony enables legislators to critically analyze issues that will impact the legislation's success and revise necessary legislative content. Civil society or special interest group's testimony provides legislators with different perspectives, better solutions, new facts or specific considerations for the bill's success or requirements.

Consulting and engaging a dialogue with government officials that will implement the bill can be crucial. Legislation presented in parliament may have an unclear intent or rationale. Explanations by government officials during a public hearing can provide critical information and necessary context for parliamentarians on a bill's intent and/or reasons for delay.

Investigatory Public Hearing

This hearing examines a particular current topic, problem or public policy issue without pending legislation. A committee may examine a pressing issue in the country and how Parliament and government can best address this problem. The committee report's findings and recommendations can be used to create laws and policy to improve long-standing or urgent problems. An investigatory hearing can examine possible wrongful actions of a public official or government body. Testimony may be held in private to allow people to speak candidly. Although to enhance transparency and confidence in elected officials, committees may want to consider the importance of public testimony. Investigative hearings can present legal issues or future legal action for those under investigation. The legal ramifications of inappropriate or illegal revelations should be considered when deciding if testimony is heard publicly or privately.



Field or Public Outreach Hearing

Field hearings are conducted outside of the Parliament in a regional area to gain a better understanding of the complexities of an issue and its affect on the local population. A field hearing helps selected officials hear from those who elected them and how an issue impacts people in different parts of the country. A safe, well-planned and conducted field hearing can improve relationships with the local population and MPs by enabling MP's to see and hear from people directly affected by an issue. Field hearings allow MPs to engage with local and regional media and improve communicate with the public outside of the capital. Field hearings allow greater public input in specific geographical areas that may be more affected by an issue or in a different way than other regions. Field hearings are typically held in various areas to assess geographical differences and improve information from the public throughout Iraq.

Hal Lipper, USAID



Dr. Abd Dhyab Alajeely discusses the importance of public hearings at outset of his higher education committee's proceedings in Iraq's Council of Representatives.



PART TWO: Planning And Holding A Public Hearing

Pre-Hearing Stage

The pre-hearing stage is critical to the success of a public hearing. Members of a parliamentary committee decide to hold a public hearing, and the Committee Chair directs committee staff planning. **At least two weeks** must be provided for planning and organizing the hearing if it is held in Baghdad for logistical planning. This will provide adequate time for committee members to acquaint themselves with the subject, allow staff time to adequately prepare for the event, and witnesses time to prepare their testimony. One month or more is needed if the hearing is held outside of Baghdad, or is a multi-session, public-field hearing to prepare facilities, logistics and security.

The following questions are helpful in the decision to hold a public hearing:

- Is the issue pertinent and timely? (Avoid holding hearings on past legislative/policy decisions or matters being considered by another committee unless jurisdictions overlap);
- Is the subject matter of interest to the general public to justify a public hearing?
- Is the time frame for feedback from stakeholders and the public sufficient for enactment of the legislation by the Parliament?
- Are a majority of MPs available to participate at the time of the hearing (at least, a quorum of 50% plus one)?
- Will public input result in a better law or public policy and/or enhanced respect for the COR and MP's through public engagement?
- Do other COR committees have enough overlapping jurisdictions on the issue to consider another committee's joint participation or will the topic be specific enough to justify one committee?
- Can the committee gather individuals and groups to assure that the information presented is fully representative of the issue?
- Will financial costs of the hearing justify the hearing?
- Are their sufficient staff resources to plan and properly execute the planning?

Timing for the Hearing

Public hearings should be scheduled on dates and times when there are no conflicting significant or important events at the COR. The committee should avoid scheduling hearings on public holidays and or other national events. Time and dates should be convenient and reasonable for the public to attend, and it is essential that MPs commit to their presence at the hearing.

It is important to conduct a public hearing in the early stages of the policy/legislative development process in order to have an impact on policy. It is recommended that the public hearing be held shortly after the COR Presidency decides to propose legislation, or as soon as ten members of the COR have introduced their own proposal.

Venue and Setting for Hearings

There are several rooms in the COR that are well suited for holding a public hearing. Staff must determine whether large delegations or crowds are anticipated, and if so, a venue outside parliament may be more appropriate.

Field hearings bring Parliament closer to the people, but it is essential that the hearing site be accessible for average citizens yet secure for MPs.

Field hearings should meet the following minimum requirements:

- Accessible to the public
- Well-lit and ventilated
- Sufficient seating capacity
- Enable use of video and audio-recording equipment
- Provide adequate security
- Provision of basic food, beverage and writing amenities



Inviting Participants

There are many ways to invite the public to participate in a public hearing, including:

- Press releases and press conferences to announce the public hearing, its objectives and anticipated outcome;
- Letters of invitation to identified CSOs, NGOs, syndicates/unions, professional associations, student groups and academics;
- Use of the COR website to call for public submissions;
- Parliament's newsletters, posters and pamphlets;
- Notices posted outside the committee room;
- Use of the Parliament Constituent Offices or Provincial Offices;
- Placing an advertisement in the press – broadcast and print.

Clarity is extremely important when the committee secretary drafts press releases, advertisements, and invitations letters for the public hearing. The invitations, advertisements and press releases should state the subject of the hearing (bill number if appropriate), date, venue, and rules for acceptance of written and/or oral submissions. Invitations should request participants to be at the venue 60 minutes before the start of the hearing. (Annex #3 provides guidelines for a public invitation letter or advertisement for a hearing on draft laws.) A copy of the draft law or policy document can be sent with the public invitation. Alternatively, it can be posted on the COR website and stakeholders notified accordingly.

The Committee should have the list of participants, who is negatively and/or positively affected by the draft law or policy; and whose support is critical for the success of the legislation. Groups in support or opposition of the draft law should be allowed to testify and give their opinions.

