

UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

ASSOCIATION DES SECRÉTAIRES GÉNÉRAUX DES PARLEMENTS
ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS

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CONSTITUTIONAL

AND PARLIAMENTARY

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The parliamentary system of Egypt
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INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Aims

The Inter-Parliamentary Union whose international Statute is outlined in a Headquarters Agreement drawn up with the Swiss federal authorities, is the only world-wide organization of Parliaments.

The aim of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is to promote personal contacts between members of all Parliaments and to unite them in common action to secure and maintain the full participation of their respective States in the firm establishment and development of representative institutions and in the advancement of the work of international peace and co-operation, particularly by supporting the objectives of the United Nations.

In pursuance of this objective, the Union makes known its views on all international problems suitable for settlement by parliamentary action and puts forward suggestions for the development of parliamentary assemblies so as to improve the working of those institutions and increase their prestige.

Membership of the Union (December 1998)

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Korea (Dem. P. R. of), Korea (Rep. of), Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Associated members: Andean Parliament, Latin American Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Structure

The organs of the Union are:

1. *The Inter-Parliamentary Conference* which meets twice a year.
2. *The Inter-Parliamentary Council*, composed of two members from each affiliated Group. *President*: Mr. M. A. Martínez (Spain).
3. *The Executive Committee*, composed of twelve members elected by the Conference, as well as of the Council President acting as *ex officio* President.
4. *Secretariat of the Union*, which is the international secretariat of the Organization, the headquarters being located at: Place du Petit-Saconnex, CP 438, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.

Secretary general: Mr. Anders Johnsson.

Official publication

The Union's official organ is the *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin*, which appears quarterly in both English and French. This publication is indispensable in keeping posted on the activities of the Organization. Subscription can be placed with the Union's Secretariat in Geneva.

Constitutional and Parliamentary Information

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I. The parliamentary system of Egypt

Presentation by Mr Sami El-Din MAHRAN, Secretary General of the People's Assembly, on The Egyptian Parliament: Its History, Present Composition and Competences. Cairo Session (September 1997)

Historical Background

At an early stage of its modern history, Egypt has adopted the representative system. It has taken the lead among the states of the region in formulating this system through various institutional perspectives for 170 years or more. With the passage of time, in response to the political, social and economic growth brought forth in the Egyptian society and thanks to growing popular national movements, these perspectives were developed, their forms upgraded, their competences integrated and their methodologies entrenched. This came as part of pioneer representative experiences eventually incarnated in the democratic practice Egypt is undergoing, mindful of respect for rights and freedoms, the rule of law, the pluralist system and a stepped-up role for the legislature in shaping the life of the nation and safeguarding values of freedom and democracy.

Observing the history of parliamentary life in Egypt, a major three-stage evolution is discerned. First, the period prior to the promulgation of the 1923 Constitution. The second covering both Constitutions of 1923 and 1930. The third is the period begun with the outbreak of the 23 July 1952 Revolution to date. In the course of these stages, the Egyptian parliament has experienced both unicameral and bi-cameral systems in reaction to relevant requirements. The name of parliament, its competence and role in political life changed accordingly.

Representative Life in Egypt before the 1923 Constitution

The early start of parliamentary life can be traced back to the Supreme Council established by Mohamed Ali Pasha in 1824. It was the first representa-

tive house whose most of its members were elected. It was composed of ministers, heads of departments, two landlords from each directorate to be elected by the citizens, two Ulama chose by the Grand Skeik of Al-Azhar in addition to two merchants selected by the senior merchant of the capital. Its standing order was issued in 1825. It set the dates of its convocation and laid down rules of work. Then in 1829 this House was replaced by the Consultative Assembly, which consisted of 156 members from senior civil servants, landlords and Ulama, ninety-nine of whom were elected. It was convoked to advise on questions of education, administration and public work. A statute to regulate working methods was passed.

The establishment of the Representatives Shoura Council signalled the advent of a new era of parliamentary action in Egypt. The Council statutes, competences and order were issued in October 1866, following many statutes that were then in effect in Europe, especially those related to the procedures of its convocation, quorum, the rules governing debates and vote-taking. This Council was composed of 75 members elected by the group of landlords from Cairo, Alexandria and Demeitta as well as mayors and dignitaries for the other directorates who, in their turn, had become elected for the first time. The Council was elected for a three-year term. It convened for two months annually at the invitation of the Khedive.

Due to the aggravated financial crisis which led to foreign interferences in Egypt's internal affairs, strong opposition trends were generated within this Council. Such opposition was further activated because of the supportive national movement which expressed itself in the writings of many intellectuals, journalists and authors. They called for holding the government accountable before a broader and more competent democratically-based representative house.

On 9 September 1881, the Ahmed Orabi-led revolution broke out. It called *inter alia* for the toppling of the existing government and the formation of a new house of representatives. Consequently, on 8 February 1882, the basic law was issued, rendering the government accountable to the popular-elected representative house for a five-year period. It vested the House with the power of legislation and the right to call ministers to account. It gave the Khedive the prerogative of dissolving the House. It was the first time ever in Egyptian parliamentary history that a fully framed parliamentary system was founded on a democratic basis.

The representatives Consultative Council continued to hold its meetings until 26 March 1882. Then in 1883, during the British occupation, this law was abolished and the basic law was issued. It brought in three Councils. Namely, the Council of Directorates, the Laws Consultative Council and the General

Assembly. The legislative function was entrusted to the Laws Consultative Council and the General Assembly. The Council of Directorates, on the other hand, carried out the administrative function and elected the members of the Laws Consultative Council.

In July 1913, the Legislative Assembly was established to replace the previous councils. It lasted from 22 January to 17 June 1914. Then World War I broke out.

Representative Life in Egypt under the 1923 and 1930 Constitutions

When the war was over, the national movement was vigorously triggered in 1919, under the leadership of Saad Zaghloul, culminating in the 28 February 1922 Declaration which rendered Egypt an independent sovereign state with four reservations. This constituted an important step towards full independence. After the country had attained its independence, it was only normal to establish a new constitutional system. Therefore, the Constitution was proclaimed in April 1923. It continued in force until 1930, and was replaced by the 1930 Constitution which lasted until December 1935.

