



National Assembly of Seychelles

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

EXAMINATION OF THE SEYCHELLES TOURISM BOARD PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

SECOND REPORT OF FPAC

5[™] ASSEMBLY

2013

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

The Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) is appointed by the National Assembly of Seychelles by the legal requirements of the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, the Standing Orders and the Rules of Procedure for Committees as the institutional mechanism for reporting on the effectiveness and efficiency of public financial management by the Government.

Aside from its Annual Report which is produced from examining the Report of the Auditor General on the annual accounts of the Government, the FPAC has the mandate to scrutinize the Performance Audit Reports of the Auditor General of a particular Ministry, Department or Agency which is financed by the Government with public money.

1.2 COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The seven-members of the Committee are appointed by the National Assembly as soon as practicable after the beginning of each session of the Assembly.

The current Committee appointed by the 5th Assembly is chaired by the Leader of the Opposition and its composition is as follows:

- Hon. David Pierre *The Chairperson*
- Hon. Charles De Commarmond The Vice-Chairperson
- Hon. Marc Volcere
- Hon. Nichole Barbe
- Hon. Sebastien Pillay
- Hon. Lenny Lebon
- Hon. Jeniffer Vel

Committee business is supported and facilitated by National Assembly Secretarial and Advisory personnel and is further assisted through the advice and guidance of the Auditor General.

1.3 CONTACT

All correspondence relating to this report or other matters within the scope of the FPAC should in the first instance be addressed to:

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2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In December 2011, the Auditor General published a Performance Audit Report on the Seychelles Tourism Board. This assignment was carried out in the period of June to October 2011 and in accordance with Section 13 of the Auditor General Act, 2010.

The overall objective of this performance audit was:

'Whether the Seychelles Tourism Board has managed its offices, financial resources and stakeholder relationships well in order to ensure the success of its marketing and inspectorate roles?'

The report of the Auditor General centred its enquiries in three-areas:

- i. Seychelles Tourism Board's Financing and Managing of its Marketing Operations;
- ii. Seychelles Tourism Board's Marketing; and
- iii. Inspectorate Function of the Seychelles Tourism Board.

The full report can be found at http://www.oag.sc/downloads/category/7-performance-audit-reports.

The Committee conducted a Hearing on the content of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor on the Seychelles Tourism Board on 12th March 2013.

The verbatim transcript of the Hearing can be found at http://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 http://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 http://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 http://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 http://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 http://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 https://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 https://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 https://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 https://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 https://www.nationalassembly.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96 https://www.nationalassembly.naticle.

The Seychelles Tourism Board was represented at the Hearing by the current Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. Elsia Grandcourt and the Financial Controller, Mr. Jean-Francois Adeline.

The Office of the Auditor General was represented at the Hearing by the Auditor General Mr. Marc Benstrong, Mrs. Marie-Lise Pierre and Mr. Antoine Fernandes in a technical and advisory role to the Committee.

The issues and related recommendations of the Seychelles Tourism Board Performance Audit Report of the Auditor General and the responses from the Seychelles Tourism Board are summarised in the table shown at Annex I.

Annex II provides detailed information on the supplementary questions by the Committee and the responses of the Seychelles Tourism Board.

3. COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is extremely disappointed that the senior management of the Seychelles Tourism Board have made limited progress in dealing with the findings and recommendations of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor General. This is despite the report having been available for 15 months.

The Seychelles Tourism Board has a maximum of one month from the date of the approval of this report by the National Assembly to respond to the recommendations of the Committee.

The recommendations of the Committee on the Seychelles Tourism Board Performance Audit Report of the Auditor General are derived from the evidence from the hearing and subsequent documentation received from the Seychelles Tourism Board.

Committee Recommendations to the Seychelles Tourism Board:

- i. The Seychelles Tourism Board will fully implement all seven-recommendations made by the Auditor General.
- ii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide details of the training proposals to improve the financial management skills of those currently lacking the necessary competencies.
- iii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide its short to medium-term plans for implementing a 'star' based classification scheme for hotels in the Seychelles as this is an internationally recognised standard used by potential visitors when selecting accommodation. In addition, the application of a classification scheme provides the basis for the inspection and evaluation of hotels.
- iv. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide the latest copy of the Cabinet Approved Tourism Master Plan.
- v. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide a full explanation how it spent the additional R30 million received from Trade partners which were allocated to the Marketing Fund and the Operating expenses in the financial year 2010.
- vi. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide unambiguous evidence of an integrated operational and financial reporting system.
- vii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will take measures to meet its statutory requirements in relation to establishing a code of practice and standards for tourism enterprises.
- viii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will develop and implement an enforcement-driven strategy and options for enforcement actions.
- ix. The Seychelles Tourism Board will develop and implement a risk based strategy and approach to its inspection activities.