Ministry officials can be invited to listen but not allowed to make comments or enter submissions unless specifically requested to do so by the Committee Chair (and only in rare occasions).

Suggested Participants for Public Hearings

While the list of potential witnesses can be endless, for the sake of the committee's time and resources, those invited to participate should be a representative cross-section of the Iraqi public, experts and civil society. If the public views the list of witnesses as biased, the credibility of the COR and individual MPs may be compromised. The following is a suggested list of participants to a public hearing:

- Academic specialists/experts
- CSOs and NGOs
- Business groups or major private sector employers in a particular region
- Trade unions or syndicates
- Student unions or student associations
- Social workers, medical professionals or specialists in a particular field
- Women’s organizations or represented minority groups
- Representatives from interested international organizations
- Individual citizens
- Ministers, Ministry or Government Officials (this depends on the type of hearing)

Essential Components of Good Media Coverage and Preparation

It is the primary responsibility of the COR’s Media Office to arrange media coverage of the hearing at least seven days before the event. The Media Office should liaise closely with the Committee Secretary and Committee Chair to ensure that all relevant materials are prepared and distributed to the press before the hearing including clear details and hearing time.

There is nothing that should prohibit committee MPs and their own staff to reach out to their own media contacts to ensure sufficient press coverage of the event, especially local or governorate-based media where an MP lives. Political blocks may have their newspapers and journalists. Reaching out to journalists that address specific constituencies is encouraged to increase interaction and the exchange of ideas with the public.

Since the COR is the body that represents all Iraqis, it is important for committee staff to ensure that the media coverage of MPs is well-presented. This can be done by assuring that the media has sufficient notice and information about public hearings to determine needed resources and appropriate coverage. The committee leadership and staff should work with the media to ensure press coverage prior to the hearing, the day of the hearing, and any post-hearing follow-up questions or needs of journalists.

Press Packages:

Developing professional “press packages” for the hearing will assure that journalists have needed information to write accurate accounts of the hearing. A press package is given to journalists that contain all of the essential information about the public hearings in one folder. The contents of the folder should include the following:

- A meeting agenda with a list of the witnesses including their professional titles and presentation titles;
- A list of committee members with a two or three sentence biography stating party affiliation and governorate;
- A version of the draft law being reviewed if appropriate. If the hearing is on a policy issue, the folder should include a brief policy statement and the policy question under examination;
- A brief explanation of rules for public hearings, such as when the media can ask questions of witnesses or MPs (at the hearing’s conclusion).
- Any committee press releases or press statements from committee MPs about the hearing;
- Written testimony submissions, presentations and speeches which should be available for MPs before the hearing and as part of the media package.

Press Conferences

It is advisable to hold a press conference at least a few days before the hearing when the Committee Chair can explain the purpose of the up-coming public hearing. A press conference can greatly assist in publicizing the event. Journalists from a broad spectrum of state and independent media should be invited to the press conference.

Inter-Parliamentary Union Advice on Involving Media and the Public

The Inter-Parliamentary Union includes the following best practice guidelines for parliaments regarding public participation (includes individual MP's, organizations and committees).

- A publicly available register of NGOs and other bodies organized by subject interest and alphabetically
- A similar register of academic and issue area experts
- Effective publicity through different media for notice of upcoming parliamentary bills, enquiries and public hearings
- Targeted invitations to relevant organizations and experts, including representatives of vulnerable or minority groups for oral or written statements
- Procedures for accepting written submissions from organizations and individual citizens
- A handbook and/or training sessions on providing evidence or written submissions to parliaments
- A public record available on-line of committee debates, legislation sponsored and considered by committee and committee hearings
- A record of public hearings held in local centers including written summaries of oral evidence



Academic experts testify before the Higher Education Committee's Public Hearing regarding private universities in Iraq

Committee Staff Responsibilities and Duties Prior to a Hearing

1. Identify hearing witnesses in advance and the procedure for witness selection. There should be representation from experts, academics, interest groups, civil society, and those actively involved in the issue. A representation of a spectrum of views should be assured. Panel representations can be created – such as a panel of academics and experts; a panel of civil society groups; a panel of individuals (public if applicable) affected by the issue/legislative initiative; and a panel of relevant government officials if appropriate;
2. Identify the date and committee members that can attend;
3. Identify the location and room size suitable for the hearing;
4. Publicize the hearing with enough advance notice so that CSO/NGOs, the public and the media are aware of the impending hearing. The hearing announcement should include the topic, time, and location and sent out at least 2 weeks prior to the hearing;
5. Decide which Committee members will ask questions;
6. Send invitations to the Committee members and witnesses regarding the hearing. Include time limits for speaking during the hearing for Committee members and witnesses;
7. Decide and announce time restraints for witness testimony. Initial presentation of testimony is typically 5-10 minutes followed by 5-10 minutes of follow-up questions of witnesses by Parliament members;

8. Request the written testimony from scheduled witnesses;
9. Write opening statements for Parliament members before the hearing. Statements are typically restricted to 5 minutes;
10. Prepare briefing books on the subject for Parliament members so they are knowledgeable of the issue. Briefing books should contain issue background information, information relevant to pending legislation, budget information, background of witnesses, names and background of community groups scheduled to testify, prior comments on the issue by civil society or interest groups, current news articles on the subject and other pertinent information;
11. Prepare an agenda for the hearing including the name of the hearing, time, location, opening statements, MP names, list of panels and/or witnesses, titles and speaking order, contact information for the committee, and an email for written testimony submission;
12. Prepare a press announcement for the media, including the name of the hearing, date, time, place, lists of MPs and witnesses, legislation and draft law if relevant. The statements of MP's should be available, as well as witnesses' statements if available;
13. Contact translators and establish what equipment they will require. The day before the hearing, call the translators to confirm their arrival for set up and any last minute needs.
14. Contact security for the COR or building where the hearing is being held and submit a list of witnesses, committee members and the information about the hearing (time and location);
15. Ensure you have transcription services to record the hearing.