The 1923 Constitution adopted the bi-cameral system (the Senate and the House of Representatives). It followed the representative system based on the independence, cooperation and correlation of authorities. The relationship between the Executive and the Legislature was regulated in terms of oversight and balance.

It rendered the government accountable before the parliament and emphasised the latter's right to put any matter to a vote of confidence. At the same time, it corroborated the principle that the Executive is bilaterally shared. It gave one of its parties, i.e. the King - the right to dissolve and to convoke parliament. However, it gave the latter the right to convene with the force of the law if not called by the time specified in the Constitution.

Representative Life in Egypt before the 1952 Revolution to the present day

Before the July 1952 Revolution, political life experienced mounting instability, reflected in acute conflict between political parties on one hand, and the frequent formation of governments on the other hand. Egypt witnessed more than 41 cabinet reshuffles from 1924 to 1952.

The revolution declared its six principles, including the principle of establishing a sound democratic life. Steps towards this end followed. It abolished the Constitution and the Monarchy, dissolved parties and declared the creation

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of the republican regime. Then, the 1956 Constitution was announced, by virtue of which the National Assembly was formed on 22 July 1957. Its members were put at 350 for a five-year term. This Assembly continued until the Egyptian-Syrian merger was declared in February 1958.

After the merger, the 1956 Constitution was abolished and replaced by a provisional constitution in 1958. A joint National Assembly composed of 400 Egyptian members and 200 Syrian members was formed. The Assembly lasted until the merger experience was over.

Then the provisional Constitution of March 1964 was promulgated, and the National Assembly was established comprising 350 elected members; at least half of whom were farmers and workers, in addition to others appointed by the President of the Republic. It lasted until 20 January 1969. New elections for a new National Assembly, which continued till 30 August 1971, were held.

On 11 September 1971, a new Constitution was promulgated; it developed the basics of the democratic representative regime in Egypt. It emphasised that the ruling system in the State was mainly founded on the rule of the law and the independence of the Judiciary. It also stressed that the political regime was based on party-plurality as far as the elementary principles and components of the Egyptian society stipulated for in the Constitution were concerned.

The Egyptian Parliament, under this Constitution, has come to be known as "The People's Assembly". This Constitution regulates the Executive - Legislature relationship so as to ensure the optimal degree of balance and oversight. It stipulates that the President of the Republic assumes the Executive, and devises jointly with the cabinet, the general policy of the State and supervises its implementation. It also states that the People's Assembly undertakes the power to legislate, to adopt the State general policy, the general plan for social and economic development, the State general budget and to exercise control over the Executive.

In this connection, it established a battery of competences for the Legislature within the jurisdiction of the Executive and vice versa.

Among the prime competences envisaged in the Constitution were those related to the People's Assembly, with regard to the nomination of the President of the Republic, his resignation and the vacancy of his post. These competences include, as well, deliberations on the government programme, the adoption of the general plan for economic and social development and the State general budget as well as the right to oversee government functioning and endorse treaties and conventions.

Other competences included in the Constitution are, for example, embodied in the powers conferred upon the President of the Republic in respect of the Assembly's convocation and closure of the ordinary session.

The Head of the State, as well, is entitled to call the Assembly to an extraordinary meeting, if necessary, and to have the Assembly dissolved should it prove imperative and after a referendum, besides the legislative powers he is vested in according to the Constitution. This is illustrated in the following exposé:

The People's Assembly: Formation, Term, Competence and Jurisdiction

Formation of the People's Assembly and Election of its Members

The Constitution stipulates that the number of the People's Assembly members should be no less than 350 to be elected by direct secret ballot. At least half of them should be workers and farmers. The President of the Republic may appoint ten members at most. The law defines the minimum age of the voter as 18 years old and the Assembly candidate should be at least 30 years old. The law also defines the number of constituencies.

The People's Assembly at present is composed of 441 elected members representing 222 constituencies, in addition to ten members appointed by the President of the Republic.

The Assembly members of political parties represented in the Assembly constitute the respective parliamentary bodies of those parties.

The party should notify the Speaker of the Assembly, at the beginning of every ordinary annual session, of the name of the member it selects from among its members to be its representative, who is to have the priority of sounding the party viewpoint in the Assembly and its committees. The latest elections were conducted in November and December 1995 on a multi-party basis, which Egypt has adopted in the form of political fora in the legislative elections conducted in 1976. In 1977, the law on the establishment of political parties was passed. The first legislative elections on a multi-party basis were conducted in June 1979. There are six parties represented in the People's Assembly at present, in addition to the independent members, that is 409 from the National Democratic Party, 5 from the New Wafd Party, 5 from Rassemblement, 1 from the Labour Party, 1 from the Liberals, 1 from Nasserist Party and 29 Independents.

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Legislative Term and Sessions

The legislative term of the People's Assembly is five Gregorian years. Elections are to be held sixty days prior to the termination of its mandate.

The President of the Republic may not dissolve the People's Assembly before the termination of its mandate unless necessity calls and on a referendum.

The President of the Republic convokes the People's Assembly for its ordinary annual session before the second Thursday of November. If it is not convoked, the Assembly is to meet - by force of the Constitution - on the said date.

The Assembly ordinary session is no less than seven months. The President of the Republic declares the ordinary session closed. This may not take place until the State budget is approved.

The President of the Republic may convoke the People's Assembly for an extraordinary session if necessity calls, or on a request signed by the majority of the Assembly members.

The President of the Republic announces the closure of the extraordinary session.

Sittings and Decisions of the Assembly

Validity of Holding Sittings and Adopting Decisions

While observing a special provision in certain instances, a meeting of the Assembly is only valid with the majority of its members attending.

The Assembly, in all cases, may not take a decision on purely non-procedural matters unless the majority of its members is present and without breaching any other clause requiring more members to attend to secure the validity of the meeting.

While observing a special provision regarding certain cases, decisions of the Assembly are adopted by the absolute majority of the members present. In case of a tied vote on a subject matter put to the Assembly, it is deemed rejected.

Opening Sittings

The Assembly holds, at the beginning of every ordinary session, a morning procedural sitting to be chaired by the oldest member present who is aided in running the sitting by the two youngest members.

