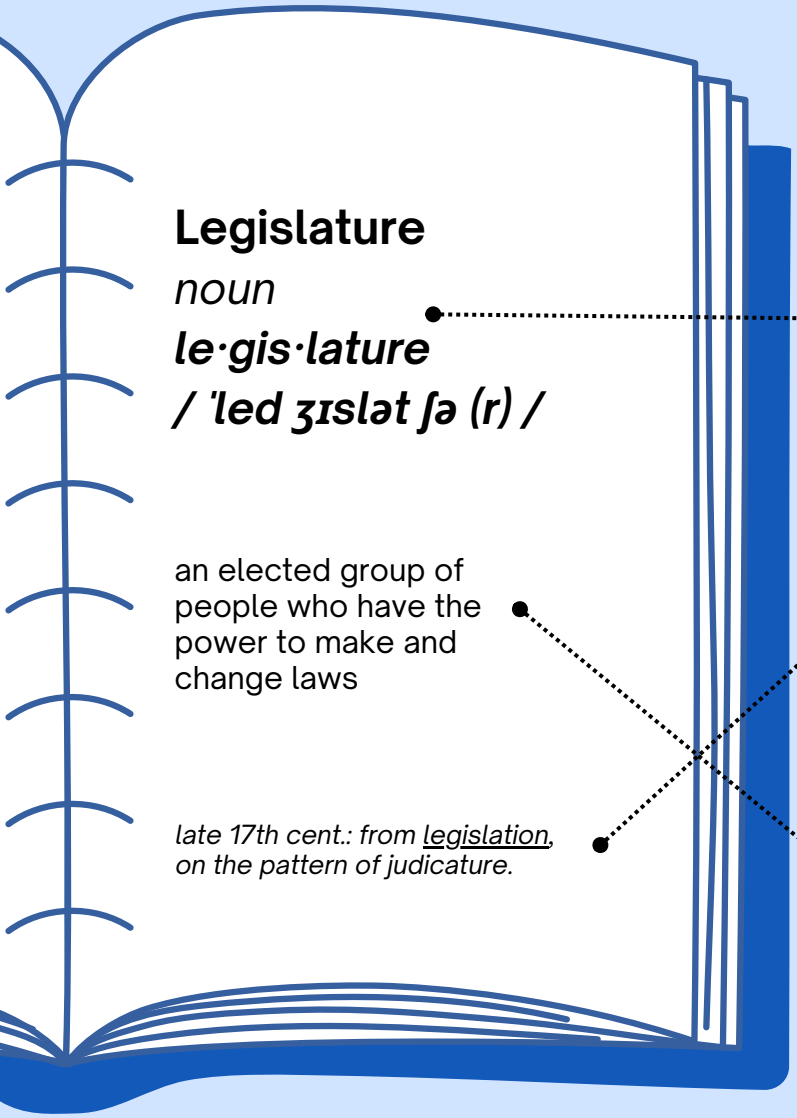
Parliamentary Glossary



This resource has been designed to help you better understand the language and terminology used in parliamentary proceedings at the National Assembly of Seychelles.

Whether you are a member of the public, a student, or a journalist, this glossary is for you!

It provides definitions and contexts of procedures, titles, and other parliamentary terminology.

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Aa

Abstain / Abstention – A recorded refusal to vote for or against a motion.

Adjournment – An adjournment describes the period of termination between Sittings of the House.

Amendments – An alteration proposed to a motion or clause of a Bill.

Appropriation Bill – A Bill seeking the authority of Parliament to authorise government expenditures.

Approval – The verbal signal given by the Presiding Officer that a motion or Bill has been approved by the House.

Assembly Business Committee – The ABC is constituted at the beginning of each Session of the National Assembly and is comprised of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the Opposition or their representative, the Leader of Government Business or their representative, the Chief Whips, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and any Independent Members. The ABC decides the order of the business of the House and is chaired by the Speaker.

Bb

Bicameral – This refers to a system of two Chambers, in which two separate assemblies are involved in the process of legislation and must come to an agreement.

Bill – A proposal for a new law, or a proposal for a significant change to an existing law, submitted to Parliament for its approval.

Budget – The process for preparing and documenting the Government's economic, spending and taxation plans for the coming year.