The Day Before the Hearing

1. Check with translators and re-confirm time, location and any further equipment needs;
2. Call and reconfirm the scheduled witnesses, deadline time for appearance, location and directions. Ask for their written statements if you have received them prior to this time;
3. Reconfirm with the transcription service of time, location and equipment needs;
4. Prepare the nameplates for Committee members and witnesses;
5. Reconfirm with the press regarding the hearing's specifics and send press releases to those who have not yet received a press release and contact number for media questions;
6. Make copies of witnesses' testimonies and Committee Members' statements for placement on tables on the hearing day;
7. Assure members have their briefing books and answer any last minute questions about the issue so Members are prepared the day of the hearing;
8. Arrange for microphones for Committee Members, witnesses and the public;
9. Request any needed audiovisual and/or computer needs such as laptops, screens or projector needs.

The Day of the Hearing

Registration of Witnesses, Media and Guests

A registration desk should be set up with an adequate number of forms for attendees to sign in and indicate whether or not they would like to speak at the public hearing. Participants should give their names, addresses, organizational affiliation, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. The registration desk should contain committee press releases, brochures, exhibits and other information material that could be useful to the public or media. Registration should start approximately 30-45 minutes before the hearing. At least two staff members must be designated to be at the registration desk. The committee must reserve the right to request additional evidence of a person's authority to speak on behalf of an organization.

Preparing the Hearing Room

1. Make sure there are enough chairs for all observers
2. Have a dedicated space in the room for translators, transcription service and the media
3. Have the press announcement prepared and available for the media on designated tables
4. Have a code of conduct available for the media and a specific place where the media should stand and obtain press releases, statements and other information
5. Have the prepared statements of the witnesses available and on designated tables
6. Have prepared statements of the Committee members available and on designated tables
7. Have a summary of the draft law if appropriate and on designated tables
8. Place a notice on the door of the hearing room about the hearing – committee name, time, title/purpose of the hearing and information for the general public
9. Have additional copies of the law, agenda, press release and MP and witness comments
10. The senior staff person should have witness phone numbers to locate late witnesses
11. Place the nameplates of Committee members and witnesses at appropriate seating places
12. Provide information on where the public can stand and sit and place a single piece of paper with hearing rules to be observed during the hearing on each chair
13. Appoint a staff person to be located at the door during the hearing to run errands, get water and welcome guests
14. Have places and chairs where the staff can sit near the Committee Chairman and Committee members to assist them during the hearing with questions or other needs
15. Place the briefing books on the desks before the Committee staff
16. Ensure that security can screen people entering the room with as little disruption during the hearing as possible
17. Test all microphones, audiovisual equipment and computers for proper functioning
18. Assure that translators/interpreters have all equipment and booths in full functioning order and necessary material and information they require is available for them

Committee Chair and Committee Responsibilities During the Hearing

Public hearings can illustrate that the COR is listening and accessible to Iraqi citizens. Thus, the Committee Chair must provide assurances that all witnesses will be treated fairly and respectfully. Not all witnesses may share the same opinion and a variety of opinions are helpful. It is essential that the Committee Chair ensure that each witness have an equal chance to express their views and a fair opportunity to answer any questions from the MPs.

As the COR's committees begin to hold more public meetings, each committee may begin to adopt appropriate procedural rules. While it is better to have a basic set of rules for all committees, in some instances it is appropriate to have rules for specific committees that address specific topics or issues. Each committee must determine in advance whether special rules are needed to ensure fairness during proceedings. It is essential that witnesses and MP's comply with all rules and procedures including time limits on witness presentations and question/answer sessions.

Committee Chair Responsibilities

Committee Chairs must have clear authority to enforce the rules and procedures to ensure a fair proceeding, and that all individuals are treated equally with their rights respected. The authority to make the rules rests with the Committee Chair in consultation with the committee prior to hearings. The Committee Chair must indicate what procedural rules will apply at the beginning of the hearing. The Committee Chair, with the help of the committee secretary, should take care not to alter these rules during the hearing. Any controversies that arise during presentations and debates about a subject matter before the committee can quickly deteriorate if it is perceived that the rules are being made up or changed as the hearing progresses. An appearance of arbitrariness or unfairness by the Committee Chair could lead not only to a legal challenge, but embarrassment of the COR as an institution in the eyes of the public and/or other MP's.

If a witness, MP or other participant is unruly during a hearing, including decorum and time constraints, the Committee Chair must have the authority to control the witness, MP or participant. If the Committee Chair makes an error, it is imperative that advice to the Committee Chair be given in a discreet manner during a public hearing to avoid embarrassing the COR and committee. For example, a recess can be called or a matter can be held so the error in rules or procedure can be brought to the Committee Chair's attention and corrected. Occasionally, rules can be relaxed if a vital or important issue is raised during proceedings. The Committee Chair, with consent of the Committee, should **use discretion** to alter or amend speaker lists, increase or decrease time limits for witnesses, and determine whether additional questions or follow-up questions can be asked during a hearing.

Beginning the Hearing and Opening Statements

It is essential that hearings begin and end on time.¹ The public will perceive that the committee is not taking the event seriously if the hearing fails to begin on time and it makes the MPs look disorganized. It is important for the Committee Chair to give an opening statement at the start of each hearing day. The statement should welcome attendees, and include a brief background of the hearing, the hearing's purpose, and introductions of other MPs present. If the first witness is late, then another witness should be called upon to take their place until that witness arrives.