This sitting is dedicated to the election of the Speaker and two Deputy Speakers. No debates may be held in the Assembly before electing the Speaker.

The task of the by-age Speaker is terminated with the election of the Assembly Speaker.

Ordinary and Emergency Sittings

The Assembly sittings are public. It may meet in camera on the request of either the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Speaker or at least twenty members.

The People's Assembly may hold a special sitting if so demanded by either its Speaker or the Prime Minister to exchange viewpoints on matters pertaining to supreme national interests or to hear statements and clarifications on decisions related to the State general policy both at home and abroad.

The Assembly may hold a special meeting to debate one of its affairs upon the request of the Speaker, or upon a written request submitted to the Speaker by one of the representatives of the parties' parliamentary bodies or at least twenty members.

The Agenda of the Assembly

The Bureau of the Assembly draws up the agenda of the sittings in accordance with the adopted plan of action while giving priority to the inclusion of government bills where the competent committees have finalized their examination and study, as well as current important issues.

As a general rule, a subject that is not included on the agenda may only be discussed upon the request of either the government or the Assembly Speaker or upon a justified written request submitted by one of the representatives of parties' parliamentary bodies or by at least twenty members.

A member, or a committee chairman or one of the representatives of parties' parliamentary bodies may request the approval of the Assembly Speaker to deliver a statement on a subject not included on the agenda in relation to urgent significant issues.

Minutes of Sittings

At the end of each sitting and within forty-eight hours from holding it, the General Secretariat prepares a briefing of the sitting in which it generally states the subjects presented to the Assembly and a résumé of the discussion held and decisions taken at the sitting.

The General Secretariat edits the minutes of each sitting in which all relevant procedures as well as subjects, deliberations and decisions are recorded in detail.

The Assembly's Parliamentary Organs

The Speaker

The People's Assembly elects its Speaker at the first meeting of the ordinary session and for its duration.

The Speaker represents the Assembly and speaks in its name. He maintains its security, order and dignity as well as the dignity of its members. In general, he ensures the proper functioning of the Assembly.

The Speaker opens the meetings, presides over them and announces them adjourned. He keeps order, conducts debate, gives members the floor, sorts out the subject of deliberation and draws the speaker's attention to stick to the point. He may clarify or ask for clarification on any point he finds obscure. He puts matters to the vote and declares Assembly-adopted decisions.

The Assembly Bureau

The Assembly Bureau is composed of the Speaker and the two Deputy Speakers. They are elected at the first meeting of the ordinary annual session upon the election of the Speaker.

The Assembly Bureau draws up a plan for the activities of the Assembly and its committees, supervises the Assembly proceedings and regulates all its parliamentary, administrative and financial affairs. The Bureau assists MPs in performing their parliamentary assignments and hammers out the sittings agenda according to the established plan of action.

The General Committee

The General Committee is formed at the beginning of every ordinary annual session under the chairmanship of the Speaker and with the membership of the two Deputy Speakers, the chairmen of Assembly committees, the representatives of parties' parliamentary bodies and five members chosen by the Assembly Bureau provided that one of them be an independent, should there be at least ten independent members in the Assembly.

The committee probes general and important issues which either the President of the Republic, the Speaker or the Prime Minister deems necessary to exchange views about. The Committee, as well, studies periodic reports copied by the standing committees, the reports referred thereto by the Assembly Bureau including the Socialist Public Prosecutor's, and the Central Organ for Auditing, as well as those of control authorities and other referred thereto by the Ethics Committee.

The Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee is formed pursuant to an Assembly decision at the beginning of every ordinary annual session upon the nomination of the Assembly Bureau, under the chairmanship of one Deputy Speaker and with the membership of the chairmen of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, the Religious, Social Affairs and Wakfs Committee and the Proposals and Complaints Committee, in addition to five General Committee members, two of them are the representatives of the Opposition parliamentary bodies and the independents, as well as five members chosen by ballot, one of whom is a woman.

The Ethics Committee is authorised to consider any violations attributed to a MP concerning religious, moral or social values, or the basic political and economic principles of the Egyptian society. It may undertake the investigation itself or delegate, from among its members, whomever it selects for this mission. The result of the investigation is then referred back to it.

Standing Committees

There are eighteen standing committees to assist the Assembly in undertaking its legislative and control competence. They are formed at the commencement of every ordinary session, and within ten days, the committee elects a chairman, two deputy chairmen and a secretary from among its members.

Every MP should join one of the Assembly committees. He may, upon the approval of the Assembly Bureau, join a second committee to help prompt the Committee activity by virtue of his expertise.

The Assembly decides, upon the request of its Speaker or the government, to set up an *ad hoc* committee to study a specific issue and prepare a report thereon. The Speaker selects the chairman and members of *ad hoc* committees. The given committees continue in existence until the Assembly takes a decision relevant to the subject for which the committees were formed or when their work is wound up. For instance, the *ad hoc* committee formed to reply to the

government statement and the *ad hoc* committee to study the child law which was set up at the first ordinary session of the Seventh Legislative Term.

The Assembly may, as proposed by the Speaker or the government, refer a particular item to a joint committee made up of bureaux or members of one or more committees. One of the Deputy Speakers or the eldest of committee chairmen chairs the committee.

At the beginning of every ordinary session, the committees single out the subjects falling within their jurisdiction. Every standing committee undertakes to study bills, motions for bills or decreed laws or other items discerned to be within its competences, which the Assembly has decided to refer thereto. The standing committees, accordingly, follow-up the impact of law enforcement, the pledges made in the ministers' statements before the Assembly and through the mass media, and how far the recommendations passed by the Assembly and reports in this connection have been executed.

The Parliamentary Group

The People's Assembly is the Parliamentary Group of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Inter-Parliamentary Conferences. The Speaker is the Chairman of the Group and the two Deputy Speakers are its deputy chairmen.

The General Assembly of the Group is made up of all members of parliament.

The Executive Committee of the Group is composed of the Assembly Bureau, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, eight members elected by the General Assembly upon the nomination of the Assembly Bureau and three other members selected by the Assembly Bureau, including at least a representative of the Opposition parties parliamentary bodies.