Budget Debate – A debate on the motion approving the Government's budgetary policy following the presentation of the Budget Speech.

Budget Address–This refers to the speech presented by the Minister of Finance, National Planning and Trade, detailing the Government's economic policies and plans for spending public money. This is done when the Appropriation Bill is set before the House for Second Reading.

Bb

Budget Replies - The Members of the House, beginning with the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of Government Business, make speeches in response to the Budget Address made by the Minister.

Business of the House - Any work before the House, also referred to as Items of Business or Assembly Business.

Cc

Cabinet – The central decision-making body of Government, comprised of the Principal Minister and Ministers appointed by the President.

Caucus – A group of Members of the National Assembly who belong to the same party.

Chairperson – The Presiding Officer of a Committee.

Chamber – The debating chamber in which the Members meet to conduct Assembly Business.

Chief Whip – The Chief Whip is a position held in both the Opposition Party and the Government Party, where a designated Member acts as the manager of the Caucus. This ensures that parliamentary party discipline is enforced, and that the party remains both organised and well-informed.

Clerk (The)– The position of Clerk is equivalent to that of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who acts as the administrative adviser and accounting officer to the National Assembly Service. The Clerk is responsible for a wide range of administrative and procedural duties related to the work of Parliament, its Committees, and its international Parliamentary Associations.

Clerk's Table – When the House is in Session, the Clerk's Table is occupied by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk who record the decisions made by the House, administrate the Sitting, and advise on parliamentary procedures.

Committee Clerk – The administrative officer and adviser on parliamentary procedures to a Committee. Duties of the Committee Clerk include taking minutes of meetings, drafting Committee Reports, and attending site visits in a supporting role.

Committee Stage – This involves a detailed study of the clauses of a Bill by a Committee of the Whole House. It is an opportunity for changes to be made to the wording of a Bill, or for new clauses to be introduced.

Cc

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – The CPA is an organisation representing the parliaments of the Commonwealth, of which the National Assembly of Seychelles is a member. It is a forum which enables Commonwealth Parliamentarians to contribute to the development of best parliamentary practices globally.

Constitution – The fundamental rules and principles on which a country is governed. It defines the relationship between the main institutions of the state, i.e. the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary, and details the rights of individual citizens.

Constituency – The electoral area of which a Directly Elected Member of the National Assembly represents.

Conventions - Also known as Parliamentary Conventions, this refers to methods of practice that Parliament has followed in the past, often to fulfil important principles. For example, by convention an Opposition Member is appointed as the chairperson of the Committee on Government Assurances, the Committee tasked with scrutinising assurances of Ministers in the House.

Dd

Debate – The formal discussions that take place in the House. During debates, Members must take turns to speak, and follow the rules set in the Standing Orders.

Deputy Clerk (The) - The position of Deputy Clerk is equivalent to that of a Deputy Chief Executive Officer, who acts as the deputy administrative adviser to the National Assembly Service. The Deputy Clerk is responsible for a wide range of departments and procedural duties related to the work of Parliament, its Committees, and its international Parliamentary Associations.

Deputy Speaker (The) – The Deputy Presiding Officer of the House, who undertakes the functions of the Presiding Officer in their absence. The position of Deputy Speaker is provided for in Article 83 of the Constitution of Seychelles.

Dissolution – The conclusion of a Parliament before a General Election. During a dissolved Parliament, all seats in the House are vacant. The provisions for dissolution are laid out in Articles 106 – 111 of the Constitution.

Drafting – The process of writing a Bill or an amendment to a Bill.

Ee

Extraordinary Sitting – An instance of a Sitting of the House outside of the programmed Calendar of Sittings, or one of national importance such as the Message on the State of the Nation Address or State visits.

Ff

Finance and Public Accounts Committee – The FPAC is one of only two Standing Sessional Committees. According to the Constitution of Seychelles, the Chairperson of the FPAC is customarily the Leader of the Opposition.

First Past the Post – This is an electoral system where voters cast a single vote for a single candidate, and the candidate with the most votes wins the election.

First Reading – A formal stage in the passage of the Bill in which the Clerk introduces the Bill to the House by reading its short title.

