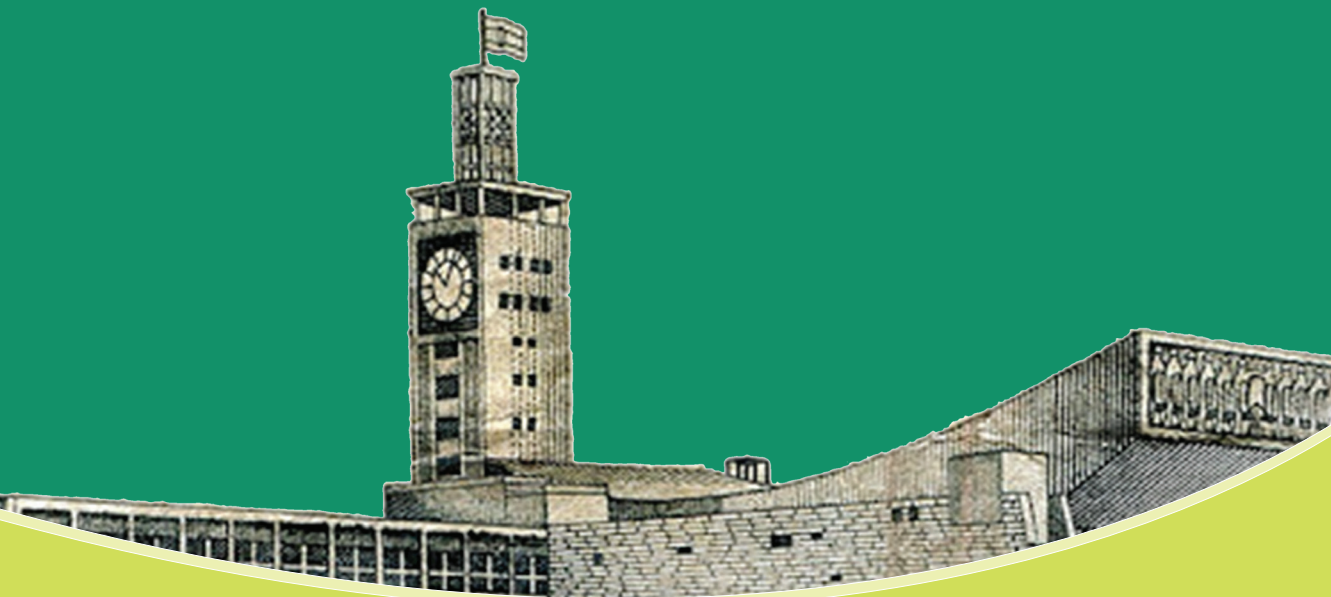




Parliament of Kenya

The National Assembly

The Hansard Department  
(National Assembly)



**Fact Sheet**  
No. 10



# The Hansard Department (National Assembly)

*FactSheet No.10*

## **The Hansard Department (National Assembly)**

*FactSheet 10: The Hansard Department (National Assembly)*

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This Factsheet on **The Hansard Department (National Assembly)** is part of the Kenya National Assembly Factsheets Series that are supposed to enhance public understanding, awareness and knowledge of the work of the Assembly and its operations. It is intended to serve as easy guide for ready reference by Members of Parliament, staff and the general public. The information contained here is not exhaustive and readers are advised to refer to the original sources for further information.

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# FactSheet

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## The Hansard Department (National Assembly)

### Parliamentary Reporting

#### Introduction

The publishing of the Hansard Report in Kenya is based on the U.K. model and is a verbatim report of all proceedings of the House. The Hansard Report is typically expected to be published within forty-eight hours of a sitting of the House unless the Speaker is satisfied that its publication is rendered impossible by some emergency or any substantial mitigating factors. Every Member of Parliament (MP) is accorded an opportunity to correct the draft verbatim report of his or her contribution so long as such corrections do not alter the substance of what the Member actually said. In situations where doubts emerge concerning the content of the verbatim record of the House, the Honourable Speaker makes a determination on how to resolve the issue.

#### Definition

“Hansard” is the name given throughout the Commonwealth to the daily printed record of the debates of Parliament. Indeed, it is word-for-word account of the daily proceedings of the House and its Committees.

The Hansard Report, otherwise known as Official Report, as enunciated by a House of Commons Select Committee on Parliamentary Debates in 1907, is:-

*“A full report in the first person, of all speakers alike, a full report being defined as*

*one which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument’.*”

### **Vision**

To be an effective and active player in the legislative process and the realization of good governance in Kenya.