The Secretary General of the Assembly heads the group's General Secretariat, organises its activities and is responsible to the President of the Group.

Competences of the People's Assembly

Legislative Competences

Amendment of the Constitution

The President of the Republic and the People's Assembly, each is vested with the power to request the amendment of one or more constitutional articles. If the request is lodged by the People's Assembly, it should be signed in advance by at least one-third of the Assembly members.

Should the People's Assembly approve the amendment in principle, it shall debate, two months after the date of endorsement, the articles subject to amendment. In the event of approval by two-thirds of the Assembly members, it shall be put to a popular referendum.

If the proposed amendment is approved, it shall come into force as of the date when the results of the referendum were announced.

The 1971 Constitution was amended by virtue of a referendum conducted on 22 May 1980. It resulted in the amendment of articles (1), (2), (4) and (5) of the Constitution. These articles are related to the State regime, its economic bases and pluralist system. Article (77) on the Presidency of the Republic was also amended. Furthermore, a new section was added. Its first chapter concerns the Shoura Council and defines its competences, while the second chapter relates to journalism.

Bills and Motions for Bills

Both the President of the Republic and every member of parliament have the right to propose laws.

Bills are referred to the Assembly committees respectively for scrutiny and reporting. Motions for Bills presented by MPs are referred to the competent standing committees only on having them thoroughly considered by the Proposals and Complaints Committee for an opinion on whether or not they should be submitted to the Assembly. Once the Assembly decides to have them considered, they are referred to the specific committee concerned.

Discussion of bills is built around the draft presented by the committee. The Assembly debates the bills in one deliberation. Nevertheless, in conformity with the provisions of the Assembly Rules of Procedure, a second deliberation may be held to this effect. The deliberation starts with discussing the general bases and principles of the bill. Should the Assembly disapprove of the bill, in principle, it will be repudiated.

The Assembly after approving the bill in principle moves on to the debate of its articles, one by one, after reading each. A vote is taken on each article separately, then on the bill in its entirety. After discussing the article and related proposed amendments, a vote is taken first on the amendments, starting with those of the broadest scale and farthest from the original text. Then, the vote is taken on the article in its entirety.

The final vote on the bill may not take place before the lapse of at least four days following deliberation. While with the consent of the Assembly - in emergencies - the final vote is taken on the bill during the same sitting when it

was approved at least one hour after its consideration unless the majority of the Assembly members decides otherwise.

If the President of the Republic objects to a bill endorsed by the Assembly and refers it back to the Assembly, the Speaker is to be notified of the objection and the reasons for it. The Assembly holds an emergency sitting to this end, where the objection as well as all relevant information are referred, in the same sitting, to the General Committee for an examination of the disputed bill. The General Committee's report is presented to the Assembly for prompt consideration. If the Assembly is to adopt the bill in question, it will be passed as law with the majority of two-thirds of its members. Otherwise, the Assembly sets up - at the request of its Speaker - an *ad hoc* committee to re-examine the bill and to amend its provisions according to the principles adopted when discussing the General Committee's report on the contested topic. The procedures to be applied in the process of debating bills are the same in relation to motions for bills, while observing special provisions regarding certain cases.

I should add that if there is a motion for a bill relevant to another referred to one of the committees, the Speaker immediately refers it to the given committee, unless the committee has already started examining the articles of bills or the motion for a bill.

Each and every motion for a bill presented by one of the members and rejected by the Assembly may not be presented again in the same session. All motions for bills are dropped with the termination of the legislative term.

During the past session the Assembly discussed 37 bills dealing with social, political and economic items, in addition to 125 bills on final accounts and budgets.

Bills of an economic nature have received considerable attention from the Legislature. This is simply a reflection of the central role it plays in the economic reform process.

The Assembly considered 22 bills covering various economic areas, notably investment guarantees and incentives, a bill on granting the concession of public utilities to construct, manage and utilize airports and runways. Since the social aspect is given special attention in the economic reform process, the Assembly has endorsed 11 bills, partly addressing important social and public issues.

The number of proposed bills submitted by the members during the same session amounted to 12, also dealing with various social, political and economic matters.

Adoption of Decreed Laws

The President of the Republic has the right to issue legally-enforceable decrees if, in the absence of the Assembly, an emergency requires expeditious action, without delay, or upon delegated legislation by the People's Assembly and with the majority of two-thirds of its members.

The decreed laws passed in the absence of the Assembly should be submitted within a 15 day period from their date of adoption if the Assembly was standing, or at the first Assembly meeting in the event of dissolution or adjournment.

The decrees passed upon delegated legislation should be put forward to the Assembly at its first sitting that follows the expiry of mandate.

If the decreed laws passed in the absence of the Assembly or upon delegated legislation, were not submitted to the Assembly during the said specified period or submitted but not approved, the force of law is revoked.

Concerning decreed laws passed in the absence of the Assembly, the Assembly is empowered to endorse their enforcement in the previous period or settle whatever consequences might ensue.

Approval of International Treaties and Conventions

Concluding treaties constitutes one of the competences of the President of the Republic. However, the People's Assembly should approve treaties of reconciliation, alliance, trade and navigation as well as treaties and instruments bringing forth State territory modifications, relating to sovereignty rights or adding financial burdens to the State Treasury that are not included in the Budget. The Assembly is entitled to approve, or reject or postpone the consideration of the treaties in question. However, MPs have no right to propose the amendment of their provisions.

During the past session, the Assembly considered 36 agreements on various vital themes, namely those related to small enterprises, social funds and promoting and protecting investments.

Financial Competences

The Assembly adopts the General Plan of Economic and Social Development. The law defines its method of preparation and submission to the Assembly.

The State budget draft is submitted to the People's Assembly, at least two months before the start of the fiscal year, and shall come into effect only on its approval.

The draft budget is put to vote, chapter by chapter and is passed by law. The Assembly is not commissioned to introduce amendments to the draft budget except upon the government's agreement.

The final account of the State budget should be forwarded to the Assembly no later than one year after the fiscal year. It is put to vote, chapter by chapter and passed as law.

