

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

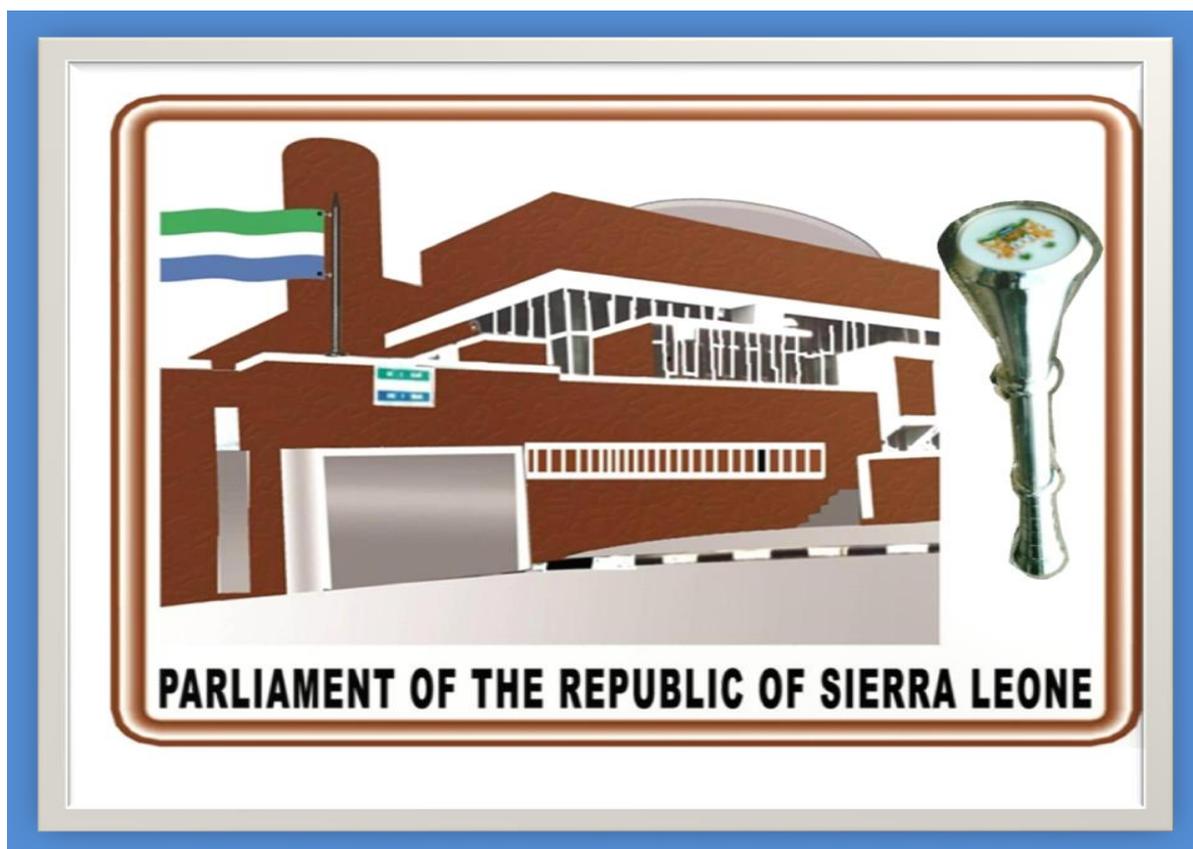
(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

THIRD SESSION - THIRD MEETING

TUESDAY, 16TH JUNE, 2015

SESSION – 2014/2015



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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Third Meeting of the Third Session of the Fourth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Tuesday, 16th June, 2015.

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- (C) ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE (REPRESENTED BY ITS MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY) AND SPECIALIST INSPECTION SERVICES (SL) LIMITED, AGREEMENT FOR THE OPERATION OF EXPORTS INSPECTION SERVICES MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY FREETOWN, DATED 10TH FEBRUARY, 2014; AND
- (D) ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE (REPRESENTED BY ITS MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY) AND GLOBAL EXPORT INSPECTION SERVICES LIMITED, AGREEMENT FOR THE OPERATION OF EXPORTS INSPECTION SERVICES MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY FREETOWN, DATED 10TH FEBRUARY, 2014.