### **Mission**

To provide accurate and credible account of the proceedings of the National Assembly through timely production of Hansard Reports.

### **Origin of The Hansard**

From the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the British Parliament prohibited all reporting and publishing of its proceedings. The Parliament believed it should deliberate in private and regarded any attempt to publicize its proceedings as a serious punishable offence. The first real advance towards an impartial account of the proceedings of Parliament occurred during the Napoleonic wars.

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the growing weight of public opinion and the increasingly outspoken attacks on the press persuaded Parliament to relax its stance. In 1803, the House of Commons passed a resolution giving the press the right to enter the public gallery. That same year, William Cobbett, publisher of *Cobbett’s Weekly Political Register* added to his newspaper a supplement entitled *Parliamentary Debates*, which was a reprint of journalists’ reports of speeches extracted from other newspapers. That was the first structured attempt to record the proceedings of the British Parliament, though it was much less comprehensive and accurate than today’s Official Report.

In 1882 that publication was taken over by Cobbett’s assistant, Thomas Curson Hansard, son of Luke Hansard, who in 1829 changed the title of the reports to *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*. The publication was initially based on reprints of reports of speeches culled from the press, but checked with a Member. Subsequently, however, it became the original work of Hansard’s own reporters. The report went on to command respect as the most authentic and accurate account of parliamentary proceedings. The Hansard family continued to produce the *Parliamentary Debates* until 1889. It was during the 60 years of the Hansard family’s publication that the name “Hansard” became synonymous with the printed debates.

### **Brief History of Hansard in Kenya**

Publishing of parliamentary debates in Kenya has been going on since the 1900s and upto the days before independence. Hansard was produced by reporters recruited in the United Kingdom and the method used then was both pen and palantyping. The people recruited to do the work were not full-time employees of the Government; they were hired to work on contract and had to satisfy the British House of Common’s qualifications for verbatim reporting. At the time, this typically

involved O-level pass plus shorthand or palantyping speed of up to 160 words per minute and typing proficiency.

After independence in 1963, there was an exodus of expatriates moving back to Europe and elsewhere and as a result, the Hansard Department experienced staffing challenges. This, in the end, culminated in a decision being taken to recruit and train local staff to do the work. The first local recruitment was done in 1968. The requirement was that those recruited had to be O-level graduates with good pass in English language, which was the official language for the conduct of business in Parliament. In 1974, legislation was passed to allow the use of both English and Kiswahili in Parliament.

After 1968, an analogue recording system was installed. The equipment consisted of master recorders, which were used to record all proceedings whenever the House or its committee was in session. They were used to record audio cassettes from which reporters would transcribe the House proceedings. Transcription was done using electronic typewriters.

In 1991 computers were introduced with Word Perfect 5.1 for DOS as the main application for transcription. In 2007 the department migrated from Word Perfect to Microsoft Word 2007. Currently, there is a digital recording system installed.

### **Core Function of Hansard**

The Hansard Department is responsible for House Reports. It produces verbatim reports of House proceedings, and proceedings of oversight/ watchdog committees of National Assembly. On occasions, the services of the Hansard Department are sought for the recording of proceedings of *ad hoc* committees, departmental committees, commissions of inquiries, conferences *et cetera*.

### **The Importance of The Hansard**

The Rules of Procedure requires the Clerk of the National Assembly to arrange for the preparation of a full report of the proceedings of each Sitting of the House. Accordingly, everything said in the National Assembly - every question, remark and speech - is meticulously recorded by the Parliamentary Reporters, who represent the acme of the verbatim report-writing profession. However, certain words or expressions, which are specifically expunged or ordered not to be recorded by the Speaker or the Presiding Officer, do not form part of the record.

The Hansard Report serves as the main reference publication for Members of Parliament, Government ministries and the public at large. Courts of law refer to the Hansard when they are interpreting Acts of Parliament. The Attorney General refers to the Hansard when confirming Acts of Parliament for assent by the President after Parliament has passed a Bill.