Although the Constitution stipulates that the People's Assembly may not amend the draft budget without the consent of the government, this has not prevented the introduction of amendments to the general draft budget presented by the government in several sessions. This came as a response to the calls by the Assembly members for increasing appropriations earmarked for certain State sectors. For instance, the budget was amended in the third, fourth and fifth sessions of the 6th Legislative Term as well as in the first and second sessions of the 7th Legislative Term. These amendments targeted sectors such as education, health and youth.

Assembly Control Competences and Auxiliary Organs

The People's Assembly oversees government action pursuant to the constitutional stipulation that the minister's accountability is both collective and individual.

Instruments of Parliamentary Control

Question, request for information, interpellation, general debate request, motion for a wish or decision, fact-finding committees, reconnaissance and confrontation committees, petitions and complaints, no-confidence vote as far as deputy premiers, ministers or deputy ministers are concerned, the prime minister's responsibility and follow-up of local government affairs.

Questions

The Constitution and the People's Assembly Rules of Procedures state that every member may address to the Prime Minister, his deputies, ministers, their deputies or other government officials, questions on one of the affairs that fall within their jurisdiction so as to inquire about a matter unknown to the member, to ascertain an incident he is notified of or to find out the government's

intention concerning any matter whatsoever. The answer to these questions is verbally given at the sitting unless they are the kind of questions that must be answered in writing according to the Assembly Rules.

The question is presented in writing to the Speaker of the Assembly. The question which will be answered verbally is included on the agenda of the nearest sitting at least one week after the date of notifying the minister concerned. The answer to the question may not be delayed for more than one month. Questions related to subjects already referred to one of the committees may not be included on the agenda before the committee submits its report to the Assembly. Should the committee delay its report, that is failing to abide by the set date, the question is to be included on the agenda. Moreover questions are not to be included on the agenda before the government presents its programme unless they involve an emergency and with the consent of the Speaker of the Assembly.

Questions concerning a certain subject or subjects closely related to each other, are annexed so as to be answered in one sitting. Questions are annexed to interpellations or to the relevant reports of committees in order to be discussed in the same sitting.

The questions put to the Assembly during the last session amounted to 137 questions, 65 of which were verbally answered and 72 were answered in writing.

Requests for Information

Each member is entitled to request to inform the Prime Minister or any other member government official of an important and urgent matter falling within the competence of the addressee.

The same procedure regarding questions, their inclusion on the agenda and debate in the Assembly is applied to the requests for information. It is noted that a member, a committee chairman or a representative of a party parliamentary body may ask the permission to deliver a statement on a theme not included on the agenda, if it is one of urgent significance. A request is to be submitted in writing containing a note on the matters he wishes to speak about and justifications before the sitting starts. To take the floor, the latter must present his statement to the Assembly in brief before considering the agenda.

The role of this oversight mechanism, known as emergency requests of information (urgent statements), has been substantially activated since the 6th Legislative Term.

Through this mechanism the members could keep in touch with issues and events of interest to the public opinion and which need quick answers and immediate solutions on the part of the government. The number of urgent statements given during that Legislative Term amounted to 547.

Interpellations

Each member has the right to address interpellations to the Prime Minister, his deputies, ministers or their deputies to call them to account for matters falling within their jurisdiction. The request for addressing the interpellation is submitted in writing to the Speaker of the Assembly sounding in general the theme of the interpellation and enclosing an explanatory memo on the facts, main points and reasons covered in the interpellation, as well as points of infraction attributed to whoever the interpellation is addressed to.

Requests for General Debate

At least twenty members may request to put forward a general matter for discussion with a view to making clear government policy and to exchange opinions in this respect.

The request proposing a general debate is submitted to the Speaker in writing. It must contain a succinctly detailed report of the subject in question, justifications and reasons. The Assembly Bureau includes the request for general debate on the agenda of the first following sitting. They, on the other hand, are not to be included on the agenda before the government presents its programme and the Assembly is over with its debate and takes decisions to this effect.

Motions for a Wish or a Decision

Every member has the right to present a motion for a wish regarding a public interest so that the Assembly conveys it to the government, or motion for a decision to be issued by the Assembly within its jurisdiction.

The motion is to be presented to the Speaker in writing containing an explanatory note illustrating the theme of the wish or decision, as well as considerations of public interest justifying the presentation of the motion to the Assembly. The forwarding of a motion for a wish or a decision may not be signed by more than ten members.

The Assembly during the last session, has considered 35 motions for a wish related either to national matters or related to some governorates of the Republic.

Fact-Finding Committees

The Constitution and the Rules of Procedure stipulate that the Assembly may set up an *ad hoc* committee or entrust one of its standing committees to find out facts about a matter of special importance, or to examine affairs of a public department, an organ, or one of the local administration units, public sector or any executive or administrative body, or any of the public projects that fall within the oversight jurisdiction of the Assembly. The purpose is to find facts about the general economic, administrative and financial position of the given matter or the body handling it, or to investigate a theme of relevance, or to ascertain how far any of the previously mentioned organs abide by the rule of the law, the plan or State general budget.

A fact-finding committee may take all necessary procedures to collect data, information and other documents related to the matters referred to it.

It may conduct whatever acts of reconnaissance, confrontation, field visits or investigations to probe facts. The Assembly discusses reports prepared by fact-finding committees at the first sitting following their submission.

The Assembly during the last session, has considered one fact-finding report. It has also approved the formation of another committee.

Reconnaissance and Confrontation Committees

The Assembly may - on the proposal of its Speaker or by at least twenty members - agree on setting up a reconnaissance and confrontation committee concerning a subject of an important nature that falls within the Assembly jurisdiction.

Petitions and Complaints

Each and every citizen, representatives of statutory bodies and moral persons have the right to submit to the Speaker written petitions including their complaints against specific actions or measures violating the Constitution or the law. Their petitions may also contain their proposals as regards amending laws and regulations, updating economic, financial or administrative measures followed by either the State machinery, local administration or the public sector.

The petition is submitted in writing and signed by its author, indicating the subject presented and the purpose targeted. Petitions are referred to the Proposals and Complaints Committee. Copies are referred to the other Assembly committees in case they are considering topics of relevance, to notify the Petitions and Complaints Committee of their opinion thereon. The Committee

presents to the Speaker regular reports on the results of their studies. It points out in the reports matters to be referred to the Prime Minister or ministers, or those to be referred to a competent committee, what it turned down as well as the opinion expressed by other committees on the petitions communicated to them.