The Committee Chair should review rules and procedures to be observed during the hearing, such as time limits for presentations, the request to switch off mobile phones, and the order for presentations. The Committee Chair should state that the committee reserves the right to eject anyone from the hearing for disorderly conduct and/or not observing rules and procedures.

¹ "Everyone has busy schedules – running over time may result in individuals leaving early and disrupting the flow of proceedings or questioning the professionalism of organizers." Zimbabwe Parliament Speaker in his remarks at a citizenship participation in a political process seminar 9th July 2009.

Time Limits for Presentations

Typically 5 and 10 minutes are allocated to each witness, with an extra five minutes for questions by members of committee. Flexibility may be needed depending on the issue and number of participants. The Committee Chair should ensure that witnesses respect established time limits. The committee secretary will keep track of time and advise the Committee Chair accordingly. It is therefore important for the secretary to sit close to the Committee Chair to fulfill these tasks effectively.



Professor in Baghdad University and civil society activist discuss in Higher Education Committee's Public Hearing the quality of education

It is standard practice that ministries present first if present and then proceed through the witness list. The range of witnesses should be balanced to avoid biased proceedings. The committee should allow all committee members a fair opportunity for meaningful participation and impartially. Witnesses should be treated with courtesy and thanked for their testimony.

Record and Transcript of Proceedings

All hearings should be recorded verbatim by the use of audio and visual recording equipment. A recording of the proceedings should be used by staff to help prepare the hearing report. A copy of the recordings should be kept with the COR's library for historical purposes. Typically, a designated committee staffer or recorder is made responsible for the recordings and another staff person from the committee's parliamentary secretariat records the minutes, debates of hearing proceedings, attendance, and the responses given during the question/answer period.

Written submissions should be kept as part of the committee's official records and filed with the COR's library and archives for future research and use. Written material produced by the hearing should be made public in a timely manner. Any documents needing translation should be done as soon as possible.

Responsibilities of Secretariat Staff during Public Hearing

The Secretariat should assist the Committee Chair and Parliament members with any questions they may have as the hearing progresses and as witnesses and/or the public raise certain points. The Secretariat should assure that noise in the room by the media or public does not interfere with testimony or hearing proceedings. Security can also assist with any problems.

Committee Chair and Committee Responsibilities During the Hearing Key Actors and Roles

Committee Chair: The Committee Chair sets the tone of the hearing and assures that time limits are respected, witnesses can testify without interruption and decorum is maintained throughout the hearing. The Committee Chair serves as the spokesperson to the media for public hearing matters. The Committee Chair may make judgment calls regarding witness testimony time limits.

Members of Parliament: Participating in a public hearing is one of the most important ways that MP's can show the Iraqi public of their interest in the public's welfare and intention to change policy to improve Iraq. A public hearing is an opportunity to solicit this feedback from citizens outside of parliament. It is essential for MPs, whether or not they agree with a witness, to actively listen, seek clarifications when needed, and ask questions to elicit more information if testimony is unclear.

Witnesses or Panelists: Witnesses are individuals who have volunteered or been summoned to the committee to present information. Typically, witnesses come of their own free will unless MP's are particularly interested in their expertise, or it is an investigative hearing. Witnesses are very involved and committed to the issue, and may be passionate in their testimony and have first-hand specific knowledge of situations or incidents where laws or policies have impacted them and the organizations they represent.

Witnesses must present their testimony within a fixed amount of time and submit their testimony in writing before they present. Some witnesses may not be able to attend the hearing and should be encouraged to provide written statements so that MPs can review their comments. Witnesses should be informed that MPs may ask questions at the completion of their testimony or elaborate on certain points, complex issues or confusing problems. Reassure witnesses that this allows MP's to gain a better understanding of the issues for more accurate policy.

Committee Secretary or Clerk: This is usually the senior most committee staff person appointed by the DG of Parliamentary Affairs who oversees the staff of the committee and supports the Committee Chairperson in their function for managing the committee. It is essential that the Secretary be highly organized and informs all committee staff of their expected roles and functions. During a hearing, the committee clerk/secretary should sit beside or behind the Committee Chair to make sure that the wishes of the Chair are carried out, materials are distributed and preparatory planning is completed.

Researcher: In some parliaments, a member of the committee staff person is assigned the role of 'researcher' especially on complex subjects. The researcher should prepare background material to supplement the MP's knowledge of the hearing subject and orally review the material with committee members and the Committee Chair. This material should allow committee members to meaningfully discuss the issue and ask thoughtful questions during the hearing

Biographical information on the witnesses should be prepared. If witnesses submitted their materials ahead of time which contain highly complex or detailed information, the researcher may want to prepare sample clarification questions for the MP's. The researcher for the committee should not have other obligations during the proceedings to allow for note taking of the discussion and recommendations made by witnesses or committee MPs. This will ultimately assist in writing the committee's final report and recommendations.

Committee Staff: A cohesive committee staff team can make essential preparatory work easier and smoother. Committee staff teamwork is essential. The roles and duties committee staff at a hearing include:

- **Registration/Welcoming Table** – a staff person should be at a table outside of the committee hearing room and direct witnesses where to go, where to sit and ensure materials are gathered and submitted to the Clerk for distribution to the MPs
- **Media Table** – another staff person should be solely responsible for working with media and the media directorate. This staff person should be responsible for posting materials

approved by the Committee Chair to the committee's website and assisting the media in accessing MPs during coffee/tea breaks and/or after the meetings. A detailed list of media attendees or those who wanted to attend but could not should be maintained so when the final report is issued all media contacts can receive vital hearing information

Logistics – One or two staff members should be available to assist wherever needed. This could be assisting with setting up the room, meeting with hotel or conference staff (field hearings), ushering witnesses or assisting the public

Interpreters/Interpreters: Because Iraq has two official languages, it may be necessary to have Arabic/Kurdish translation/interpretation. Witnesses may speak a foreign language and in need of translators. Translation can be simultaneous or consecutive. The type that is chosen must be determined before the hearing.