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

**THIRD SESSION - THIRD MEETING
OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Tuesday, 16th June, 2015.

The House met at 10:13 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown.

I. PRAYERS

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

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

The House was called to Order

SUSPENSION OF S.O 5(2)

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 11TH JUNE, 2015

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Tuesday, 11th June, 2015. As usual, we go page by page. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? There being no amendment or correction, can somebody move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 11th June, 2015?

HON. ALHAJI S. DUMBUYA: Mr Speaker, I so move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. ABIE KALOKOH: Mr Speaker, I so second.

(Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to)

(The record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Tuesday, 11th June, 2015, has been adopted as presented)

III. PAPER LAID

(A) THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION 2012

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH (*Deputy Majority Leader*): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of the House the Annual Report of the Tertiary Education Commission, 2012.

(B) THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

MR BERNARD BALOGUN KOROMA (*Minister of Transport and Aviation*): Mr Speaker,, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of the House: Agreement between the Sierra Leone Airports Authority and the Westminster Aviation Security Services Limited for the Provision of Airport Security Services to Sierra Leone Airports Authority, dated 17th February, 2012

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

MADAM MABINTY DARAMY (*Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry*): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following agreements which were laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday, 2nd June, 2015:

- (a) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and African Link Inspection Company Limited, dated 13th April, 2012;
- (b) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Sierra Inspection Company Limited, dated 13th April, 2012;
- (c) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Specialist Inspection Services (SL) Limited, Agreement for the Operation of Exports Inspection Services Ministry of Trade and Industry Freetown, dated 10th February, 2014; and
- (d) Articles of agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Global Export Inspection Services Limited, Agreement for the Operation of Exports Inspection Services Ministry of Trade and Industry Freetown, dated 10th February, 2014.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you would recalled that in 2012, an agreement was signed between the Government of Sierra Leone and African Link and also Sierra Inspection Company. However, before this agreement was signed, it went through competitive bidding in line with international best practice, which was presented by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am here this morning to present this paper for it to be ratified for many reasons. The Agreement that was signed has increased revenue generation. It is believed that smuggling, fraud and tax evasion have been the norms at Customs Department, but with the establishment of inspection expert in the valuation of goods and services with offices all over the world, they have been able to minimise fraud and smuggling. This has reduced the anomalies that usually

occur at the Customs. This has resulted in revenue generation and revenue mobilisation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if these Agreements are ratified, there would be compliance in terms of scrutinising every good or service imported into the country. The rigours of scrutiny would force people to comply with the rules and regulations. Mr Speaker, since the signing of the Agreement, we have also seen the development of the human resource capacity. According to the Agreement, a Custom Officer is supposed to work with them in their offices. This will ensure the transfer of technology, techniques and knowledge to the Custom Officers.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Agreement would enable the National Revenue Authority (NRA) to establish a data base system where every item that is being imported into the country will be recorded. In other words, the data base will be transferred to NRA from which they would be able to work efficiently in revenue generation. Also, the system would help to mitigate risks because those who are complying with the terms of this Agreement would have their information transferred to NRA.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Agreement would prevent dumping of goods into our country. In other words, many countries may want to use Sierra Leone as a dumping ground to import expired goods. With such a system in place, the importation of such goods could be easily detected and prevented. For instance, in most African countries, it is believed that the dark part of a chicken (the leg) is not usually consumed in European countries or in America. What they normally do is to look for somewhere they could dump these goods. South Africa is one of the countries that is trying to discourage such practice. Refrigerators with estimated one year life span are products that are frequently dumped somewhere else. They do this to help rid their societies of hazardous wastes. As such, they always look for places to take these unwanted stuffs. But with this system in place, such practices will be prevented forthwith.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the advantages of having a destination inspection are numerous. The problem we have with export inspection is that we do not have the capacity to determine the amount of tonnage, value, price and the quality of