- x. The Seychelles Tourism Board will develop and distribute practical compliance guidance for the business community in respect of inspection activities.
- xi. The Seychelles Tourism Board will develop and introduce robust mechanisms to record visitor arrivals and produce quarterly reports on these including variances from period to period.
- xii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide details of its allocated 2013 research budget and details and expected impacts of planned research activities in 2013.
- xiii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide evidence that the office in Singapore has now been closed and that no further rent paid other than that reported by the Auditor General.
- xiv. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide documentary evidence of how the R6 million recorded as being spent on the Singapore office was actually spent in the China office.
- xv. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide detailed information on the Key Performance Indicators to be used in 2013 to measure the corporate success or failure of the organisation.
- xvi. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide details of recommendations made by the UN-WTO Consultant to restructure the Seychelles Tourism Board with particular reference to the inspectorate function.
- xvii. The Seychelles Tourism Board will provide the explanation from the Licensing Authority as to why it did not revoke the licence of a tourism premise that was deemed unsatisfactory by the Seychelles Tourism Board inspectorate.

ANNEX I: SEYCHELLES TOURISM BOARD'S RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATION	STB RESPONSE	EVALUATION OF RESPONSES
1. The lack of financial skills and awareness amongst the Board, senior management, and finance and non-finance staff remains a significant barrier to improving the management of financial resources in the Seychelles Tourism Board: Page 4 – 5.	1. The Seychelles Tourism Board should ensure that finance and non- finance staff receives appropriate guidance, training and support in order to meet financial reporting requirements and to plan and manage budgets effectively.	Currently all staff of the accounts unit who has been recruited understands the process of planning and managing budget. There are also other staff working and managing budgets where there is still a lack of knowledge in budget preparation and management. Requests have been made for them to attend training sessions to provide them with the basic guidance to better prepare their budgets.	This partially answers the Committee question.
2. Effective financial resource management is not embedded in the Seychelles Tourism Board: Page 4 – 5.	2. Managers in the Seychelles and overseas offices should be properly accountable for their financial resources and incentivised to use them effectively and efficiently. As a first-step, the Seychelles Tourism Board should build in an assessment of management of financial resources within the performance appraisal of all	A uniform system of recording and reporting their financial information is done on a monthly basis. All office has to comply with this on a monthly basis as their full set of accounts is then checked for any anomalies/irregulariti es and posted into the accounting software – QuickBooks.	This is a satisfactory response to the Committee's question, re: the management of financial management. However, it does not provide an answer to the link between resource allocation and individual unit performance to see if the STB is achieving value for money. This issue is dealt with by an earlier recommendation in this report by the

PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATION	STB RESPONSE	EVALUATION OF RESPONSES
	staff, whether in the Seychelles or overseas.		Committee to the STB calling for the establishment of key performance indicators.
3. The Seychelles Tourism Board does not integrate financial and operational performance information, making it difficult to evaluate the value-for-money of its work: Page 4 – 5.	3. The Financial Controller should capture information from the various sections and overseas offices and present integrated financial and operational performance data to the Board to enable it to compare costs and to establish a sound footing upon which to base decisions on resource allocation.	As from August 2011, the STB has adopted and implemented the accounting package QuickBooks after which had enabled the Financial Controller to produce clear and concise financial information as addressed to the Board on a continuous basis. It is now adopting new project management software which will bring more budgetary control and thus better allocation of resources.	This is a partial response to the recommendation and it is clear that much remains to be done.
4. There is a gap in the Seychelles Tourism Board's approach to inspection at a corporate level that is reflected in the lack of strategic leadership and published standards. The Seychelles Tourism Board has a key role to play in ensuring that businesses	4. The Seychelles Tourism Board should urgently deliver its legislative requirements to establish a code of practice and standards for tourism enterprises, so that businesses are clear about how the inspection process will operate.	The Cabinet of Ministers approved back in November 2007 the National Harmonised Standards for Accommodation and Catering Enterprises; a code of practice for the tourism industry. However there were some objections from the local tourism trade and the classification project was placed on hold. Additionally, the STB	This is an unsatisfactory response from the STB.