- **Simultaneous** – The interpreter offers quick and immediate oral interpretation of one language into another. Good simultaneous interpreters are difficult to find and only the best should be hired for public hearings, especially if the interpretation will be broadcast. A special booth and audio equipment is needed. Witnesses must be reminded not to speak too quickly. This form of interpretation is more efficient but expensive and does not offer time for clarification of witness testimony.
- **Consecutive** –The interpreter speaks and interprets after two or three sentences made by a witness or MP. Consecutive interpretation allows for clarifications and nuances, is less expensive and does not require special equipment.

Caterer: Good food, snacks and beverages are very important for success. A public hearing is like inviting guests to your home. Coffee, tea, and snacks can help people feel comfortable.

Security: Proper security is essential when large numbers of people are present in Iraq. Coordination with security services at the COR or at field sites is essential. Lists of witnesses should be provided to security at the entrance or security check-points to help ease passage for those presenting to the committee. Security for MP's, witnesses and the public is essential before, during and as people exit a hearing.



Closing the Hearing

The Committee Chair should give a closing statement when the committee is fully satisfied that everyone interested in making a submission has testified. The closing statement should summarize the hearing and present a future plan of action for the committee on the proposed legislation or policy matter. A Committee Chairperson can convene a press conference at that time to clarify any issues that journalists may have pertaining to the hearing or issue.

After the Hearing

Thank you letters should be sent to all witnesses that testified and inform them of the importance of their contribution on the proposed legislation or policy. All witnesses should receive thank you notes regardless of their views (pro or con) presented during the hearing.

Writing and Issuing a Committee Report

Issuing reports is one of the most crucial functions parliamentary committees undertake to show a high level of diligence, care and prudent actions by MP's of the problems and policies that Iraq now has to solve. Reports demonstrate to Iraqi citizens and voters that their elected officials are listening. The post-hearing follow-up Committee Report summarizes all material presented at the hearing (oral and written information). The report is a consolidation of evidence and a summary of findings. For example, if a committee was scrutinizing government activity or legislation, the committee will want to summarize the input received from stakeholders and make recommendations on changes to a law or practice. If the hearing examined public administration or policy, the committee may identify a particular problem and make specific recommendations on how public money should be better spent or how a Ministry or agency should change a practice or service to better support the Iraqi people. Possible legislative language, definitions and specific intentions can be included in the report.

The committee secretary with assistance from the researcher and other committee staff should compile a report of the hearing proceedings that clearly illustrate the hearing attendance (a full list of participants to be provided as annex) with all written and oral evidence received by the committee. The committee should meet within seven days after the public hearing to deliberate on evidence and information gathered taking into consideration written materials, oral testimony and information submitted during the hearing. Possible amendments and recommendations are made in the report.

Thus, a draft committee report should contain hearing testimony, statements, information, witness lists, conclusions and key recommendations that the Committee MPs wish to make as a result of the public hearing process. This report will be presented eventually to the COR. Once a draft version of the report is written, it should be distributed to the committee MPs for them to review, make commentary and advise changes. Any additional suggestions from MPs should be incorporated and approved by the committee. These may be used as the legislation moves forward in the legislative process and further amendments or revisions by MPs, the Legal Committee or in other COR areas.

It is important to note that not all MPs must agree 100% of the time on a conclusion or on the testimony of a witness. For example, if seven of ten MPs want a particular version of the report or a conclusion to be made, the majority's position should stand, unless the committee has agreed beforehand to a process of 100% consensus. In many parliaments, if a topic is very contentious and a particular group vehemently disagrees with the majority of committee members, the 'main' report of the majority still becomes the official report of the committee; however, the minority group of MPs (or any number) can table a *minority report* that counters the findings of the main report. Guidelines and samples of the structure of a 'best practice' committee report on a draft law and reporting on the budget are provided in Annex #1 and Annex #2, respectively).



The Iraqi Minister of Higher Education answers questions from the COR's Education Committee concerning the validity of foreign degrees earned by Iraqis

The Committee Chair should inform the leadership of the COR of any major developments within the public hearing through the committee report. The committee report should be available to all COR MPs to read within two weeks of the public hearing. Assistance to the Committee Chair can assure that the report is widely available. A press release can assist this process. All MPs, DGs and the SG should have a copy of the report. The report should be posted on the website and filed with the COR Library.

Evaluation of a Public Hearing

The committee is encouraged to evaluate the public hearing in relation to its intended purpose. Both the staff and the MPs should meet at a separate time to discuss the public hearing. The committee can identify what went right and/or wrong and prepare lessons for future public hearings. Committee Staff, led by the Clerk/Secretary, should meet separately to discuss if the team could have worked any better or differently for a smoother hearing process. MPs must focus on witnesses and their testimony, not logistics of the hearing. Committee staff should implement needed changes for future hearings.

Another consideration is to ask witnesses their opinions. It is important to communicate post-hearing actions plans and outcomes to all participants through email, press conferences and/or press releases. Send witnesses the final report. Before that report is complete, staff should follow-up with witnesses to thank them for their participation and get feedback from them on logistical issues.



PART THREE: ANNEXES AND SAMPLES

Annex #1: Sample Structure for Public Hearing Report on Draft Legislation

Executive Summary:

An executive summary briefly states the main points and conclusions made throughout the rest of the report. This section of the report must use concise language but be comprehensive in scope. The executive summary should be written after completing the rest of the report as it is easier to summarize what has been written previously. The executive summary should be placed at the beginning of the report so that readers can gain a summary of the full report and analysis.

Introduction and background:

The introduction of the hearing report should give the reader a brief background of the law and decision by the committee to convene a public hearing. This section should outline the report and future actions of the committee once the report is filed with the COR.