exports that go out of this country. Mr Speaker, I used to work at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. What usually happened with African Minerals or London Mining Ltd was that they would come to tell us that they have exported such amount of goods at certain price. We were not having any means of verifying what they were presenting to us, Mr Speaker. Therefore, this Export Inspection Company would help to determine the quality and quantity of goods and their prices. This will put Sierra Leone in a better position to benefit from the export of her natural resources.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, apart from the fact that we will be able to benefit immensely from this Agreement, but the fact that the inspection is being carried out in the country makes a lot of sense. This is because if the inspection is carried out in other parts of the world, there are militating factors. For instance, if we allow a country like China to do the inspection for us, when our importers do not speak Chinese, they will only accept whatever is being said to them. However, with the availability of these facilities, our importers will have the advantage of communicating even in our local languages. In fact, the exercise would help them improve their skills.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that the following Agreements be ratified by this Honourable House:

- (a) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and African Link Inspection Company Limited, dated 13th April, 2012;
- (b) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Sierra Inspection Company Limited, dated 13th April, 2012;
- (c) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Specialist Inspection Services (SL) Limited, Agreement for the Operation of Exports Inspection Services Ministry of Trade and Industry Freetown, dated 10th February, 2014; and
- (d) Articles of agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Global Export Inspection Services Limited,

Agreement for the Operation of Exports Inspection Services Ministry of Trade and Industry Freetown, dated 10th February, 2014.

(Question Proposed)

HON. SIDI M. TUNIS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to contribute to the ratification of the Agreements before us. These Agreements boil down to two issues, increase in revenue mobilisation for government and security for the people of this country. We have seen in the past where goods were dumped in Sierra Leone. If ratified today, these Agreements would stop malpractices that have been going on in the country and enhance revenue generation. Mr Speaker, I am saying this because for far too long this country has been exploited by unscrupulous business people. Therefore, the ratification of these Agreements is not only timely, but very important for the development of this country. The business people have been under-invoicing their goods, thereby depriving the government and the people of this country *(Applause)*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to reiterate that these are very good Agreement. I want to refer the House to Articles 4.3(1) and 4.3(5) of the Africa Link Agreements. Those provisions are talking about training and transfer of knowledge because Africa Link is going to be training our Custom Officers. With your leave, Mr Speaker, Article 4.3(1) of the Africa Link Inspection Company Limited shall ensure adequate training of its staff and management, and provide training and support to CEBF, Custom Officers in the areas of computerised risk management.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the Special Interest Services in Articles 3(1) and 3(2). Mr Speaker, what is contained in those sections has never happened in this country. In other words, there was no monitoring mechanism in place to assess the quantity and quality of goods exported out of this country. This has never happened, and with the leave of the Speaker, it says: *"SIS shall carry out quality and quantity inspections to the best of its ability at the point of loading to the export vessel."* Article 3.2 further says: *"SIS shall carry out, at its overseas offices, a price verification of the product to be exported to ensure that national revenue is obtained by the Republic of Sierra Leone."* What this Article is telling us is that whatever tonnage is leaving this country, the Company is not just the only

determinant in terms of the amount involved, but we are going to use our overseas offices to ensure that the prices are equivalent to what is being shipped out of this country. With the ratification of these Agreements, more benefits are assured for the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to call on the companies to share the data with other MDAs, especially the Produce Monitoring Board. The Committee on Trade and Industry will ensure that the data for the quantity of cocoa leaving this country is available to the people of this country. We are still having problems with some of the exporters, but these problems would be laid to rest if these Agreements are ratified today. That is, the Global Inspection Services and SIS will ensure that every single produce leaving this country is accounted for, so that the people of this country will benefit from the revenue that is going to be generated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to encourage the companies to make sure that they provide services in their areas of operation. This is because in these Agreements, the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility is not very clear, however, I want to call on the companies to ensure that they give back to these communities where they operate. I want to call on this Honourable House to put all private interests aside and ratify these Agreements. I thank you, Mr Speaker (*Applause*).

