

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

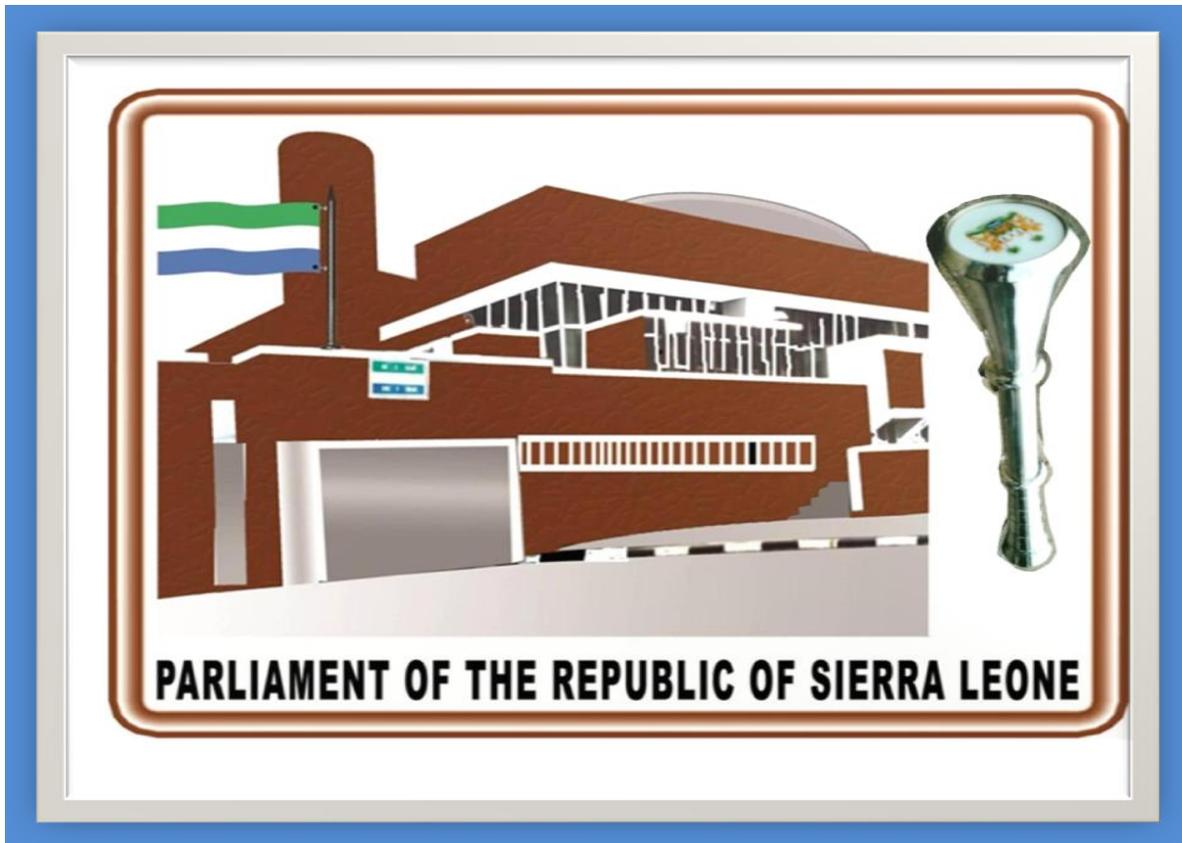
(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION - THIRD MEETING

THURSDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2016

SESSION – 2015/2016



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMETARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: IV

NUMBER: 41

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Thursday, 3rd November, 2016.

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PROPOSER: HON. IBRAHIM BUNDU

SECONDER: HON. CLAUDE D.M KAMANDA

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT THE FIFTEENTH REPORT OF THE FOURTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE BE ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE AND THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN BE APPROVED.

V. PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

The Minister of Internal Affairs

To brief Parliament on the following;

1. What is the current fees for passports?
2. Is there any increase in the passport fees?
3. When are these new rates effective?
4. Upon what legal Instrument has your ministry made this increase?
5. What is the cost of an application form?



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Thursday, 3rd November, 2016.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Mrs Fatmata Bintu Weston, Read the Prayers].

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

[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, 27TH OCTOBER, 2016

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 27th October, 2016. As usual, we go through page by page. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? There being no amendment or correction, could someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 27th November, 2016 as presented?

HON. MOHAMED KAMARA: Mr Speaker, I so move.