ΑŪ	ERFORMANCE UDIT REPORT REFERENCE	RECOMMENDATION	STB RESPONSE	EVALUATION OF RESPONSES
s t	operate to a high standard and thus meet visitor expectations: Page 4 – 5.		has also initiated the process for the introduction of a code of practice otherwise known as Standard Operating Procedures for the organisation itself. The works to prepare this document is well underway and expected completion if August 2013.	
The second of th	The Seychelles Tourism Board's ack of an overall sanctioning strategy and culture weakens compliance by business. The non-existence of enforcement means that deterrence cannot be used as a way to ensure compliance: Page 4 – 5.	5. The Seychelles Tourism Board should develop an enforcement-driven strategy that delivers sanctioning options and enforcement actions proportionate to the seriousness or the persistence of compliance breach.	Despite the provision of the STB Act of 2005, the STB is not a regulating body with enforcement powers. STB is always seen as a facilitator and in all its undertakings this is the preferred role.	This is an unsatisfactory response from the STB. This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
The second of th	The Seychelles Tourism Board has no coherent approach to risk and no consistent risk- based approach. We question whether the relative balance of inspection activity of the	6. We recommend that the Seychelles Tourism Board undertakes a review of its approach to inspection activity, building in risk as the driver for the inspection approach.	STB is open to ideas for improving the service that it provides and will certainly take this recommendation on board. It must be noted however that indirectly this is being practiced by STB.	This is an unsatisfactory response from the STB. This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.

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Seychelles Tourism Board is effective across all of the areas of its remit: Page 4 – 5.			
7. The level of Seychelles Tourism Board face-to-face advice to businesses, through the inspection process, is substantial. We believe that this could be supported by published advice and guidance through the Seychelles Tourism Board website: Page 4 – 5.	7. The Seychelles Tourism Board should develop a strategy for inspection advice and guidance, as soon as possible, which ensures that businesses can and do receive quality practical advice on what to do in order to comply.	We don't have the published documents, when the client will come to STB this is given to them and guidance is given.	This is an unsatisfactory response from the STB. This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.

ANNEX II: SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS BY THE COMMITTEE AND RESPONSES OF THE SEYCHELLES TOURISM BOARD

REPORT REFERENCE	COMMITTEE QUESTIONS	STB RESPONSES	EVALUATION OF RESPONSES
Background: 1.4 - 1.5	What are you doing to increase market share?	'We continue with our, especially on our traditional markets, we continue with the marketing activities that is there to further grow the business, but we also look at diversification in going into new markets.'	This is a vague response to the question put by the Committee. However, the answer to this question should be shown in the Tourism Master Plan requested by the Committee in an earlier recommendation in this report.
	How did you maintain a budget of R76.3 m?	'We managed to keep in within the allocation that was given and managed to fulfil the activities and all the plans and targets that had been set for the year.'	This more or less answers the question posed by the Committee.
Strengthening the Strategic Approach: 1.7	• Why was it that since 2005, you have been operating without a formal organizational strategy?	'Unfortunately I cannot explain what was there in the past why it was not done or implemented.'	This answers the question posed by the Committee.
	Is STB currently adopting a formal organizational strategy?	'From 2010 onwards I would say, we have started out, we've mapped out, first it was a 5 year plan strategy and then every year we have strategy that is spelled out for the year and then further details are per the different markets.'	This answers the question posed by the Committee.
	What strategy are	'We have a strategy that	This answers the

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	you using?	at our annual meeting which we do together with the private sector, it's public, we publicize it, it was presented to all the private sector and whoever wants to have a copy of it.'	question posed by the Committee.
Tourism Master Plan: 1.9	Has the Tourism Master Plan been completed?	'Today yes, the Master Plan is final, it's been presented to the Cabinet, it's been endorsed, there are recommendations, set key recommendations that have come out of there and recommendations are already being undertaken.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
Management of Finance is a Continuing Challenge: 1.12 – 1.14	What is the status of your financial accounts?	'To date we have done 2007, it's been audited already, 2008 has been audited as well, 2009 and now, actually tomorrow they are coming to the office to do 2010 up till 2012.'	This answers the questions posed by the Committee.
	• Since 2007 you have continuously been late with the submission of your financial accounts, what are you doing to improve this situation?	'One of my, my greatest, my mandate when I joined the STB is to clear the backlog, one of my priority. So, I can give you assurance that it will be.'	This answers the questions posed by the Committee.
	What was the R30 million additional funds used for in 2010? Was it used for the Marketing	'Yes there was the Sub- Marketing Committee and this precisely was for marketing.' 'But can we give you	This is not a satisfactory answer to the questions put by the Committee.