General Concepts and Background to the Proposed Legislation:

The second section of the hearing report defines the problem, policy issue or proposed legislation. It describes how the issue came to the attention of decision-makers.

Objectives of the Bill:

Policy arguments for the proposed legislation are discussed in this section, including detailed goals of the legislation or policy.

Constitutionality of the Bill: MPs cannot rule as a court would rule within the hearing report but can identify certain issues related to a proposed bill's constitutionality and make recommendations. The report should clearly state whether the committee considers the bill to be constitutional or in conflict with the Iraq Constitution and the applicable sections in question. MPs should make explicit and detailed recommendations for redrafting sections that are questionably unconstitutional. This will allow fellow MPs notice of the concerns during further discussion of the bill.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Bill:

The committee should outline the potential economic and social benefits and monetary costs of legislative enactment of a bill or policy. The committee's secretariats or staff can assist MP's in this analysis.

Capacity to Implement the Bill:

The committee report should outline whether there are sufficient resources (financial, human and material) to implement the bill. Examples of government programs in ministries or agencies can serve as a reference point for successful implementation. The financial costs for the government and treasury for budgeting and implementing should be examined and included.

Drafting of the bill:

The report should discuss ambiguous legislative language and include possible clarification language for future amendments or legislative revisions. Legislative clarity is crucial for MP's and final legislative policy.

Consistency with Existing Laws and International Obligations:

Inconsistencies or conflicts with existing laws must be clearly stated in the committee's report. Iraq's international obligations and domestic law must be considered for consistency and compatibility.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The conclusions and recommendations section of a committee report is critical and summarizes all crucial information. The committee should discuss salient and convincing points for the legislation or policy presented by witnesses and information given at the hearing to make final conclusions and recommendations. Final recommendations should clearly illustrate that the MP's listened to public comments and considered them in final recommendations.

The report itself should be built like a pyramid whereby the conclusions and recommendations are the pinnacle of all the work undertaken by the committee and the testimony of the witnesses. The conclusions/recommendations should be clearly linked and built upon the findings made in the report. For example, if a committee held a hearing on legislation to approve the implementation of a major toll-road between the seaports in Basra and Baghdad and an association representing truck drivers had testified that additional costs for the toll-road would increase the costs of goods and make the seaports of Basra less competitive, **a possible recommendation** may be:

Two witnesses representing the Seaports of Basra Corporation and the Basra Truckers Association testified that the creation of a toll-road between Basra and Baghdad would increase the costs of goods shipped from Basra to Baghdad by 25 per cent. They testified that increased costs would make goods more expensive for average Iraqi citizens in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq and make the Basra seaports 15 per cent more expensive than ports in Kuwait. Thus, businesses that import goods to Iraq may shift their shipping to Kuwait and transport goods over land at a cheaper price. This could cause lost jobs for people in Basra and make goods slightly more expensive. Therefore, the Standing Committee X recommends that the government possibly reconsider its plan to construct a toll-road and instead invest in building a free highway between the seaports in Basra and Baghdad that would appropriately address this issue.

Recommendations should be numbered and in order of importance to reflect the correlations between testimony and policy recommendations. In the above example, the recommendation weighed the increased costs of goods resulting from the building of a toll-road and possible loss of jobs with the alternative of remaining competitive by building a free highway instead.



Annex #2: Sample Report Structure for Budget Law

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Situational analysis of the particular economic sector
4. General budget objectives, including projected total expenditures, projected total revenues, distribution of expenditures and revenues, budget deficit and how it will be financed.
5. Brief overview of ministry's intended programs and targets for the year
 - a. Ministry budget objectives: what are the ministry's qualitative objectives in the budget?
 - b. Ministry budget allocation: what is the ministry's allocation for the coming year? This should provide a brief summary of the heads of expenditure.
 - c. Other ministry revenue sources – are they realistic?
 - d. Was there any discussion in the budget preparation of problems that the ministry foresaw from its allocation? Were these addressed in the budget presented in Parliament?
6. Brief review of economic performance in the last Fiscal Year
7. Review of qualitative and quantitative performance
8. What were the targets?
9. Review of expenditures
10. Review revenue inflows
11. Output, outcome and impact?
12. Evaluation and explanation of performance
13. Does the ministry foresee this year's budget targets being met?
14. What is the likely impact on the country of the failure to meet targets?
15. If the obstacles to performance are within the ministry's competence to overcome, what plans does the ministry have to overcome them?
16. If the obstacles are beyond the ministries' control, what suggestions does the committee have of how they might be reduced in the future?
17. Outlook and general issues
 - i. Does the ministry foresee requiring a supplementary budgetary allocation in this budget period?
18. Conclusion and Recommendations
19. Annexes

Annex #3: Guidelines on Public Notice for a Hearing on a Draft Law

This is an actual sample from the Iraqi COR.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DRAFT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT LAW

The Committee on Financial Affairs will be conducting a public hearing on the draft Financial Management Law currently before the COR.

The purpose of the hearing is to obtain public views on the draft law. The committee will consider these submissions with a view to recommend any necessary amendments to the proposed legislation

Date and time: *The hearing will take place on Wednesday, 22nd November 2009 at the COR committee room 1 from 10:00 to 16:00 hrs. All participants are expected to be at the venue 30 minutes before the start of the hearing.*

Participants can make written or oral submissions at the hearing. A maximum of 10 minutes shall be provided to each presenter to make an oral submission followed by a maximum of five minutes question time by members of the Committee.

Written submissions must be short and precise and reach the committee at least 24 hours before the hearing. Written submissions should be a one page concise recommendation either in support or in opposition of the proposed legislation.