HON. ALPHA B. LEWALLY: Mr Speaker, I so second.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 27th October, 2016 has been adopted as presented]

III. PAPERS LAID

[A] HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HON. HASSAN SHERIFF: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, permit me to lay on the Table of the House a document entitled 'Proposed Monthly Remunerations and Allowances for the Chairperson and Members of the NASSIT Board of Trustees.'

HON. BASIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I wanted to move a motion that this document that has just been laid be debated.

THE SPEAKER: Are you moving a motion or giving a notice of a motion?

HON. BASIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I will be moving the motion, but I was just giving a notice of motion.

[B] HON. HANNAH BUNDU SONGUWA

CHAIRPERSON, PARLIAMENTARY ACTION GROUP

2016 TO 2017 PARLIAMENTARY ACTION PLAN ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SIERRA LEONE

HON. HANNAH BUNDU SONGOWA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of the House the Report of the parliamentary Action Group in Ending Violence against Women and Children in Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, in accordance with S.O 18[7], permit me to give a brief overview on this document I am about to lay.

Introduction

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, a group of parliamentarians met at the Bintumani Hotel on the 30th May, 2016 to discuss the situation of violence against women and children in Sierra Leone. A second meeting was also held in August at the Bintumani Hotel, wherein a communiqué was finalised. In that communiqué, Mr Speaker, parliamentarians committed to do the following for the women and children of this country:

- [i] law reform and implementation;
- [ii] advocacy and awareness;
- [iii] mobilise resources; and
- [iv] monitor and implement action plan.

Also Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, members of this Committee agreed to have the following as honorary members, i.e., the first lady of Sierra Leone, the Speaker of this Honourable House and the Clerk of Parliament. There were other issues discussed for the attention of donor partners and the government. Issue, like the presentation of the communiqué to the media and other stakeholders, was also agreed upon, which we are going to do in Committee Room 1. Presentation of the action plan to donors and other stakeholders would be done this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. We also agreed to have an operationalisation of the action plan with donors and other partners. Also, parliamentarians committed themselves in the monitoring and evaluation of this action

plan. Mr Speaker, Permit me now to lay this document on the Table of this Honourable House *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, following what has just been said, I would like to interrupt the proceedings at this point to recognise visitors that are here to witness the laying of that Paper on Parliamentary Action Plan on Ending Violence Against Women and Children in Sierra Leone. I want to recognise and welcome them for attending this ceremony. I also want to welcome representative from UN, who are occupying the Diplomatic side of the gallery. I also want to recognise representatives of UNICEF, SLSAV, US AID, EU, the Inspector General of Police, Professor Memunatu Pratt, UN Women and World Vision.

[C] HON. ALPHA BABA TUNDE LEWALLY

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

HON. ALPHA B. LEWALLY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also stand on S.O 18[6-7]. Before I lay the document, permit me to give an extract of the aforementioned document. I read, "Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the world is now facing a threat of a well-known global phenomenon of climate change that requires the collective effort, as a nation, to adopt policies and strategies on mitigation and adaptation mechanisms in consonance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to which Sierra Leone, as a nation, is signatory. The recommendations in this Report highlight some of the contributions we can make towards fighting Climate Change as Legislators for which the Chairpersons of Committee on Lands and the Environment, Agriculture and Food Security, Fishery and Marine Resources, Mines and Mineral Resources, etc. would solicit this noble House for our active participation with the Climate Change stakeholders in combating the unfolding activities of these environmental disaster.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of the House a document entitled: 'Report on Climate Change Awareness Raising Issues for the Parliamentary Committee on Transport and Aviation, organised by the Meteorological Department, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and the

Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency, held at Makeni City, on the 22nd and 23rd September, 2016.

[D] HON. BENNEH BANGURA

THE CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

HON. BENNEH BANGURA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, permit me to lay on the Table of this Honourable House a document entitled:

Report of the Committee on Information and Communications Oversight visits to Selected Departments, Commissions and Parastatals in the Provinces, from the 31st May to the 3rd June, 2016; and in Freetown, from the 19th to the 22nd July, 2016. I thank you very much [*Applause*].

IV. MOTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Mr Speaker, with your leave in the absence of the seconder, the Honourable Claude D. M. Kamanda, I would want to ask that the Honourable Leonard S. Fofanah to take his place.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I hope there are no dissenting views to that suggestion. Please proceed, Mr Majority Leader.

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I present to you the Fourth Session of the Fourth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, Fifteenth Report of the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service on Parliamentary vetting of presidential nominations.

