

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

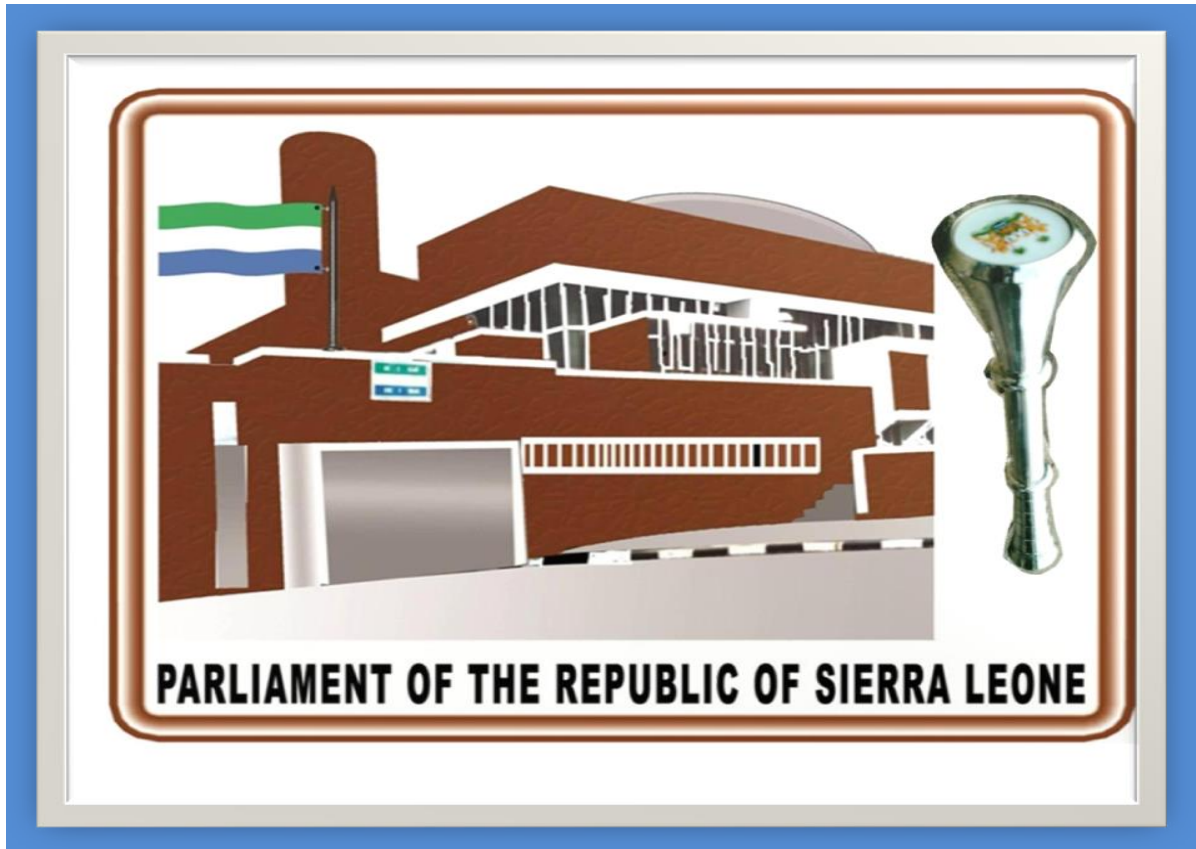
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

SESSION – 2016/2017



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First Meeting of the Fifth Session of the Fourth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held On Tuesday, 12th September, 2017.

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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

**FIFTH SESSION – FIRST MEETING
OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Tuesday, 12th September, 2017.

I. PRAYERS

[The Clerk of parliament, Hon. Ibrahim Sesay, Read the Prayers].

[The House met at 10.44 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown].

[The Speaker, Hon. Sheku Badara Basiru Dumbuya, in the Chair].

The House was called to Order

II. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON TUESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Tuesday, 5th September, 2017. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? There being no correction or amendment, would someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 5th September, 2017 as presented?

HON. AMADU KANU: Mr Speaker, I so move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. FRANK KPOSOWA: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 5th September, 2017 has been adopted as presented]

III. LAYING OF PAPER

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE

HON. LEORNARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sorry to inform you that I neither heard from the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice nor his deputy.