Gg

Gazette –This is the official publication of the Seychelles Government, where records and official government and commercial notifications are published as required by legislations. This includes public health notices, election notices, Bills, Acts and subsidiary legislation. It is presided upon by the Attorney General.

General Election – The election held after each term of Parliament, every 5 years, to re-elect a new Parliamentary cohort.

Hh

Hansard – This refers to the Hansard Division of the National Assembly Service, who are tasked with the transcription of the Verbatim. Hansard Reporters also aid in Chamber duties, such as escorting Ministers and accompanying delegations into the Chamber.

Ii

Inter-Parliamentary Union – The IPU is a global organization of national parliaments, gathering 180 member countries including Seychelles, dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue.

Immunity - This refers to certain protections from the usual application of the law, and covers anything that is said by or voted on by a Member of Parliament in Chamber, or in a Committee

Jj - Kk

Ll

Leader of Government Business – An elected Member of the incumbent Government party, who's role is to put forward the government business for debate and steer it through the House. The role of the LGB is provided for in Article 84(A) of the Constitution of Seychelles.

Leader of the Opposition – An elected Member of the opposition party, who's role is to scrutinise government, develop counter-policies, and hold relevant government bodies accountable to their budgets. The Leader of the Opposition is also responsible, in consultation with the Speaker and the President, for the order of priority for the presentation of Bills to the National Assembly. The role of the LOTO is provided for in Article 84 of the Constitution of Seychelles.

Legislation – The laws, Acts of Parliament, or Bills enacted by or on the authority of Parliament. The term is also used to describe the act of making a new law.

Long Title – This refers to the long title at the start of a Bill that begins "A Bill for an Act…". The content of the Bill must be covered by the Long Title. This is read by the Clerk when the Bill is tabled.

Mm

Mace (The) – The Mace is the symbol of the Speaker's authority and impartiality. It is carried into the Chamber by the Sergeant-At-Arms, who is the custodian of the Mace. By convention, the Assembly cannot proceed unless the Mace is present in the Chamber.

Matter of Privilege – This refers to a matter a Member raises that they believe affects privileges of the Assembly. A Member wishing to raise a matter of privilege does so at the first available sitting of the Assembly by informing the Speaker and stating the matter proposed to be raised, If, a matter suddenly arises during a sitting of the Assembly, the proceedings may be interrupted, provided a division is not in progress, in order that the matter can be raised and disposed of.

Media Gallery – A dedicated section of the Public Gallery for official use by Accredited Media Personnel.

Meeting – A meeting of the National Assembly refers to every term the Assembly meets during a session.

Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) – Persons elected to the National Assembly of Seychelles. Directly Elected Members represent and serve a constituency. Proportionately Elected Members are nominated and elected by the party in which the serve; this is provided for in Article 78(b) of the Constitution of Seychelles.

Minister – A member of the cabinet of Ministers appointed by the President and approved by the National Assembly.

Minister's Table – The table at which Ministers and any accompanying delegation are seated at when the House is in Session and when Ministers are required to be present for Questions for Oral Answer. [See: Official's Table]

Motions – A formal proposal put forward for debate and consideration by a Member to the House.

Moment of Reflection – A brief moment of silence, as directed by the Presiding Officer, following the National Anthem before the commencement of any business in the House.

Nn

Naming – A measure of reprimand at the discretion of the Presiding Officer in the rare occasion that the powers under Order 51 of the Standing Orders are deemed inadequate to deal with an offence in the House. As provided for in Order 52 of the Standing Orders, the Presiding Officer may name the Member(s) and suspend them from the Service of the National Assembly for a set duration.

National Anthem – The National Anthem of Seychelles is played at the commencement of each Sitting of the National Assembly.

National Assembly Service – Previously referred to as the Secretariat, it is the impartial administrative body which provides the necessary parliamentary services to allow the National Assembly to function properly and efficiently in all matters connected with its procedures and practices.

National Assembly Service Committee - This is a Committee which is set up and operated on a voluntary basis, by National Assembly Service Staff. Currently, the National Assembly of Seychelles has only one, namely the Environmental Policy Implementation Committee (EPIC).

Notice – Unless otherwise specified or in matters of public urgency deemed by the Presiding Officer, ten clear days' notice is required for a motion to be moved at a Sitting. Order 42 of the Standing Orders details the specific conditions for the movement of a motion without notice.