The committee report is also inclusive of its proposals to address the problems cited in notable petitions. The Speaker may request the Assembly to refer these reports to the competent committee or to the government.

No-Confidence Vote as far as Deputy Premiers, Ministers or their Deputies are concerned

A no-confidence motion concerning a deputy Prime Minister, one of the ministers or their deputies may be submitted in writing to the Speaker signed by at least ten members. This motion may not be submitted before the Assembly has finalized the discussion of the interpellation addressed to the concerned member.

The Speaker puts forward the no-confidence motion immediately after its submission to him. The Assembly may not issue a decision on the motion before the lapse of at least three days from the date bringing debate thereon to a close. The Assembly takes a no-confidence decision by the majority of its members.

The Responsibility of the Prime Minister

The Assembly may decide on the responsibility of the Prime Minister. The same procedures related to withdrawing confidence from deputy premiers, ministers or their deputies are applied to the motion. The Assembly endorsement of the Prime Minister's liability is acknowledged by the majority of its members. The Assembly Bureau prepares a report containing the elements of the topics in question and the Assembly's opinion thereon.

The Speaker puts the report to the Assembly. The Speaker on approval of the Assembly submits the report to the President of the Republic.

The President of the Republic may return the report to the Assembly within ten days. In such a case the Speaker puts the matter forward to the Bureau in an extraordinary meeting to be held for this purpose. The Bureau presents to the General Committee its conclusions regarding the previously mentioned report and the reasons for returning it to the Assembly.

The General Committee prepares a report containing its opinion on the subject according to what is decided by the majority of its members. Then it

presents this report to the Assembly. If the Assembly persists in its opinion, the President of the Republic may put the point of contention between the Assembly and the government to a popular referendum.

The referendum is conducted within thirty days of the Assembly adoption. If the result of the referendum is supportive to the government, the Assembly is to be considered dissolved, otherwise the President of the Republic accepts the resignation of the government.

In addition to the Assembly prerogative to call to account - in the political sense - the Prime Minister and ministers, the Constitution has empowered the Assembly to convict the President of the Republic on charges of treason or criminal crime according to a proposal submitted by at least one-third of its members and with a decision issued by a two-third majority of its members, the President of the Republic is brought before a special tribunal.

The law states that the court is to be composed of 12 members, six of whom are Assembly members to be selected by ballot. Three of them will carry out the prosecution before the court.

The Constitution also stipulates that the Assembly has the right to charge the ministers criminally upon a proposal submitted by at least five members and with a decision issued by two-third majority of its members.

The auxiliary organs assisting the assembly in undertaking its controlfunction

- The Central Organ for Auditing
- The Socialist Public Prosecutor
- **Political Procedures**

Nomination of the President of the Republic

The procedure of naming the President of the Republic is to be in the works sixty days prior to the expiry of the President's term of office. He is to be named no later than a week before the end of the term.

The People's Assembly nominates the President of the Republic at the proposal of at least one-third of its members.

The candidate who obtains two-thirds of the MPs votes is put to a plebiscite. If he falls short of getting this majority, there will be a re-nomination two days after the first vote.

The candidate shall become President of the Republic when he obtains the absolute majority of the votes cast in the plebiscite. If he fails to win this majority, the Assembly nominates another candidate. The same procedure for his candidature and election is followed.

Before acceding to power, the President takes the oath before the People's Assembly.

Debate on the Statement of the President of the Republic

On opening the People's Assembly ordinary session, the President of the Republic delivers a statement covering the State general policy. He has the right to deliver other statements before the Assembly.

The Speaker convokes the General Committee by the end of the sitting in which the Statement of the President was delivered to consider the questions related to the Assembly plan and activity.

Fifty Assembly members may submit a written request to the Speaker suggesting deliberation with regard to the Statement of the President, citing reasons for the debate. If the General Committee approve of the request, the Speaker submits it to the Assembly for a majority-based approval to the effect of holding this debate and setting a date.

Debate on the Government Statement by the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister presents the government programme in the wake of a Cabinet reshuffle or at the opening of the People's Assembly ordinary session. This statement is referred to an *ad hoc* committee for study and report to the Assembly. The report and the Assembly debates on it are referred to the government to take the necessary measures concerning the recommendations included in them.

This Committee should embrace representatives of opposition parties' parliamentary bodies and the independents.

Endorsing the Declaration of War and Emergency

The Assembly's approval to declare war should be in an in-camera emergency sitting held at the request of the President of the Republic.

Concerning the state of emergency, the Prime Minister reports to the Assembly Speaker on the declaration of the state of emergency, supported by a statement of relevant causes and justifications.

The Speaker submits to the Assembly the Republican Decree on the declaration of the state of emergency or its extension in an emergency sitting held to this effect within 24 hours of his notification.

The President of the Republic or the Vice-President is empowered to spell out the reasons and conditions for this declaration.

The Assembly refers the statement of the President of the Republic or the Premier to the General Committee for study and reporting back to the Assembly, inclusive as the report should be of the causes that generated the declaration of the state of emergency.

Membership Affairs

Members' Immunity

In the bid to secure a sound performance by MPs of tasks entrusted to them without fear of penal liability, the Constitution has ensured for MPs a special immunity established in two cases:

- First:** MPs are not to blame for the ideas and views expressed in the course of their functioning in the Assembly or its Committees.
- Second:** It is not admissible that, during the People's Assembly legislative term - unless caught red-handed - any criminal proceedings be applied to MPs except by an advance permission from the Assembly. When the Assembly is in recess, the permission of its Speaker should be obtained first. The Speaker is to report to the Assembly at its first meeting.

Membership Validity

Article 93 of the Constitution stipulates that the Assembly decides on the validity of its membership. The Court of Cassation investigates the validity of contestations lodged to the Assembly after their referral by the Speaker.

The contestation is referred to the Court of Cassation within 15 days as of the date of notifying the Assembly. Investigation should be sealed off in a 90-day time from the date of having it referred to the Court of Cassation.