All inquiries about the public hearing and written submissions must be directed to:

Name

Committee secretary

COR address:

Telephone:

Email:

A copy of the draft law is hereby attached. It can also be downloaded on the COR website:

Annex #4: Sample Agenda

- Title: “Human Trafficking in Iraq – The Problem and Solutions”
- Who is holding hearing: “Human Rights Committee”
- Date, time, place:
- List of names of witnesses and titles

Agenda:

Statement by Chair of the Human Rights Committee

Statement my Members of the Human Rights Committee

Panel I: Statements by national and international academics, experts, and police on the issue of sexual exploitation trafficking

Panel II: Statements by national and international academics, experts and police on the issue of labor and organ trafficking

Panel III: Statements from representatives from civil society groups working on trafficking

Panel IV: Statements from victims

Closing Statements by Chair of the Human Rights Committee

Annex #5: Sample Testimony Facts (Taken from “Human Trafficking in Iraq” by the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights – May 2007)

Trafficking is becoming one of the most lucrative transnational crimes after the illicit trade in drugs and arms, affecting a minimum estimated 800,000 to 900,000 victims globally each year. Research has shown that Iraqi women and girls are subject to sexual exploitation and forced labor. Women and girls are being trafficked in Iraq may be a predictable outcome of conflict and instability, but little is being done to protect those who are currently living under conditions of forced labor or sexual exploitation, or to prevent additional women and children from becoming victims.

The Iraqi Constitution prohibits forced labor, kidnapping, slavery, slave trade, trafficking in women or children, and the sex trade. Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”). Iraqi government officials have failed to prevent abuses and to punish offenders. Iraq has not passed anti-trafficking legislation, allowing traffickers to continue to operate with impunity.

Iraq must develop an effective national and regional counter-trafficking strategy to include prevention strategies, protection of trafficking victims, and prosecution of traffickers. It is an opportune time to address trafficking and other serious human rights violations, as Iraq’s national and regional governments work to strengthen the rule of law. Addressing the problems of trafficking and other forms of gender-motivated violence is essential to this process of reform.

Annex #6: Guidelines for a Press Releases for Public Hearings

1. A press release is brief and highlights an important event, decision, information and/or legislation.
2. The 1st paragraph should include who, what, when, where, why and how. The most important facts should be presented first and details after this
3. The press release should have a headline and would want to make the media cover the story
4. There must be a contact name and telephone number so the media has a contact for further information and questions
5. There should be a date listed on the release or “for immediate release” followed by the month, day and year
6. Quotes must be included. These should be short and easily understood
7. Describe legislation: what it does; the impact it will have – i.e. on whom, policy, business, government; who or what it is directed at; quotable remarks about the legislation or policy
8. Summary of legislation or policy
9. Parliament member’s name
10. Describe legislation: what it does; the impact it will have – i.e. on whom, policy, business, government; who or what it is directed at
11. Quotable remarks about the legislation or policy
12. Summary of legislation or policy
13. Limit the release to 1-2 pages – 1 page is best

Example

الأثنين 11 نيسان 2011

أعلن النائب عبد نزياب العجلي رئيس لجنة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي في مجلس النواب أن اللجنة سوف تعقد جلسة استماع عامة حول قانون الجامعات والكليات الأهلية الثلاثاء 2011/4/19 في تمام الساعة العاشرة صباحا في قاعة رقم (3) بمجلس النواب.

عليه تدعو اللجنة الجمهور ومنظمات المجتمع المدني واتحادات الطلبة والهيئات التدريسية والمعنيين والمتأثرين بهذا الموضوع والإطراف الأخرى إلى عرض آراء ومقترحات منظماتهم ومؤسساتهم حول هذه القضية إلى لجنة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي من أجل ضمها إلى السجل الرسمي لجلسة الاستماع . وستؤخذ هذه الإفادات الخطية بعين الاعتبار عند مناقشة اللجنة لهذا الموضوع ..

يرجى من المؤسسات والمنظمات اقتصار عرضهم على صفحة واحدة فقط وإرسالها إلى البريد الإلكتروني :
taleem_cor_iq@yahoo.com
بإمكان وسائل الإعلام الاستفسار حول الجلسة العامة من خلال الاتصال بسكرتير اللجنة ، على رقم الهاتف :
07801977106... أو البريد الإلكتروني: atheernakash@yahoo.com

Annex #7: Press Release Example

Organization
Contact: Name, Title
Phone, Email

For Immediate Release: Month, Day, Year

**Headline – One to two lines that clearly state what the issue are and what you want to say
(Parliament Member X Introduces Legislation to Do X)**

Subheading – A short headline

City, Date – One to two sentences that clearly summarize the issue and story. Generally - someone did something that the press would want to know about

Give a quote if possible. Give an overview of the issue or pending legislation.

Give support again for what is said in the first paragraph or initially. Give bulleted information so it is easier to read