HON. P.C ALIE KAVURA KONGOMOH II: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today is another very important day in this Well. I want to say here that we the Paramount Chiefs are going to be comfortable because of these Agreements. I am saying this because we are living with the grass root people and we know how often they grumble against the government. If the government has started taking some positive decisions to allay their fears, I think that is a very good move by the government. Mr Speaker, when I was reading the provisions in the Agreements, I became fulfilled and satisfied. For example, when some of these investors go to the provinces, the next thing they do is to acquire lands and even determine the prices of our produce. In other words, they determine the prices of our Cocoa, coffee, ginger, etc. Mr Speaker, if you go to some of these local shops, you will never price their goods. However, if these Agreements are ratified and

enforced, there will be more revenue for the government and the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that I am 100% in favour of these Agreements. Our local farmers have been suffering for decades because their produce are being priced by other people. They do not even know how these prices are determined. With these few words, Mr Speaker, I want to crave the indulgence of this Honourable House to speedily ratify these Agreements. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, everybody is clamouring for an increase in salary and an improvement in the conditions of service. This will only happen if we put a stop on some of the anomalies that are happening within our revenue generation institutions. As the first speaker said, these are fine Agreements and we must ensure that the provisions in these Agreements are implemented for the benefit of the people of this country. As Members of Parliament, we should be clamouring for Agreements meant to increase revenue generation in this country. If we ratify these Agreements, I believe this government and subsequent governments will have an increase in revenue generation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some of the goods coming into this country are substandard. This is because we do not have any mechanism in place at the Water Quay to monitor the quality of goods being imported into this country, but if these Agreements are ratified, some of these substandard goods would not be imported into this country. As the Minister has said, this country is presently a dumping ground for expired goods. If you walk along the streets, you will notice that most of the goods have expired.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these Agreements would also help to capacitate the staff of NRA because these institutions have the capacity to empower our staff to match up to international standards. With these few words, I want to urge this Honourable House to speedily ratify these Agreements. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. UMAR PARAN TARAWALY: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that advantages of these Agreements are many. As a representative of the people, when these Agreements were placed into my pigeon hole, I read through them and I discussed them with my constituents. Therefore, most of the things I am about to say this morning are information I gathered from them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my constituents are convinced that these Agreements will boost economic growth in the country. They will lead to export-led growth because the objective for which Sierra Leone is moving towards trade and investment gateway will be achieved through these Agreements. I am saying this because those who have read these Agreements will agree with me that putting a verification process in place for all import and export goods will add value to our revenue generation drive.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these Agreements is geared towards eliminating fraud, tax evasion and price discrimination. These Agreements are also meant to put a stop to the activities of fraudsters. I want to tell all economic saboteurs of this country that today is a turning point in the economic life of Sierra Leone. This is the time their nefarious activities would have to come to an end. We want to create a conducive atmosphere for domestic entrepreneurship. Mr Speaker, these Agreements attempt to deter over invoicing and under-valuation of our goods. This is because the Agreements seek to ensure transparency and accountability. Mr Speaker, by introducing the principles of transparency and accountability into the process, our revenue base will increase and all ill-fated individuals who have been circumventing due process will no longer have an escape route.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly look at the obligations of the Companies in these Agreements. According to these Agreements, the various Companies would be charged with the responsibility of implementing the provisions contained in these Agreements. Mr Speaker, if you look at the system of the single window concept, as contained in Article 14 of the Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Africa Link Inspection Company, you would agree with me that this system is a transparency mechanism geared towards sharing