The outcome of investigation and the Court opinion are put to the Assembly to decide on the contestation validity within 60 days from the date of forwarding the result of the inquiry to the Assembly.

The membership is only considered as null and void upon a decision to be passed by a two-third majority of Assembly members.

The Assembly Independent Budget and Rules of Procedure

The Assembly has an independent budget which is tabled as a single, total figure in the State Budget. It undertakes its own accounts, thus it is not subject to the supervision of another authority. The Assembly Rules of Procedure indicate the modality of thrashing out, probing and adopting the annual draft budget, as well as preparing, organising and monitoring accounts and endorsing the annual final account without restriction to government rules.

The Assembly draws up its Rules of Procedure to organise its work methods, and the exercise of its functions.

Assembly General Secretariat

The General Secretariat undertakes technical and administrative tasks assisting the Assembly's parliamentary bodies in fulfilling their responsibilities. It consists of secretaries, departments and divisions making up the organisational structure of the technical, administrative and financial machinery. The Secretary-General, who is appointed pursuant to an Assembly Bureau decision as named by the Speaker, is in charge of supervising the Secretariat. He attends the Assembly sittings and is responsible to the Speaker in terms of the Secretariat's sound functioning and co-ordination between its units.

Finally, and although Egypt still adopts the uni-cameral system, it is according to the constitutional amendment approved by the people in the referendum conducted on 22 May 1980, that the Shoura Council was established. It is an important turning point in the history of representative life in Egypt in the wake of the July 1952 revolution. It is an expression of the desire to expand the scope of democracy, and to make the intellectuals and dignitaries participate in formulating the nation's future.

The number of the Shoura Council members is not less than 132, two-thirds of whom are elected by direct secret ballot; and the President of the Republic appoints the remaining one-third. The Council at present is composed of 264 members.

By virtue of the Constitution, the Shoura Council is consulted in terms of the following topics:-

- Proposals to amend one article or more of the Constitution;
- Bills complementing the Constitution;
- Draft of the general plan for economic and social development;
- Alliance and conciliation treaties as well as all other conventions resulting in modifying state territories or those relevant to sovereignty rights;

- Bills referred to it by the President of the Republic;
- Topics related to the State general policy, or its policy of foreign or Arab affairs referred to it by the President of the Republic.

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The President, Mr OLLÉ-LAPRUNE, thanked Mr MAHRAN for his clear and comprehensive presentation of the Egyptian Parliamentary System. He was sure that there would be many colleagues wishing to ask questions.

Mr GORAYA (Pakistan) congratulated Mr MAHRAN on his presentation and on the arrangements for the conference. He asked that Mr MAHRAN elaborate on the relationship between Parliament and the Executive. How accountable was the Executive and how was that accountability manifested?

Mr MAHRAN said that he had obviously given merely a summary of the parliamentary system in Egypt. There were many more details that could have been given. Egypt had not adopted a full separation of powers since the principles of co-operation and balance were also considered very important. Therefore, on the one hand the Legislature oversaw the Executive but on the other the Executive had the power to balance and, on occasion, to interfere with the work of the Assembly. The President of the Republic convoked the Assembly as a balance to the Executive power and endorsed bills which were approved by the Assembly. The Legislature had the right to question ministers and to move motions of no confidence against ministers. Thus the principle was one of co-operation between powers to achieve a balance in the Constitution, not competition.

Mr GORAYA asked if there was any specific provisions in the Constitution which ensured that the Executive was accountable to the Legislature.

Mr MAHRAN said that there were such constitutional provisions in a number of texts. One example, Article 124 of the Constitution, stated that every MP had the right to address questions to the Prime Minister or ministers when those questions were within their jurisdiction. Under Article 125, the Prime Minister or ministers had an obligation to reply. Article 126 said that Ministers were accountable before the People's Assembly on matters of policy. The People's Assembly could withdraw their confidence from the Deputy Prime Minister. Article 127 stated that the People's Assembly could call the Prime Minister to account on the request of a tenth of members. There were, therefore, many texts in the Constitution on the responsibilities of government in relation to the Legislature.

Mr NYS (Belgium) also congratulated Mr MAHRAN and said that he had a number of questions. He first asked about the quorum of the People's Assembly. In many assemblies there was a quorum necessary for decisions or votes, but was it the case in the Egyptian People's Assembly that a quorum was even necessary for the holding of a meeting. Also in some countries there were sanctions against absent members; was that so in Egypt? Mr NYS also asked for clarification on part of Mr MAHRAN's text which suggested that in the case of a disagreement between the President and MPs if two-thirds of MPs disagreed with the President, the law could be adopted without the President's approval. Was that in fact the case?

Mr MAHRAN said that the sitting of the People's Assembly was not valid if there was not a half of all members present plus one. This was necessary at the beginning of the sitting but discussion could then continue if fewer members were in the Chamber. However, for any decision this number of members had to be present. For procedural matters a quorum was not necessary. There were penalties in the Rules of Procedure for absent MPs. Attending a sitting at the People's Assembly was one of their main duties. The President had the power to return a bill to the Assembly if he did not agree with it. If, however, the Assembly endorsed the law again, conflict is deemed to have occurred and the President puts the question to a referendum of the people within 30 days of the decision of the People's Assembly. If the result of the referendum was supportive of the government, the Assembly was dissolved. Otherwise the President accepted the resignation of the government.

Mr RISSE (Germany) thanked Mr MAHRAN for his speech and asked about the Shoura Council which remained in the Constitution. What was the function of the Council and its political significance.

Mr MAHRAN said that the Shoura Council was established in 1866 and its competences were defined in the Constitution. It was concerned with studying how to preserve the principles of the 1952 Revolution, supporting social peace, enhancing the democratic system and the rights and duties of the public. The Shoura Council had to be consulted on amendments to the Constitution and ensure that bills were compliant with the Constitution as well as examine plans for the economic and social development of the country, treaties of the country's territory, bills referred to them by the President and Arab affairs' policy referred to them by the President. Their opinions were conveyed to the President and to the People's Assembly.

Mr YIN ZHONGQING (China) congratulated Mr MAHRAN on his presentation. He noted that there were 441 elected MPs and 10 members appointed by the President. He asked how many members belonged to the National Democratic Party and how many to the other smaller parties.