THE SPEAKER: In that case, the laying of that document is accordingly differed. Parliament should not be taken for granted. I am not unaware of the present situation and the circumstances attendant on it. This may well explain perhaps why sittings are delayed. But I want to appeal to all Honourable Members that we keep to our traditional time of 10:00 am. I do understand the situation, but let us try to be more responsible. I do realise that this time around we did not go for recess simply because we could not. I hope that is understood. And the Honourable Ansumana J. Kaikai did say that or had predicted that the way he saw things, he had

his doubt whether we would have time for recess this time around. That has happened and I want Members of Parliament to keep to the time.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on the issue of relating to time, I was Chief Whip in this House and one of the lessons that I learnt before I became Chief Whip was appealing to my colleagues to be here at 10:00 a.m. If you are not so much interested in the proceedings, you can now quietly go out and take care of your business, but allow the business of the House to commence at 10:00 a.m.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other issue I have observed from the Chief Whip and his Deputy is that they usually say, **"Mr Speaker, the time is now 10:30 or it is now past 10:00 and I move that..."** You do not need to tell the time because when you state it, it sounds embarrassing to the House. Please, do not announce the time, but just go ahead and say, 'I move that S.O 5[2] be suspended for the business of the House to commence. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Honourable Ansumana J. Kaikai has just told you what used to happen when he was Chief Whip. Let me tell you, Honourable Members that all of us suffered under the Leadership of Honourable Ansumana J. Kaikai when he was Chief Whip. Even I as Speaker seated here today, when the Honourable Ansumana J. Kaikai was Chief Whip of this House, he was very powerful. A host of Members who were here that time can testify to that. The Honourable Dr Bernadette Lahai can testify to that.

Mr Leader, I take it that before I announce the date for adjournment of the House, I was going to adjourn the House to Thursday, the day after tomorrow. But I understand that the SLPP will be having their convention. So, in order to be at the safe side, I will not adjourn the House to that date. Mr Leader, I think you have a very important announcement to make for the information and attention of Members of Parliament.

HON. LEONARND S. FOFANAH: Exactly, Mr Speaker. With your leave, Mr Speaker, I want to inform Honourable Members that we have a very important meeting on Thursday and I am therefore requesting... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Majority Leader, there are implications in saying 'workshop.' So, just say a meeting for all Members of Parliament. I know it is not a workshop. Unless some form of transformation has already taken place, but for all I know it is not a workshop, but a meeting.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, I am therefore requesting that all Honourable Members bring their documents relating to the Bill entitled, 'the Food and Feed Safety Authority Bill.' This Bill is going to be discussed in this meeting exhaustively and I want to inform you that our Ambassador to the EU and the Consultant have arrived. They want to give us further education on the pending Bill that is with us. We are also taking the liberty of inviting all the necessary stakeholders who are part of that Bill to be in attendance on Thursday. I am therefore urging and requesting that you please bring your draft copies along. The meeting will start at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday. Thank you very much and I am anticipating your cooperation.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O 23. Mr Speaker, the Honourable Claude D.M. Kamanda [Chief Whip of this House] and Vice President of the Pan-African Parliament Youth Caucus and a cross section of the Pan-African parliamentarians from about twelve to fifteen countries were in Brussels on a study tour to the European Parliament from the 4th - 6th for us to understand how the European Parliament operates. While we were there, we paid a courtesy call to our Embassy, the Sierra Leone Embassy accredited to the Belgian Kingdom of Belgium. We were warmly received by His Excellency Honourable Ibrahim Sorie and his staff at the Embassy. However, Mr Speaker, we held very serious meetings that had to do with the operations status and the challenges that the Embassy has been facing. You would agree with me that that Embassy is very important because it is the Embassy that is accredited to the European Union and the European Union is one of our partners in development, especially if you look at the European Development Fund [EDF] that was approved for all ACP countries.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we met and we were happy that we were warmly received. Staffing is one of the challenges that is currently affecting how Sierra Leone is represented on the various committees of the European Union. Apart from