information and giving access to individual actors to ensure that they know exactly what goes on in this industry. The Single Window Concept is a unique concept geared towards ensuring the dissemination of Trade Messaging Software System to different MDAs, like the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Finance, Export Agent Promotion Agency, the Office of the President, etc. This will ensure that the MDAs concerned know exactly the operational policies, activities and actions of all the players involved. In fact, this system will also ensure that nobody reports directly to the President as it used to be because the Office of the President is also part of the Single Window Concept.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to conclude by calling on this Honourable House to ensure that these Agreements are implemented to the latter. I am in support of these Agreements; and I want to urge colleague Honourable Members to ratify these Agreements. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have a Chairman in charge of the Committee on Trade and Industry. He has a wealth of experience in Business Management. He believes that if the government raises more revenue, the betterment of the people of this country is assured. The Agreements we have before us are meant to generate more funds for the government and people of Sierra Leone. They are meant to ensure the prosperity of the people of this country. As the Honourable Member has just said, since these Agreements are meant to better the lives of Sierra Leoneans, we have to give them our supports. We, on this side of the ayes, want prosperity in every corner of this country. We have to give these Agreements our supports, not because we love Honourable Sidi M. Tunis, who is the Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Industry, but because these Agreements are meant to better the lives of Sierra Leoneans. As opposition Members of Parliament, we are not here to oppose good things like these Agreements. However, we will continue to oppose any Agreement that is not in the interest of the people of this country. With these few words, I want to crave the indulgence of this Honourable House to speedily ratify these Agreements. Thank you, Mr Speaker (*Applause*).

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: I thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have before us Agreements meant to promote the welfare our people. One of these Agreements is already been implemented for over a year, but it is here today for ratification. Two of these Agreements have taxation clauses without the consent of Parliament. I would want the Minister to make these clarifications. The GGDO, under the auspices of the Ministry of Mineral Resources, is responsible for a lot of the functions that are included in these Agreements. I want to call on the attention of this Honourable House that these clauses in the Agreements should be revisited. The Minister should inform this House that those clauses in the Agreements are in the domain of other institutions, instead of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. We have to make sure that the issue of conflict of interest is avoided. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice must review these Agreements to ensure that they are properly aligned. I want to call on the Minister to take notes of the issues I have raised and take care of them accordingly before the implementation of these Agreements.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want the Minister to know that these are fine Agreements, but those clauses may have been mistakes on the part of those who put these documents together. For example, the issue of Gold and Diamond in these Agreements must be expunged, since they belong to other Ministries and institutions of government. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the debates on the Agreements before us started on a very good note. That is, all speakers were enthusiastic in making their submissions in terms of the numerous advantages of these Agreements. During her presentation, the Minister elaborated and enumerated the advantages to the government of Sierra Leone, especially those that have to do with revenue generation for the government. However, the Acting Minority Leader ended on a very sad note. This government is desirous of generating funds and in the process, some mistakes were committed. I am not saying that the Agreements were speedily done, but hindsight is now telling us that there are lacunas in the Agreements and they would be revisited accordingly. The government entered into these Agreements because it needed those funds; and in the process to generate

funds, the Agreements were implemented before they came to this House. However, the Agreements are now before this Honourable House; and we have identified the lacunas in the Agreements. I want to assure the Acting Minority Leader that those Clauses are going to be revisited and reviewed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Chairman of the Oversight Committee on Trade and Industry has vigorously defended these Agreements. Therefore, I want to urge my colleague Honourable Members on both sides of the ayes of this House to speedily ratify these Agreements. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

MADAM MABINTY DARAMY (*Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry*): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take this opportunity again to thank all those who have contributed to this debate. I want to thank you for your contributions towards these Agreements. All the issues you brought forward are genuine and I want to assure this Honourable House that the gaps identified by the Acting Minority Leader would be considered. On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following Agreements which were laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday, 2nd June, 2015:

- (a) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and African Link Inspection Company Limited, dated 13th April, 2012;
- (b) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Sierra Inspection Company Limited, dated 13th April, 2012;
- (c) Articles of Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Specialist Inspection Services (SL) Limited, Agreement for the Operation of Exports Inspection Services Ministry of Trade and Industry Freetown, dated 10th February, 2014; and
- (d) Articles of agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by its Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Global Export Inspection Services Limited, Agreement for the Operation of Exports Inspection Services Ministry of Trade and Industry Freetown, dated 10th February, 2014.

(Question proposed, put and agreed to)
(Government Motion by the Minister of Trade and Industry has been ratified)

ADJOURNMENT

*(The House rose at 11.15 a.m., and was adjourned to Thursday, 18th June, 2015, at
10.00 a.m.)*