1. Introduction

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service, alive to its constitutional obligations, met on Tuesday, 1st November, 2016 and interviewed three Presidential nominees for appointments as follows.

- i. Director-General, National Civil Registration Authority
- ii. Two Members, National Civil Registration Authority

2. Procedure

The Committee conducted the hearings within its set framework of procedures. The nominees were interviewed on issues pertaining to their educational background to ensure that they have the relevant education and necessary backup experiences to man such important offices of state. Further probing questions put to the nominees covered wide ranging issues relating to their track records in pertinent work situations, declared assets, tax obligations and their vision for a nationally productive tenure. Issues of unsuitability or otherwise were closely looked into.

3. sixteenth sitting of the committee on Tuesday, 1st November, 2016

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the following nominees were interviewed on oath:

i. Mr Foday Kamara, Proposed Director-General, National Civil Registration Authority

Mr Foday Kamara is currently the Chief Registrar, National Registration Secretariat. He joined the Sierra Leone Civil Service in 1995 and has served in the following institutions among others:

1995 – 2000, Cabinet Secretariat;

2000 – 2006, Anti-corruption Commission; and

2010 – date, National Registration Secretariat.

Mr Foday Kamara is a seasoned administrator, economist, research/intelligence and Civil Registration Specialist with over 15 years of post-graduate work experience in public service administration and management.

Responding to pertinent questions, Mr Foday Kamara deposed that his mandate as Director-General of the Authority includes providing overall leadership in the management of the day to day activities of the Authority and to initiate and maintain high-level contact with interested parties at both the local and international levels. Reacting to further questions, Mr Foday Kamara said that **“the Authority was established to develop and maintain an accurate database of the population of Sierra Leone, issue out national identity cards to everyone resident in**

Sierra Leone and providing accurate information on births, deaths, adoptions and marriages.”

ii. Ms Valnora A. C. Edwin, Proposed Member, National Civil Registration

Authority

Ms Valnora A. C. Edwin is the Executive Director of the ‘Campaign for Good Governance’ and has served in that position for the past nine years. She is highly skilled in policy advocacy, coordinating and participating in research, leveraging resources, fundraising, networking and negotiating with donors, governments, civil society organisations and the media both nationally and internationally.

Responding to the Committee’s inquiries, Ms Valnora Edwin said that **“the board would be there to make policy guidelines and exercise control and supervision over the Authority particularly in the area of financial management to enhance the effective and efficient functioning of the Authority.”**

iii. Mr Hassan Lama Bundu, Proposed Member, Member National Civil

Registration Authority

Mr Hassan Lama Bundu is a practitioner of the noble teaching profession and has taught in various schools from 1993 to date. Mr Bundu combines his teaching with business and is the Proprietor of the Palama General Services, Sierra Leone Limited of 137 Fourah Bay Road, Freetown.

Answering to the Committee’s inquiries on what would be his input on the board, Mr Bundu said, “I will work collaboratively with colleague Board members to ensure strict adherence to the provisions of the Act and all policies thereto, to enhance the effective management of the Authority.”

4. Recommendations

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Committee adjudged the following Presidential nominees to be suitably qualified for their proposed appointments and they are recommended to the House for approval:

- i. Mr Foday Kamara, Director-General, National Civil Registration Authority;
- ii. Ms Valnora A. C. Edwin, Member National Civil Registration Authority; and
- iii. Mr Hassan Lama Bundu, Member National Civil Registration Authority.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Fifteenth Report is the unanimous decision of the Committee. I therefore move that the Fifteenth Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service be adopted by the House and that the recommendations contained therein be approved. Signed by Honourable Ibrahim R. Bundu, Chairman.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed]

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that the nominees before us this morning are going to occupy very unique positions. The interview of these three nominees was very short and for the first time the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service had a set of nominees going to the same authority, i.e., the National Civil Registration Authority; starting from the Director-General and his Commissioners. Therefore, the past interview was of a different kind. Fortunately, all the three nominees, starting from the proposed Director-General to the Commissioners, were eminently qualified in their various fields. The experiences they brought before the Committee during their interview made the work of the Committee easier.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start with Mr Foday Kamara, proposed Director-General, National Civil Registration Authority. This is not the very first time this House is meeting Mr Foday Kamara. During the passage of the Civil Registration Act, we had the pre-legislative hearing in which Mr Foday Kamara eloquently explained to

the House in Committee Room 1 the functions of the Civil Registration Authority. I believe every Member of Parliament went home satisfied that the Government is putting in place the Civil Registration Authority. From that point on, Mr Foday Kamara has assiduously worked to start the implementation of the programme. And when he appeared before the Committee of Appointments, he again elaborated efficiently on the need and the purpose of the Civil Registration Authority and how it is going to be helpful to this country. According to him, the Authority would assist even the National Electoral Commission [NEC] in the registration of voters. Those who intend to contest the forthcoming elections should take heart that everything would be well and the elections would go on well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I said earlier in my introduction, the Committee was sufficiently satisfied with the candidates before us and I want to recommend them to this House for approval. I thank you, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