His Excellency, they have only two senior staff, the Head of Chancery and the Deputy Head of Chancery. And because it is the European Union, Sierra Leone sits on many important committees that require our staff to sit on those committees and sometimes the meetings are taken simultaneously. Our participation on those committees has a lot of technical and financial benefits that we accrue to Sierra Leone; but sometimes while four or five committees are sitting on the same day, our two staff, together with His Excellency can only sit on three. So, we do not know what happens when we do not sit on the other three committees. Decisions are taken maybe that will impede on the development of our country. We are losing as a country. So, staffing is a crucial issue that the Embassy is facing. For example, UNESCO sits in Paris and we pay our annual dues to UNESCO. We pay huge amount of money but we do not have any staff member that will attend the meetings in Paris. So, we are also losing a lot of benefits that will come to us when we sit on the UNESCO Desk. The UNESCO Desk is perpetually empty in Paris because when you go there, you will be there for like a week and you stay in your hotel. So, it is a big problem, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of financing is also very important. Every bit of service that is rendered should be paid for; and when that is not done, the service provider will give you few weeks notice. If you do not pay, the bailiff will come and remove you. What is happening now is that subvention for the embassies are provided in every six months, instead of three months as it used to happen. We were informed that the money is not even enough. So, they are always worried that they would one day [like their suppliers for stationary] could come because the moneys are not paid. And when these moneys are delayed, taking an overdraft will cost us more money because of the huge interest rate. So, there are lots of challenges the embassy is facing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we met and we were fully updated. In fact, the issue of migration is also a big challenge. We have over three thousand Sierra Leoneans in Brussels. We have over many thousands in Luxemburg, in Paris and those people are being covered by that mission. Some of them are there legally, but for those who fall foul of the law maybe they do not have the correct papers, they

bring them over and those who have committed crimes and imprisoned are usually brought to the Embassy to verify whether they are truly Sierra Leoneans. In fact, under the Vienna Convention and also the Valetta One and Two Conventions, if a country finds your citizen falling foul of the law, it is the responsibility of the Embassy to work with that country to repatriate those people. The problem they are facing is that sometimes they do not have Emergency Travelling Certificates [ETCs]. On a few occasions, some of them would say they are not Sierra Leoneans after they have been brought to Lungi. So, they take them back to Brussels and the people in Belgium are not happy that Sierra Leone is not living up to their responsibilities under the Vienna and Valetta One and Two Conventions of Diplomacy. So, the fear is that we will one day hear that the Embassy is being closed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have Sierra Leoneans who are honest and are genuine residents with valid documents. We risk those Sierra Leoneans staying in that country because when they are there, the remittances they are sending is helping their families and even helping to build their communities. So, if this issue continues, it is going to be a problem. There are Sierra Leoneans out there we need to protect. The Immigration Department, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are the problem to this situation. We do not want in future all those Sierra Leoneans who are law abiding to suffer unduly. I am saying this because if that Embassy is closed, those law abiding Sierra Leoneans will suffer the consequence. It could also mean that all the remittances they send here will stop. Some of them have dependents here in terms of paying their school fees, medical, food and for everything. So, we listened very carefully and we took the onus to say we would report to this House for our attention.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want the Committee on Internal Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs to take note of this very seriously because the Immigration Department is under the Committee on Internal Affairs. Again, I want to inform the Committees on Education and Finance that Sierra Leone is not sitting on the UNESCO Desk. Therefore, we want these four Committees to please further meet with their respective Ministries, so that they brief them on the reasons why

Sierra Leone is not sitting on the UNESCO Desk. The Committee on Finance will have the privilege to ask why subventions are not being sent every six months. Why there are problems with the repatriation of Sierra Leoneans who are falling foul of the law, thereby jeopardising the other Sierra Leoneans who legitimately reside in those countries? These are Sierra Leoneans who are helping to sponsor their own people here in terms of education, health, etc.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these are very serious issues we need to address. We are not able to sit on all the European Union committees because of shortage of staff. We only have two senior staff there, Mrs Bangalie, who is the head of Chancery and Mr Yankuba, who is the Deputy Head of Chancery plus H. E Honourable Ibrahim Sorie. The Embassy needs professional staff. They have drivers and secretaries, but those ones cannot go to represent Sierra Leone. So, these are the issues we have brought to the attention of this House. They have done well in the sense that the Embassy used to share the other apartment with a family that was residing there. You cannot share an Embassy with a family for residential purpose. What they have done is that they have renegotiated with the family and the family members have moved somewhere else. That apartment is now the full property of the Sierra Leone Embassy. They are trying to renovate it just in case they would have additional staff. We took tour of that building and they have done very well in that area. But the shortage of staff is costing Sierra Leone because we are not benefiting at all. Sierra Leone is not represented on the committees that have some technical and financial benefits. So, this is the appeal I am making for this House's attention. We want the Committee on Education to engage the UNESCO office here and also the Ministry on that issue. They are supposed to send somebody to sit as Education Attaché. This is not happening at all, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we must also interrogate the Ministry of Internal Affairs to tell us the problem with the issuance of the ETCs. I am saying this because when they were brought here, they refused to be given ETCs. They took them back to Belgium. Our Ambassador was summoned by the Belgian Government and they threatened to close the Embassy. If that happen, it will be very sad for the image of this country. So, we hope that members of these four committees will take the