REPORT REFERENCE	COMMITTEE QUESTIONS	STB RESPONSES	EVALUATION OF RESPONSES
	Fund Committee?	more clarity.'	
Importance of Incisive Leadership in the Management of Finance: 1.17 & 1.22	• You have had 5 Financial Controllers in the last 6 years, what are you doing to ensure that this is not the case again for the next 5 or 6 years to come?	'What have we done is to in the first step to look at where the problem was and now that we have a Financial Controller we have a team as well that supports the work that is being done. We've had constant dialogue and also close monitoring with the Financial Controller.'	This answers the question posed by the Committee.
	• Have you made any attempt to evaluate the impact of this, and if yes, what are the results of this evaluation?	No response.	
	• Can you honestly say that you now have a strong financial management system in place?	'I can, at the moment safely say yes, confidently to a degree that yes the accounting and financing yes is being followed properly.'	This answers the question posed by the Committee.
STB Culture of Increasing Expenditure Coupled with Lack of Financial Management: 1.24	Has this area been reviewed?	'It's been referred to on numerous counts in this report that we focus only on the visitor arrivals, but there are also other measures whereby the performance is monitored. We have our annual report that is produced yearly, now we've introduced that, we did the first one last year and this year also we're in the process of finalizing. We have the	This is not a satisfactory response to the question put by the Committee.

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		monthly reports that are forwarded by our offices, whereby we monitor the activities that are done.'	
Cost Effectiveness of Marketing: 1.29	Have you given this a priority? What have you achieved so far?	'I would say, once we have the system that we are now implementing it gives us a clear picture on once we venture into certain activities on certain markets' 'And looking at where the money is being spent and seeing the feedback we're getting it helps us to better plan and like I said initially, it helps us to be more smart in the approach that we take towards the different activities being undertaken in the various markets.'	This answers the questions put by the Committee.
Core European Market: 2.6	• Why has there been a gradual decrease in the ratio of European visitors as a percentage of the overall total?	'Because there was no proper mechanism to follow it and of course the arrival figures went down.'	This does not answer the question posed by the Committee.
STB's Overseas Representation: 2.9, 2.12 & 2.13	How were the overseas offices operating without proper record keeping?	'Unfortunately I cannot really explain that part.' 'Back then there was a problem with their accounting software they were using and probably no proper records were kept.'	This is an unsatisfactory response to the Committee question.
	Who was managing their	'In terms of who was the Financial Controller then,	This answers the Committee's question.

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	finances?	the latest one I know before the current one we have was Mr. Domingue.'	
	What kind of research or surveys does the STB conduct to measure or value effectively the impact and outcomes of its marketing?	'The research that we are doing is not only based at the trade, but consumer as well, and also it's looking at the different market segmentation to further develop our different niche markets that we have at base.'	This answers the Committee's question.
	Why don't you feel that 'research' is a priority?	'The allocation to research was not significant then, but we have re-looked at that because we realize the importance, especially now that we are going into new emerging markets.'	This partially answers the Committee's question.
Asian Office Impact: 2.25	Why is STB still paying rental charges if the office is non-operational?	'The Singapore office was closed when it was almost during the same time that Air Seychelles ceased the operation in Singapore which was as at early 2011, but the office was unmanned.' 'But where it says here that it was unmanned it was not unmanned it was the presence of the Director that was not there. But we had STB personnel there and we were in the process of deciding to put a Manager to take over from whoever had moved.'	This partially answers the Committee's question.
		'This now is engulfed by	This partially answers

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	• What has happened to the R6 million allocated in the 2011 budget for the Singapore office?	the China office.'	the Committee's question.
Success is Managed Through Arrival Numbers Only: 2.38	What means of measuring success are you using currently?	'We have the monthly reports that we receive from the office based on the activities that is done. And also we are looking at the press clippings that come in and the various feedback that we get from the trade as well.'	Although this only partially addresses the question of the Committee this issue is dealt with by an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	Do you find it as a useful indicator of performance?	'But we are also in the process of re-looking at how we measure the performance of the output that we have on the marketing.' 'We are in the process of re-looking also at specific rating indicating to performance.'	Partial response to the question from the Committee.
Code of Practice and Standards: 3.5 - 3.7	Why is STB not complying with their Act?	'With regards to compliance to the Act, there is the criteria set that the SP uses when we go out into the monitoring or visiting of the establishments when we go out with the other bodies.' 'We realise that we don't have such a document but the importance of having it we've realised that it's there.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.