Place ##### or End or More if the release goes to a second page

SECTION FOUR: Public Hearing Planning Check List

| Task | Notes and Details | MP/Staff Person | Due Date | STATUS: <i>Not Started</i> <i>In Progress</i> <i>Complete</i> |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|----------|--|
| <i>Pre-Hearing Groundwork</i> | | | | |
| Call a meeting of the Standing Committee and solicit feedback from MPs as to their desire to hold a public hearing. | | | | |
| Questions for the Committee to consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the issue pertinent, timely and current? 2. Does the subject matter relate to current legislation or current issues for MP's, ministries or the public? 3. Is the time frame for the hearing sufficient to alter pending legislation? 4. Are a majority of MPs available for the date? 5. Will seeking public input result in the affirmative of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A better law, or more sound public policy b. Enhanced respect for the COR and MPs by engaging the public 6. Which committees have jurisdiction of the issue? 7. Can aspects of the issue be addresses by a hearing and possible witnesses? 8. Do the benefits justify the cost? 9. Are there sufficient staff resources to properly plan and execute the hearing? | | | | |
| Confirm the date AND location of the Public Hearing(s). Will there be more than one? If so, when and where? | | | | |
| Decide format and desired agenda with the Chair | | | | |
| Inform the Parliamentary Affairs DG and Research/Library DG if needed for assistance in preparations for materials or coordinating other aspects of the Secretariat | | | | |
| <i>Participant Selection</i> | | | | |
| Create a potential witnesses list that will provide coverage for all aspects of the | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| issue drawing upon input for academics, the government, international groups and MP's. | | | | |
| Create an invitation letter template for all intended witnesses, including hearing topic, legislation it addresses, dates, times, locations, logistical information for the public hearing. | | | | |
| Use "Witness Information and Material" sheet to track confirmed witnesses, their contact information, RSVPs, materials sent and received etc. (???) | | | | |
| Collect Witness biographies and/or CVs | | | | |
| <i>STAFFING OF THE HEARING</i> | | | | |
| Determine which committee staff will attend the hearing and what role they will undertake. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secretary/Clerk Person - Media Contact and Support Person - Administration, catering and logistics Person - Media and Witness Registration Table Person - Research Staff Person - Recording/Transcription Person | | | | |
| <i>TRAVEL</i> | | | | |
| Is the committee travelling for this hearing? If no, skip this section, if yes, continue. | | | | |
| Determine travel needs for the committee flight options and availability for all MPs to travel at the same time | | | | |
| Check if visa/passport identification requirements (are there special internal visas/ID or Ministry of the Interior permission to go to specific locations in Iraq?) | | | | |
| Confirm final travel itinerary for participants if witnesses are travelling and make reservations for MPs and staff | | | | |
| Ensure tickets for all attendees are purchase and paid at least 7 days before departure to confirm seating | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| AGENDA | | | | |
| Draft an agenda – who will speak on what days? | | | | |
| Determine whether witnesses will be in panels, time allowed for testimony OR will witnesses present themselves? How long will question sessions be for MPs for witnesses? | | | | |
| Distribute Agenda to MPs at least one week prior to the meeting and include any notices or presentations received by witnesses and research reports) | | | | |
| COMFORT ISSUES | | | | |
| Since witnesses may travel into Baghdad or MPs to other cities in Iraq, create a list of local places for shopping, restaurants and for personal needs and/or toiletries | | | | |
| Prepare memo for MPs and witnesses that discusses times and length of coffee/comfort breaks and whether or not meals will be served Lunch and/or dinner cost arrangements should be clearly outlined as well as per diems or vouchers | | | | |
| Locate nearest worship places | | | | |
| FINANCES | | | | |
| Prepare a Budget for the public hearing and break costs down by each day of the hearing with costs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Printing of Materials - Per Diems for Witnesses and/or MPs - Food and beverages at the meeting - Hotels and/or accommodation in Baghdad for witnesses and/or for MPs in other cities - Airline and/or transportation costs for MPs and for witnesses (mileage allowances) - Room rental costs for facilities not in the parliament (i.e. convention centre or hotel meeting rooms) - Costs for staff over-time - Costs for interpreters/translation - Costs for ground transportation - Costs for audio visual equipment | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| - Sundry expenses or office supplies? | | | | |
| Calculate attendee/witness per diems and have logistical staff person hold onto the per diems in individual envelopes until it is distributed to the participant (have a signature form ready to prove receipt of the money) | | | | |
| Provide Secretary of committee or lead planner with additional cash to cover sundry and other expenses that may occur on the day of a hearing (for off -site hearings) | | | | |
| <i>Logistics: Ground Transport</i> | | | | |
| Determine local transportation needs for witnesses such as airport transport, etc | | | | |
| Arrange ground transportation to hotel locations and/or parliament and security needs | | | | |
| <i>Logistics: Lodging</i> | | | | |
| If committee is travelling to other cities – select a hotel that is secure for MPs. If committee is holding meetings in Baghdad, secure rooms in hotels near the COR for any witnesses that are attending the hearing. | | | | |
| Confirm reservations for any meeting rooms in hotels and/or room reservation 7 days before and 1 day before the event. | | | | |
| Reserve and inspect meeting space in hotel for size, set-up and chair/table arrangements | | | | |
| Make all final payment arrangements for any additional costs | | | | |
| <i>Logistics: Other</i> | | | | |
| Create “Logistical Agenda” for Committee staff for all required duties and times | | | | |
| Determine off-site needs for SIM, paper, supplies etc. | | | | |
| Determine IT needs (laptops, projectors, recorders, cameras, etc) | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Request laptops and IT needs from the IT directorate 7 days before departure or the date of the hearing | | | | |
| Create participant contact list | | | | |
| Create service provider/staff contact list – have a list with the names and numbers of all committee staff, caterer, IT repair people, translators, interpreters etc | | | | |
| SECURITY: Coordinate with the Security Department of the COR to ensure that witnesses are able to access the COR and/or if the hearing is off site, coordinate with the security officials at hotel and/or conference facilities to ensure safety | | | | |
| <i>Briefing Materials</i> | | | | |
| Decide what materials to give to participants before departure versus upon arrival and ensure witnesses have sent/mailed their presentations to the Committee Secretary 48 hours prior to hearing for distribution | | | | |
| Create Small “Briefing Binders” for each MP with witness biographical information, witness testimony and technical reports | | | | |
| Finalize agenda (daily breakdown of activities, workshops, briefing, meetings, breakout sessions etc.) | | | | |
| Create evaluation forms for witnesses and the public | | | | |
| <i>FOLLOW-UP</i> | | | | |
| Draft and send thank you letters | | | | |
| Confirm payments made and received | | | | |
| Reconcile receipts/invoices | | | | |
| Write reports – See report writing annexes | | | | |