responsibilities to call a meeting, inviting all the ministers in charge to find lasting solution to this problem. Honourable Ibrahim Sorie is here for a month and it will be prudent for those committees to call a meeting with the Honourable Ibrahim Sorie and the requisite Ministers, so that the full story with documentation will be given to them. We are just bringing up this issue for the attention of Members of Parliament. He is here for the next one month and we will be grateful if you can arrange meeting, inviting UNESCO, Immigration Department, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so that all of these issues are discussed and amicable solution is sought.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Let us take advantage of the presence of Honourable Ibrahim Sorie for the next one month to find solutions that will address these challenges. So, we want on behalf of the Sierra Leone Parliament to thank the Embassy for the warm welcome we had and the hospitality. I thank you very much for listening, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Well, Honourable Members that is very important piece of information for this House. I hope the relevant committees will take note of that.

HON. KERIFALA S. CONTEH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O 23. This is very important for the people of this country. Mr Speaker, you will agree with me that over the weekend, the National Telecommunication Commission [NATCOM] mandated the telecommunication companies to give free service to Sierra Leoneans for three days. By my primary schooling, a day is 24 hours, which means that 3 days is 72 hours. Regrettably, everybody here would agree with me that over the weekend telecommunications in this country was almost zero. In the first instance, instead of 24 hours, the telecommunication providers opted to give 6 hours. This means that the free calls started from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. And if you do a proportional calculation in relation to that, the money value of that time is Le234, 000 and we know by basic principle that if everybody is allowed to call at one time, nobody will make a call. So, I see it as a deliberate ploy by the telecom providers to give these free calls at a particular time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if it should be 72 hours, then the money value equivalence to 72 hours [assuming we call throughout that period], is **Le 2,880,000**, per Sierra Leonean using any of these networks. Honestly, Mr Speaker, if you listened to radio stations over the weekend, you would have noticed that marriages were destroyed. Lovers were separated and businesses were destroyed. Honourable Members, this is very important and it is a very serious issue. We will not was socially bias, but when you opt to call your love ones and you cannot get them, it leads to misunderstanding. For that reason, I am calling on the Committee on Information and Communications to ensure that NATCOM changes this form of punishment for these mobile operators. For example, instead of giving free calls where nobody will benefit, they should provide the equivalence in monetary value as stipulated in the Telecoms Act.

In view of the above, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will be looking forward to the Committee on Information and Communications to ensure that this lost week is compensated in monetary value to subscribers. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am standing for the Chairman and Deputy Chairman because I was present when fines were levied against these mobile operators. Some of us were invited and the Chairman of NATCOM was also invited. The mobile companies were fined **\$600,000** and **\$400,000**. Apart from those fines, the Chairman of NATCOM decided that the public should benefit. In that regard, the free calls service was an extension of the fine levied by NATCOM. This is because according to the technical people at NATCOM, some of the operators were not providing best quality service to members of the public and the outcome was that the free calls were part of the fines. We experienced some difficulties with those companies. I am sure we agreed to raise this matter in this Well today. This is because our oversight should have started this morning, but the leadership decided that because of the very important nature of legislations, that exercise should be postponed to next week. However, I want to assure you that after hanging heads with the Chairman and other members of the Committee that during our Oversight activities, this issue could be copiously raised

so that we can come back and report to this House. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Ibrahim Ben Kargbo, with regards to the deferment of the date for your oversight activity, what the Leader told you? I am not unaware of that at all. But I want to state here that that was not principally because of very important issues that we have to discuss here. The letter that was written by the Clerk of the Committee states, 'after the first successful oversight activity.' Honourable Ibrahim Kargbo, there is no evidence that the first exercise was successful. So, I will not allow the second activity until there is an evidence of that.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: We want to give assurance to Mr Speaker and to this House that the report of the first exercise will be made available soonest to allow us to continue.