Oo

Oath of Allegiance – An oath of loyalty, in accordance with Order 27 of the Standing Orders. No Member shall take part in the proceedings of the House until the Oath has been administered.

Official's Table – When Ministers and any accompanying delegation are required to attend a Sitting, the Official's Table is used for those who do not fit on the Minister's Table, or those who are not required to speak immediately.

Opening of Parliament – In accordance with Parliamentary Procedure, the National Assembly of Seychelles is officially opened every year by the Honourable Speaker. This ceremony is an auspicious occasion for the Speaker to address the Members of the House and the general public.

Oo

Opposition – A term commonly applied to any party in Parliament that is not a part of, or does not support, the current government.

Order Paper – The published document that details the business of the House, to be transacted during the scheduled Sitting. The order in which the business is laid on the Order Paper is provided for in Order 25(2) of the Standing Orders.

"Out of Order" – A term used by the Presiding Officer when a Member's proposal, action, or general behaviour is deemed to go against the rules of parliamentary procedure.

Pp

Parliament – The Constitution of the Third Republic of Seychelles provides for the establishment of the National Assembly of Seychelles, its composition, the election of Members, and the vested powers to make and pass laws. It is a unicameral Parliament, comprised of 35 Members including the Speaker.

Parliamentary Privilege – Members take an Oath of Allegiance which guarantees their freedom of speech in the Assembly in order to protect them and improve the debates of the House. Privileges and Immunities ensure that Members can carry out their duties without constraints.

Parliamentary Museum – The National Assembly of Seychelles hosts the only Parliamentary Museum in the country, called the "Evolution of the Seychelles Parliament", which is comprised of a collection of photographs, audio/video articles, logos, maps, and various artifacts.

Parliamentary Week – The normal parliamentary week is between the hours of 0900hrs and 1700hrs on Tuesdays and Wednesdays according to convention. The Presiding Officer may also convene Parliament on other dates, in consultation with the Assembly Business Committee. [See: Sitting]

Passage of Bill – This term describes the process by which a Bill enters Parliament and obtains approval into Law.

Point of Order – A question raised by a Member, addressed to the Presiding Officer, in a situation where the conduct of the House does not follow the Standing Orders or customary procedure. It is at the discretion of the Presiding Officer to accept or deny the Point of Order and make any final decision regarding it.

Pp

Precedence - A previous event in a parliament's history where a decision was made that can be regarded as an example or guide for consideration in current circumstances.

Presentation of Papers – This refers to the process in which reports and other documents submitted by Members, Ministers, or Committees are presented to the Assembly during a Sitting by the Clerk laying them on the Table and disseminating them to all Members.

Presidential Assent – The final approval for a Bill, after it has passed through the House.

Private Member's Bill – A Bill sponsored by a Member of the Assembly.

Private Notice Question – As provided in Order 35 of the Standing Orders, the Leader of the Opposition has the privilege to submit a Private Notice Question to the Clerk in writing, at least six hours before Question Time. A PNQ is often related to a recent or imminent event, an issue of national importance, or one that seeks clarification on public policy.

Proceedings – This term describes everything that is said and done in the House. Proportionately Elected Member - This refers to Members of the National Assembly not Directly Elected to represent a district, but nominated and chosen by their respective political party.

Public Bill – A Bill sponsored by a governmental / public entity, which is concerned with matters of public policy.

Public Gallery – The designated seating area from which members of the public may watch the proceedings of the House. Access to the Public Gallery is coordinated through formal requests submitted to the Office of the Clerk, or by invitation through the Office of the Speaker.

Public Hearing – A formal proceeding held by a Committee in order to gather testimonies and evidence from relevant bodies and stakeholders.

Qq

Questions Without Notice – As provided for in Order 33 of the Standing Orders, a QWN is a question which does not follow the procedure of being asked within three months of submission and are treated to be of an urgent nature and relate to matters of public importance.

Quorum – This refers to the number of Members, excluding the Speaker, necessary to constitute a meeting of the House. As provided for in Order 10 of the Standing Orders, the quorum of the Assembly shall consist of one half of the number of Members.