To this end, the Hansard Reports have become important publications. Whenever there is a critical issue in the House, the Department gets numerous requests for copies of the Hansard from various quarters including foreign missions. Most libraries in the country and abroad are subscribers to the Hansard Report. In summary, Hansard is useful to:

- a) Government Ministries/Departments in implementing House Resolutions.
- b) the Speaker in making various Rulings.
- c) Courts in determining true proceedings of the House.
- d) Committees in preparation of reports to the House.
- e) Legal Departments while drafting bills and amendments to bills.
- f) Confirming accuracy of results of divisions.
- g) Committee on Implementation to follow up on the Resolutions of the House.
- h) Committee Chairpersons/mover while replying to Bills/Motions.

The verbatim reports of the proceedings of Parliament are not a mere narration of Questions, Adjournment Motions, Bills, Resolutions, etc. As a matter of fact, they are a rich source of contemporary history. They provide detailed information on all matters touching on the life of an ordinary citizen. They bring to light the political, economic and social conditions of even the remotest parts of the country. Besides, they serve as a mirror of the hopes and aspirations, concerns and apprehensions of the nation as voiced by its chosen representatives.

### **Production Process**

The production of the Hansard Report has changed with time from palantyping, shorthand to audio recording and now digital recording. The digital hansard production system is applied concurrently with the analogue recording system.

Hansard Reporters produce transcripts of debate and cover the proceedings in the House in turns according to a work rota that starts at the commencement of each sitting and ends with the rise of the House. The time of sitting is apportioned to all reporters in what are called 'takes', with each 'take' consisting of a given number of minutes. The recorded cassettes are word processed through a network of computer work stations manned by a team of Reporters. The Reporters' work is revised by Assistant Editors against the tape to ensure that nothing is omitted.

They also have access to a digital recording system of the proceedings, which is newly installed. Individual members' speeches are placed in their pigeon holes as soon as possible after they have spoken, although in some cases this may not be until the following day. Members are expected to go through their speeches and may make valid corrections on spellings of names or fill in inaudible gaps. A Member is debarred from altering the original meaning of what he said; if he does so, his corrections will not be accepted. Speeches corrected by Members are returned to the Hansard Editor within 24 hours of receipt. Corrections not returned in time may not be incorporated in the final report. Two copies of the 'raw' report are also placed in the Library for immediate reference by Members.

A Member who wishes to refer to his contribution before the report is compiled may see the Hansard Editor who will make arrangements for the particular bit to be retrieved.

### **Printing Of The Report**

The printing of the Kenya Hansard is undertaken by the Kenya Government Press in Nairobi. The process is long and sometimes bound volumes take long to be delivered. Before a volume of the Hansard is bound, an index is prepared for it and

this is done by Reporters, Readers and Editors. The index is prepared manually but the Department intends to install a software to quicken the process.

### **Establishment and Recruitment**

The Hansard Department falls under the Directorate of Legislative and Procedural Services and is headed by the Hansard Editor who reports to the Senior Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly. The Hansard Editor is in charge of production, quality control, distribution and preservation of the Hansard Reports. The Editor answers to all queries regarding the Hansard from within and outside. S/he is assisted by the Deputy Hansard Editor.

### **Hansard in Parliamentary Website**

Hansard Reports, Order Papers, Votes and Proceedings, committee Reports *et cetera* are posted on the Parliamentary Website ([www.parliament.go.ke](http://www.parliament.go.ke)) for the benefit of Members of Parliament, staff, government departments and the general public. Hard and soft copies of the Daily Hansard are available by 10.00 a.m. of the next day.

### **Our guiding Core Values are:**

- Honesty and integrity
- Professionalism
- Team spirit
- Accountability and transparency
- Respect and courtesy
- Efficiency in service delivery
- Neutrality/impartiality

### **Clientele**

- Members of Parliament.
- Government Ministries and departments.
- Private sector institutions/ NGOs.
- Parliamentary officers manning House and Committees proceedings.
- Members of the public.
- Local and international libraries.
- Kenyans in Diaspora.
- Universities, colleges and secondary schools.
- Petitioners.

### **Service Benchmarks**

The Hansard Department will endeavour to meet the following service levels when normal working conditions apply:-

- We will make sure that the daily Hansard will be ready for distribution to Members by 10.00 O'clock of the following day.
- Requests from Government Ministries and departments will be met on the spot.
- Information to private institutions and individuals on how to access the Hansard through the website and Government Press will be available.
- Corrections by Members will be effected immediately they are received by the

department.

- We will ensure that copies of the edited version of the Hansard Reports will be posted on the website weekly.
- Bound volumes of Hansard Reports will be produced together with index at the end of every session.
- All complaints from our clients will be promptly addressed in accordance with parliamentary regulations.