THE SPEAKER: And I have to see evidence before I can allow the second exercise.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want us to go back to the issue relating to Food and Feed Safety Bill. Though it is not the business of colleague Members of Parliament on the other side to know about our convention on Thursday, but I equally want to state here that if that meeting is going to take place, we shall be away for the convention. I want the House to give due consideration to the fact that we are doing this for the whole of Parliament. Therefore, if the deliberations on that Bill are going to take place whilst we are away, it will not be good for us. I want to ask the Majority Leader of this House to make sure that we discuss that Bill tomorrow. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Majority Leader, any reaction?

HON. LEONARND S. FOFANAH: What the Honourable Member from Bo District was saying is of sense to me. Unfortunately, I cannot stand here alone and take that decision, Mr Speaker. The workshop was predicated on the people who are coming from Brussels and they are not at my beck and call at the moment. I will have to communicate with them if that suggestion will be possible. We will give you notice for tomorrow; but if we cannot find a more convenient date depending on how long

they have to be here, we will take all those things into consideration. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Mr Majority Leader, if you want total participation, then what the Honourable Jusufu B. Mansaray has said thus makes a lot of sense. So much as you said that these people are not at your beck and call, you have to contact them as the Majority Leader of this House. This is because I know why Thursday was chosen. You and I know and I am sure the Majority Leader knows why Thursday was chosen. But since we are not going to have sitting on Thursday, we could make arrangement for tomorrow. Honourable Jusufu B. Mansaray, it is the mentality of all of us normally, perhaps if we want to be very sure of having a successful meeting, it is better to have it on a day when there is sitting. And that was why we were having a sitting on Thursday. However, since that is not going to happen and this meeting is so important having regard to everything that has been said in relation to that, then if it is going to take place tomorrow, let us make every effort to be here. Mr Majority Leader, you can contact those people now and see whether they will be available. And when that information is sought, make sure it is passed to Members of Parliament. You can use the Chief Whip because he is very good at passing such information.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, I have noted your comments and your directives. The fact of the matter is that we have other stakeholders, but we will do everything possible to reach them.

HON. SULAIMAN M. SISAY: Mr Speaker, the Leader and Deputy Leader of this House wanted me to comment on the Kenya elections. I represented the AU and the Pan-African Parliament as an Observer at the elections. As far as the AU, the Carter Centre and the Commonwealth are concerned, the elections were free and fair. The problem I observed we had a pre-selection briefing with former President Thabo Mbeki and the AU. I said to them that the problem of Kenya has something to do with pre-independence and post-independence and that has something to do with two families; i.e., the Kenyatta and the Odinga families. Why can't the leaders of Africa call these two families and solve the problem of Kenya. This was what I said

during the briefing. So, whatever happened after that I was proved to be right. The two families are the problem in Kenya.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am seeing similarity in Sierra Leone. The director of the Data Management or the man in charge of the National Electoral Commission data in Kenya was killed less than ten days before the elections. In Sierra Leone, we are beginning to see similar problem with the data. So, when the Leader and the Deputy Leader asked me to comment, I see the same pattern in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leoneans should be worried. Parliament should be vigilant and we need to be proactive by calling the NEC to this House. The data is very important. If the Leadership of this House asked me to comment, this is what I have to say. It has something to do technical matters, the elections were free and fair, but it was the technical matter. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Well, Honourable Sulaiman M. Sisay, with respect to you, I know so much about the Odinga and the Kenyatta families. The political History of Africa in those days some of us are well read in it. But I want to assure you that that has nothing to do with holding credible elections. Mind you, the observers have pronounced the elections as been free and fair. They did not say anything wrong in the conduct of those elections. It was a technicality, and that is what you have said having regard to the rules. You must follow what the constitution says. And for certain things that are happening, it is left with Parliament. After adjournment, I will like to see the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Energy Committee in my office.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, let me just remind you of something you have said that we are yet to receive the report from the Telecommunications Committee. Why can't they come and talk to you also because the business of an incomplete business must be squared out; otherwise, it is going to be... -
[Interruption].

THE SPEAKER: No, let them talk to you.

HON. ANSU JAI KAIKAI: But Mr Speaker, you are the highest Authority here.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let them talk to you.

ADJOURNMENT

*[The House rose at 11.55 a.m. and was adjourned to Tuesday, 19th September,
2017 at 10 .00 a.m.]*