Rr

Ratification – This refers to the formal confirmation or sanction of an agreement, treaty, or amendment. It is essentially the process by which a state officially declares its consent to be bound by an international instrument. In the Constitution, it is stipulated under Article 64 (4), that the binding of the Republic to an agreement cannot occur without a resolution passed by the National Assembly.

Recess – This refers to a break during the Parliamentary Session where the House does not meet. There are three periods of Recess a year, following each term.

Retract- The term used by the Presiding Officer to direct a Member to withdraw a statement. This action also instructs the Hansard to remove the statement from the Verbatim.

Revised Order Paper - This refers to any subsequent Order Paper released, and includes any deletions or additions following the first Order Paper such as the Private Notice Question.

Right of Reply – The right of the mover of a motion, or the motion for a Second Reading of a Bill, to speak for a second time, marking the closure of debate and signalling for a vote.

Ss

Second – The support expressed by a second Member of the Assembly to proceed with the order of business.

Second Reading – The stage in which the overall principles and merits of a Bill are considered through debate. The House proceeds into this stage after the Clerk has read the long title of the Bill.

Select Sessional Committee – This is a Committee which is prescribed in Order 90 of the Standing Orders and may be established at the beginning of each new Assembly and cease to exist at the dissolution of each Assembly. Order 90(2) of the Standing Orders prescribes the following Committees: House Committee, Scrutiny of Bills Committee, Defence and Security Committee (DSC), International Affairs Committee (IAC), Committee on Government Assurances (COGA), and the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC).

Sergeant-At-Arms – The Sergeant-At-Arms (SAA) is responsible for the coordination of security on the National Assembly Precinct, conduct and maintaining of order within the Chamber and Public Gallery on the order of the Speaker, as well as acting as the custodian of the Mace. The SAA is also responsible for leading the Speaker into the Chamber each Sitting day, as well as leading the Ceremonial Procession when required.

Session – As prescribed in Article 106(1) of the Constitution of Seychelles, a Session of the National Assembly shall begin on the first meeting of the Assembly when summoned by the President of the Republic. Unless the Assembly is dissolved sooner, a Session shall continue for a period of five years.

Short Title – The formal title of proposed legislation which may be used for the purposes of citation, and which does not cover all provisions and descriptions of the legislation [see: Long Title].

Sitting – As provided for in Order 3 of the Standing Orders, a Sitting refers to a period during which the Assembly is sitting continuously without adjournment and includes any period during which the Assembly is in committee. Sittings may occur on any day, as decided by the Speaker in consultation with the Assembly Business Committee.

Standing Orders – This refers to the document which provides for the rules, conventions, and authorities of the National Assembly and its proceedings.

Ss

Standing Sessional Committee - This is a Committee which is prescribed in the Constitution of Seychelles and must be established at the beginning of each new Assembly and cease to exist at the dissolution of each Assembly. The two "permanent" Committees prescribed are the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) and the Standing Orders Committee.

Statement – A contribution made in the House that does not pertain to a question or motion moved before the House, and usually includes Members' personal statements, commemorations of national or international days/events, or Ministerial statements. This does not include Points of Order or Communications from the Chair.

State-Of-The-Nation-Address – The State of the Nation Address commonly referred to as SONA is delivered by the President to the Assembly in line with Article 65 of the Constitution of Seychelles which states that
"The President shall –
At the beginning of each year; and
Before a dissolution, pursuant to Article 106(2) (a) or (b), of the National Assembly, deliver to the Assembly a message on the state of the nation."

Statutory Instruments – This refers to documents drafted by government departments to enact changes in legislation, with the aim of allowing the provisions of an Act to be to be subsequently brought into force or altered without passing a new Act altogether. All S.I.s can be found published on the Official Gazette, or on the National Assembly of Seychelles website.

Speaker (The) – The principal Presiding Officer of the House, who presides over the Sittings of the House impartially and enforces the rules prescribed in the Standing Orders The position of Speaker is provided for in Article 83 of the Constitution of Seychelles. Order 101 of the Standing Orders prescribes that the Speaker has the authority to regulate the conduct of business of the Assembly according to and outside of the Standing Orders.

Speaker's Gallery – The Speaker's Gallery is a traditionally prestigious seating area within the Public Gallery, which faces the Speaker directly and is used upon invitation only.