### **Feedback**

We value and welcome feedback and suggestions from our clients to enable us sustain provision of quality services. Our clients can provide such feedback through:-

- Letters.
- Fax.
- E-mail: [clerk@parliament.go.ke](mailto:clerk@parliament.go.ke)
- Telephone.

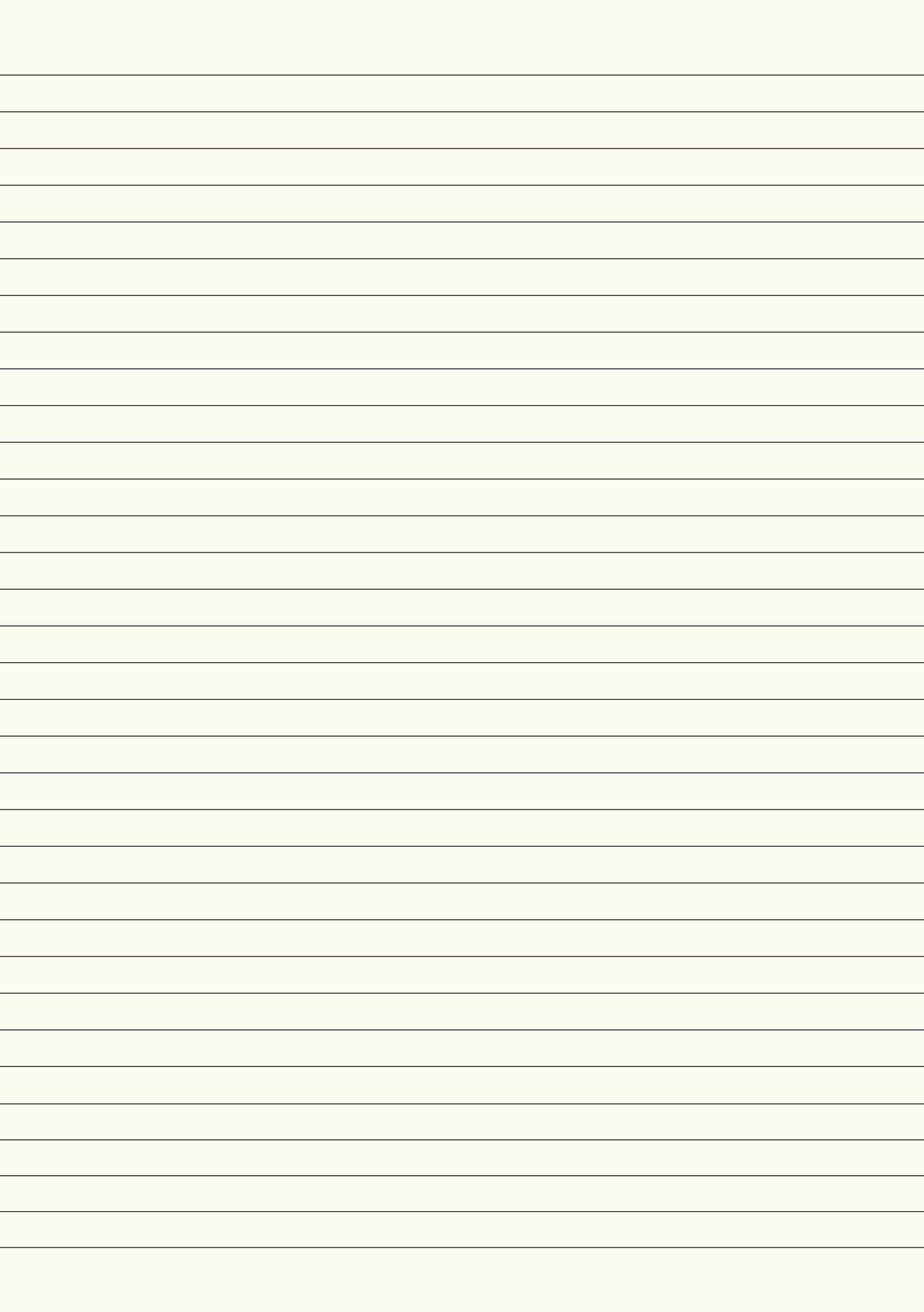
### **Complaints Procedure and Redress Mechanisms**