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	Why have you made no further progress towards meeting the requirements of the Act, despite the approval of Cabinet?	'The harmonised standards that were approved by the Cabinet has not been delivered I would say probably because of these issues that was there which needs to be re-looked at.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	Has this monitoring programme been put into action?	'Not at the moment, not as yet.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
Work of the Inspectorate: 3.19	Are all establishments being inspected currently?	'Not necessarily so.' 'I would say today based on the inspection being done we do more than 50%, even more than that.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	What strategy are you using for inspection?	'It's under discussion now because we had also a UN/WTO Consultant coming to look at the structure of STB, now that we fall under Ministry on how the operation will be, certain recommendations have been made in regards to this structure.'	This is a partial response to the question posed by the Committee.
There is a Lack of Proactive Management Support for the Standards and Product Enhancement Section: 3.25,	Has a decision been taken to separate the Inspectorate function from STB?	'You're marketing a destination and the product which is important so it goes hand in hand.' 'So, for the moment it's not separated yet.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
3.26 & 3.29	Why was the previous CEO not in favour of the Standards and	'Would it work to separate it if you have a proper mechanism in place because there is a	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.

REPORT REFERENCE	COMMITTEE QUESTIONS	STB RESPONSES	EVALUATION OF RESPONSES
	Product Enhancement Section being part of STB?	certain degree of over- lap.'	
	Has this issue been addressed? Has the STB taken a step to develop a coherent view and understanding of the inspectorate role and requirements?	'But what I have done with the HR is re-looked at how for example the going out for the inspections and I won't say they have low morale right now I think they are more or less hopeful that something will be done about this section.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
The Inspectorate Section has no Enforcement Powers: 3.32	Has there been any move to amend the STB Act with respect to this issue? or,	'No. We still today don't have the enforcement ability.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	Have you developed any enforcement capabilities as proposed by the Auditor General outside of the Act?	'No.'	
Transparent Reporting Making Businesses and the Public Aware and Getting them on Board: 3.34 – 3.35	• Is this being done?	'3.34 yes, the annual reporting, but it's only like I said the publishing of the inspectorate work that is not there, but the annual report is.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	Have you implemented the rating system?	'If we implemented it yet, no, but it was a point that was discussed at our last year's marketing meeting and it's a point that we will take up, we	This is a partial answer to the Committee's question.

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		should take it up along the year. But we haven't started anything yet.'	
Liaising with and Understanding Businesses: 3.36, 3.40 & 3.41	• Are you conducting this analysis to identify problems within businesses?	'Yes we are engaging with the businesses, it's through the various forums, meetings that they have.	This answers the question of the Committee.
	 Have you published any documents with guidance and/or advice to businesses? 	'We don't have the published documents, but the set criteria are there.'	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	Did the Seychelles Licensing Authority provide any explanations as to why they did not revoke that license?	'I would have to re-visit the case.'	This does not answer the question put by the Committee.
	Why was no action taken against that particular business?	Unable to respond as the decision was taken by the Seychelles Licensing Authority.	This is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.
	Have you developed that kind of relationship yet to ensure that SLA delivers a consistent approach/respons e?	'Well, I suppose now with the new structure and, I mean not a new structure, but being within a Ministry it's like it has to be decided to what extent we allow STB to say ok, and say that the place has to be closed down.'	This does not answer the question put by the Committee and is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.

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Performance Management: 3.43	What is senior management doing to solve this issue?	'Because the inspectors that are within that section has been there for a long time now, they've established a rapport with the different operators that are there, and before yes, the perception was that they come in and they're more or less looked at as, you're not helping them with it but the approach I think has changed now and the inspectors they are very much aware of this on how they approach when they go to these establishments.'	This does not answer the question put by the Committee and is dealt with in an earlier recommendation in this report by the Committee to the STB.

Membership of FPAC, 5th Assembly: Hon. David Pierre Chairperson Hon. Charles De Commarmond Vice-Chairperson Hon. Lenny Lebon Member Hon. Nichole Barbe Member Hon. Sebastien Pillay Member Hon. Marc Volcere Member Hon. Jeniffer Vel

Member