Mr MAHRAN said that there were six parties represented in the People's Assembly. The National Party had 409 members. There were 29 Independents. There were two parties with five members each and there was a single member for three other parties. The members appointed by the President were there to provide expertise, for instance, on the functioning of parliament. Of the ten members appointed by the President, seven were from the National Democratic Party and three were Independent.

Mr GALAL (Sudan) thanked Mr MAHRAN for his hospitality. He asked about the Secretariat of the People's Assembly; whether they were affiliated to the Parliament; how they were recruited; how they were trained and what their promotion prospects were.

Mr MAHRAN said that one feature of the Legislature was its independence from the Executive. It was important that the Executive did not interfere with the work of the Legislature. The staff of the Legislature had to give technical advice to MPs. They were, therefore, appointed by the Assembly. Their status was established by Parliament and the parliamentary rules laid down how they should be recruited through adverts in newspapers, submission of curriculum vitae, the taking of examinations and tests. The People's Assembly paid great attention to the training of staff. There was a training department directly affiliated to the Secretary General's office, since this was considered to be of great importance. Training was continuous. There was help from university professors in the training of staff.

Mr TROCCOLI (Italy) thanked Mr MAHRAN for his presentation and asked about the help given to the Egyptian People's Assembly in its auditing function by the General Prosecutor.

Mr MAHRAN explained that there was a central organisation for the auditing and financial control of the activities of government. This organisation produced reports for the People's Assembly which were referred to the competent committee. The committee examined the report, calling government officials before it to discuss any infraction. The committee's report then went to the People's Assembly for an opinion. If there were grave violations, the report was forwarded to the Public Prosecutor who was affiliated to the People's Assembly. The function of the People's Assembly was to defend the political and economic aspects of Egyptian society. If there was a question of economic probity, the Public Prosecutor could investigate and report on the matter, for instance if there were accusations of drug trafficking. He submitted an annual report on his function to Parliament which was studied in committee, reporting to Parliament on how he had fulfilled his duties.

Mr DAVIES (United Kingdom) asked whether the position of Secretary General was filled from the existing staff of the People's Assembly or from outside.

Mr MAHRAN said that the Secretary General could come either from within the Secretariat or from outside according to qualification. The Secretary General was equivalent in rank to a minister. If there was a capable and efficient member of staff it was possible that he could become the Secretary General. It was not, however, the prerequisite that the person be appointed from the Assembly's staff. Mr MAHRAN himself had started in the Department of the Public Prosecutor and then moved to the People's Assembly twenty years ago.

Mr BENVENUTO (Italy) said he had been very interested in Mr MAHRAN's clear presentation. He had a question on the state of emergency. The rules seemed similar to those in Italy. Rules were important but more important sometimes was the way such rules were implemented. Were there many cases of such states of emergency being decreed? For instance, did it happen every year? What were the issues of such importance that laws by decree were necessary? Were they always questions of political importance or also economic importance, for instance, and did the People's Assembly ever reject laws decreed by the President of the Republic?

Mr MAHRAN said the Egyptian system was similar to that in Italy. There had not been many decrees in the current parliamentary term and none in the previous parliamentary term. Indeed, over the last 16 years there had only been two or three decreed laws.

Mr SOHONI (India) thanked Mr MAHRAN for his presentation. He had a question about the Ethics Committee. What had been the experience of its operations and what effects had it had on the Constitution? Had it served its purpose? There was a similar committee in the Rajya Sabha in India but it had only just been established.

Mr MAHRAN explained that just as the Executive called its own members to account so the Legislature and the Judiciary had to do the same with their own members. How then could members of parliament be brought to account? The answer was through the Ethics Committee, a committee of MPs. Such committees also existed in the European Union and in the USA. The Ethics Committee was usually chaired by one of the deputy speakers. It investigated claims that the action of an MP was contrary to his or her duties. A member of parliament had to be an example to the people. The Committee also agreed on penalties. For instance, not to attend the Assembly for up to 15 days. On occasion, MPs had been dismissed.

Mr LANZ (Switzerland) asked whether a member of parliament could have another job and asked what was the remuneration of members of parliament compared with, for instance, a university professor.

Mr MAHRAN said that a member of the People's Assembly had to be totally dedicated to his work. They could not work in government or public sector posts since they had to be completely independent. But the Constitution did allow civil servants to run as candidates. If they succeeded, however, the civil servant had to leave their post for the time of their mandate. They could then return.

Ms VASSILOUNI asked on behalf of Mrs TZORTZOPOULOS (Greece) about the amendment in 1980 to the Constitution which added a new section, the first chapter of which concerned the Shoura Council, the second chapter issues relating to journalism. She asked whether the chapter relating to journalism applied to both electronic and written journalism. She also asked why such an addition to the Constitution was necessary. Surely these issues were covered under a general freedom of the press article.

Mr MAHRAN said that the 1971 Constitution had wanted to provide for freedom of written expression. There were other articles in the Constitution concerning freedom of the press. Article 260 stated that journalism was an independent and free authority. Article 270 said that journalists had the right to express themselves freely in the service of the community. The oversight of newspapers was prohibited and the freedom to publish newspapers guaranteed. All these articles showed the emphasis placed upon freedom of the journalists.

Mr NAZEER ATTIYAT (Jordan) thanked Mr MAHRAN for his presentation and asked about the possibilities of the motions of no confidence and the question of parliamentary immunity in Egypt.

Mr MAHRAN said that it was difficult to succeed in withdrawing confidence from a number of ministers. If that were done, why not withdraw confidence from the Prime Minister himself. But that did not make sense in a democracy where the majority in an Assembly formed the government. Certainly it had never happened in Egypt. With regard to parliamentary immunity, it was important to note that it was not a privilege for the member himself but for the interests of the House.

Mr OLLÉ-LAPRUNE once again thanked Mr MAHRAN for the answers he had given. The great interest and keenness of the questioners showed how useful his presentation had been. He was sure that all members looked forward to their forthcoming visit to the Egyptian Parliament which should be an opportunity to learn even more concerning the parliamentary system. Mr MAHRAN thanked everyone there and looked forward to continuing the discussion during the visit to the parliamentary building.