HON. P.C. JOSEPH ALIE KAVURA KONGOMOH II: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My contribution is going to be based on a personal plea. As the last speaker rightly said, the three nominees before us were over qualified. However, I want to inform this House that we Members of Parliament are representing the grassroots and we know what Census did. We know what other registrations are doing. For example, when it is time for voter registration, we know what usually happens. Sometimes our local people are unregistered and they have the right to be registered. I am pleading that the promises made during the interview are adhered to by these nominees. This is what I wanted to plead with the nominees because I know the President and his advisers are very wise.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want this House to know that the President is preparing for the future development of this nation. I hope all those put in those places would perform according to the expectations of the people and the President. I thank you very much and I plead that we speedily approve these nominees.

HON. DIXON M. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am going to be very brief in my contribution. I want to re-echo the statement made by the Deputy Majority Leader when he said that this is the first time the President has nominated more than two people in a position and that they are all qualified, or better still, over qualified for the first time.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Dixon Rogers, do you think that was a very honest statement made by the Deputy Majority Leader?

HON. DIXON M. ROGERS: Yes, Mr Speaker. As far as I am concerned, it was a honest statement.

THE SPEAKER: It is your opinion.

HON. DIXON M. ROGERS: I was quoting from what the Deputy Majority Leader said, Mr Speaker. I will not withdraw that statement I think that a fair statement as far as I am concerned.

THE SPEAKER: Did he say so, Honourable Member?

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: This statement was not made yesterday, but a few minutes ago. I did not say what the Member of Parliament has quoted.

THE SPEAKER: It means that the Honourable Member has not quoted the statement correctly.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Absolutely, Mr Speaker.

HON. DIXON M. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, let me start with Mr Foday Kamara. Mr Foday Kamara deserves the job because I think he is very thorough in the discharge of his duties. I have met Mr Foday Kamara twice in his office and judging from the discussions I had with him, he is a man who is ready to sacrifice for this country. Therefore, I think he is qualified for this job. He is somebody who always stands by his words. His yes is always yes and his no is always no. In summary, therefore he is a disciplinarian.

For Miss Valnora Edwin, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that Miss Valnora Edwin has been very firm in every decision she has taken. She has defended democracy in this country and I hope she would continue in that direction. She is a woman of substance and she deserves whatever appointment she gets in this country.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have known Mr Hassan Lama Bundu when we were serving as teachers at the Congress Secondary School. I have no speck of doubt in his capacity to perform. My only problem is that he is a brother to Honourable Ibrahim R. Bundu. I hope he would not be influenced. Thank you very much *[Laughter]*.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Honourable Dixon Rogers was saying very good things about somebody I taught in school. If the Speaker is boosting of people he has taught, I have also produced people who are being recognised by the President of this nation. Today, I am happy to state here that I have people whom I have taught and Mr Foday Kamara who is seated here today is one of them. I think I should be commended for that because I contributed in his education.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Mr Foday Kamara was a student of mine at the Ahmadiyya Secondary School. In fact, he was one of the first students I taught when I graduated from Fourah Bay College. I am sure the inspiration we provided for them then served him well and he chose the right path to work. That is why I have no doubt in him to perform his functions at the office where he would go if approved by this House. I want to remind him to always put this country first before any other thing. I am saying this because every nominee is expected to serve this nation. The office Mr Foday Kamara is going to occupy is very sensitive and we are looking forward to its contribution towards national development. There is one thing I always know that good students are identified not when they are in the work place, but when they were growing up. I am here to reaffirm my belief in him and the faith I have in his talent to perform.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about the other two nominees in front of us. For the lady from Campaign for Good Governance, I have always known her through the works she has been doing in this country. I am sure her nomination by the President is apt and I believe she deserves that position. She would definitely do what she has been doing at the Campaign for Good Governance. In the same vein, I believe Mr Hassan Lama Bundu would also perform as expected for the progress of this country. He has been a teacher and all of us know what teachers are capable of doing. Teachers are performers and result oriented people. His wealth of experience in the classroom would help to transform the National Registration Authority.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to ask my colleagues that we hastily confirm these nominees. I thank you very much.