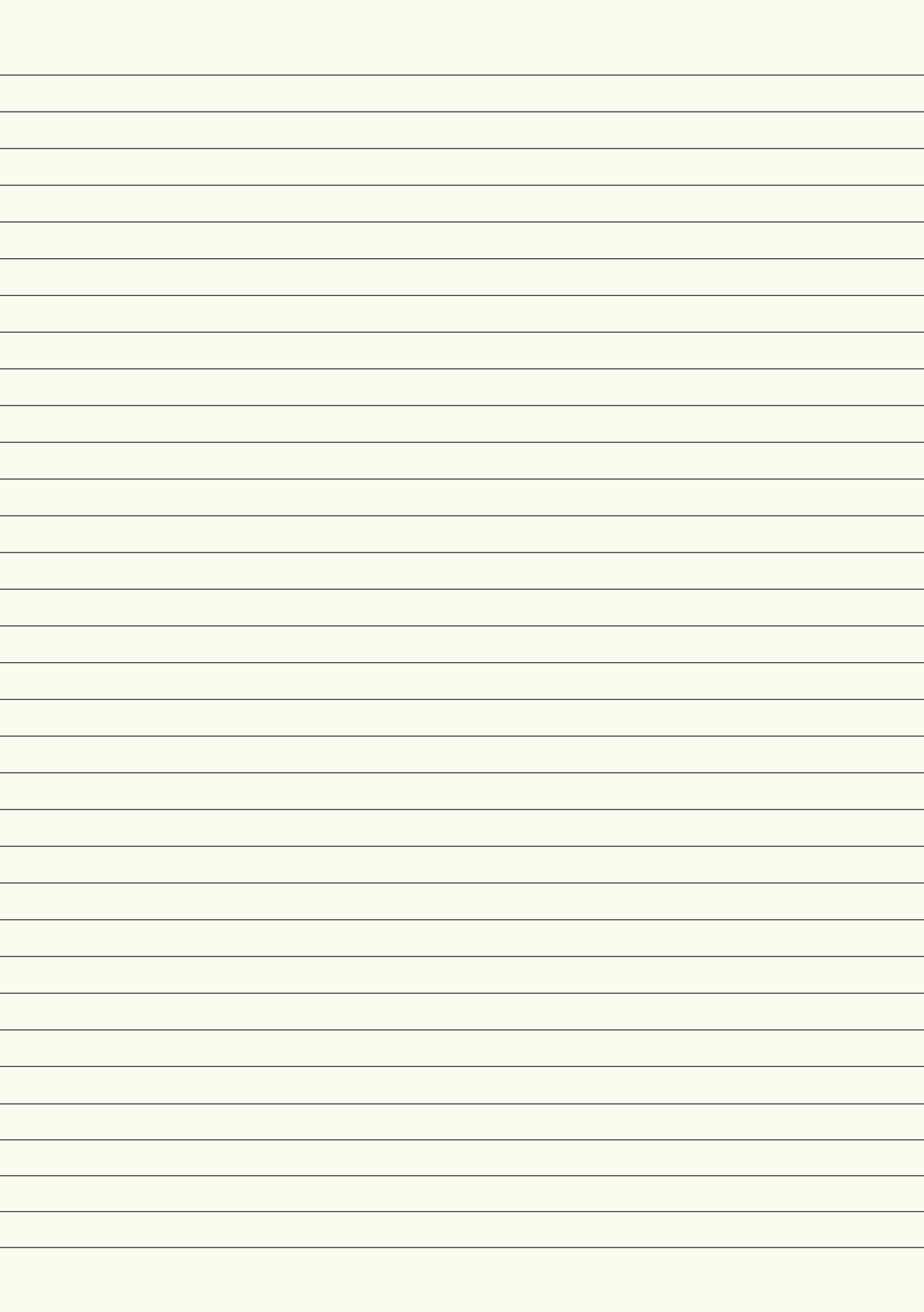
If you have a complaint about any aspect of Hansard service, please discuss this in the first instance with the Editor in-charge. If you are still not satisfied with the way the matter has been resolved, you should make a written complaint to the Hansard Editor with a copy to the Clerk (National Assembly). You can expect a response within two working days of it being submitted.

#### **Please write to:**

The Hansard Editor,  
Kenya National Assembly,  
P.O. Box 41842-00100,  
Tel. 020-2221291 Ext. 3221.  
NAIROBI.  
Email to: [clerk@parliament.go.ke](mailto:clerk@parliament.go.ke)









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**Website:** [www.parliament.go.ke](http://www.parliament.go.ke)



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