Sponsor (of a Bill) – The Member or Minister who presents a Bill in the House.

Suspension of Members – The process and authority of formally suspending a Member of the National Assembly is vested in the Presiding Officer and provided for in Order 52 of the Standing Orders. The Presiding Officer, when deemed necessary, will name the Member, and suspend them from the service of the Assembly.

Ss

Suspension of Sittings – This refers to a pause in the continuation of a Sitting, which is set to recommence later that same day.

Suspension of Standing Orders – As provided in Order 97 of the Standing Orders, it is at the discretion of the Presiding Officer for the Standing Orders to be suspended by the Assembly wholly or in part for a specified purpose upon a motion made by a Member.

Supplementary Questions – This refers to questions which may be asked, at the discretion of the Presiding Officer, with the intention of clarifying information given on an answer which has already been given by a Minister. Supplementary questions may not seek answers which deviate from the original question asked.

Swearing-in Ceremony – As prescribed in Article 99 of the Constitution of Seychelles, a Member of the National Assembly may not take part in the proceedings of the National Assembly until the Oath of Allegiance has been administered and the Member is sworn-into office.

Tt

Term – This refers to a period of continuous Sittings marked by a period of recess in between. The National Assembly Calendar of Sittings is made up of three terms, with three periods of Recess in between.

Third Reading – This is the final stage in the passage of a Bill. During this stage, no amendments affecting the principles of the Bill may be made. When the Bill has been read for the third time, it is deemed to have been passed by the National Assembly.

Uu

Unicameral – This refers to a system where parliament consists of a single Chamber, which has the sole vested powers of legislation.

Uu

Unparliamentary Language – This refers to language that is contrary to the decorum of the House. Order 59(7) provides that Members should refrain from such behaviour including use of offensive words or expressions, use of unbecoming language, or the making of personal charges against any Members.

Urgent Questions – As provided for in Order 34 of the Standing Orders, a Member may give notice and submit an Urgent Question to the Clerk at least 24 hours before the day the question may be asked to the relevant Minister. These questions allow Members to seek information on important matters that they believe should be raised in the House.

Vv

Verbatim – This refers to the official minutes of the Sittings of the House, which contains all activities conducted such as debates, orders, motions, and resolutions.

Vice-Chairperson - The Deputy Presiding Officer of a Committee.

Vote – This refers to the formal expression of a Member in favour or against a decision made by the Committee of the House. No Member shall be obliged to vote and may choose to abstain.

Ww

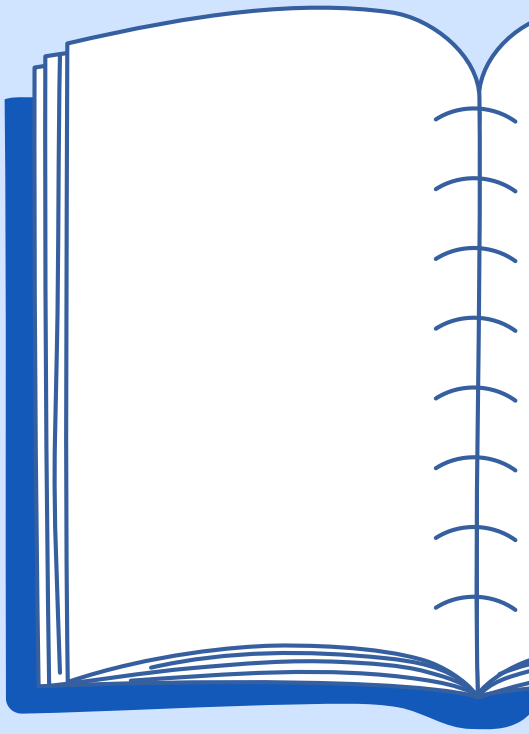
Whip – This refers to the designated Member, of each party, charged with informing and maintaining order within their parties. Whips ensure that their party Members vote accordingly, attend necessary meetings, and act as ‘party managers’.

Xx - Yy - Zz

Parliamentary Glossary

Disclaimer

The information in this Parliamentary Glossary is provided for general reference and educational purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the National Assembly of Seychelles reserves the right to amend, update, or revise content as necessary.



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