HON. VERONICA K. SESAY: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was with the Committee that interviewed these fine nominees and having gone through their Curriculum Vitae [CVs], they were found to be qualified for the positions they have been nominated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to single out one person because I want to be very brief. I want to talk about Madam Valnora Edwin. In this country, the name Valnora is a household name. We the women of this country have been fighting for 30% quota in terms of women's representation. I always feel good whenever women are nominated to serve in different positions, especially those who have proven their mettle. However, I want to give her piece of advice. I know she has been doing well and I also know that she would perform beyond imagination. I have no iota of doubt in her capability to prove herself. What men can do, women can even do it better.

Considering the importance of registration in this country, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we want every single person to be registered because it is their right to be registered. We discussed it during the interview because it is one of the challenges we faced during the census. In the Riverain I come from, it is very difficult to go to that place, especially the road leading to Shengeh. As we are preparing to start the registration process, I want you to make sure that every woman in this country is

registered. I am not in any way saying that men should not be registered. I am only sending a message to the lady in front of us. Please pay more attention to women because we are more vulnerable. Women have more problems in this country and you should make sure that the last woman in the village is registered. That is my concern because you have been doing it before. As somebody was saying, you are indeed a woman of substance and not a woman of circumstance. I believe that you will lead and others will follow because there are women out there waiting for such opportunities. We have a lot of good women in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to talk about the male nominees before us this morning. We have gone through your documents and we are quite sure that you would perform beyond expectations. As I was saying, we want you to ensure that those in the River Line area are registered. Majority of my constituents were not counted during the census and that is why we had that problem during the boundary delimitation. We do not want to face the same problem again in the forthcoming general election. Please make sure that the last person is registered. You promised us during your interview and I know that those promises would come to pass. So, we are going to take you by your words. I will be reminding you on the promises you have made to us.

With these few words, I want to urge my colleagues to approve these nominees because we want them to go and start work. I thank you, very much.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very happy for giving me this opportunity this morning. The Honourable Hassan Sesay said that he taught Mr Foday Kamara during his secondary school days. I have had the opportunity to have been in the university with Mr Foday Kamara. I have already been a teacher before Honourable Hassan Sesay taught Mr Foday Kamara. I had a Higher Teacher's Certificate by then. Therefore, by the time he was a teacher to Mr Foday Kamara, I was already a trained and qualified teacher *[Laughter]*. Mr Foday Kamara is a dedicated and sincere Sierra Leonean. I know how scrupulous he could be, especially in the discharge of his duties. I am not surprised why he grew in the civil service. He has indeed grown

over the years. However, I want to advise Mr Foday Kamara that he starts as he wishes. I want him to know that sometimes when people are in positions of trust in this country, there are baits. What are the baits? Some people are very good in dropping those baits for decent people, so that they could be corrupted. Please, I want you to be guided and always try to do the right thing. Somebody has just reminded me of a Bible scripture that I love so much; Proverbs 1:7. With the leave of Mr Speaker, it says, **“The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”** Please avoid any mundane activities and stay focused. There are people who could lure you to do the wrong thing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second person I want to talk about is Madam Valnora. We have not interacted personally, but we have been interacting in this country at one major level because I belong to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and I have been a journalist with very strong repute in this country. I have operated at the highest level of journalism. So, we have been engaging at that level from the civil society wing. I have been watching Madam Valnora very closely because I have worked with her in the Civil Society realm. During those years, she proved herself as somebody who can perform. I want to inform madam Valnora that she has attained certain standards that must be maintained. Our worry is that who is going to take after her? She performed very well during that transition in this country and some of us are very happy. Again, I want to caution that you do the right thing and ignore any bait from the powers that be. Don't be overwhelmed with that and always try to do your work diligently. In other words, make sure you do your work conscientiously, follow your convictions, and be guided with respect and the leadership skills you have gathered. Do not fall below standards. We will be monitoring your activities and society will hold you responsible for any drop in the standard you have set yourself. I am really encouraged by your appointment because we in the Civil Society are guided in what we normally do.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Mr Hassan Lama Bundu is also a very good nominee. The three of them are going to the same institution and they must work as a team for the benefit of this country. I am very hopeful that they would be approved by

this House. However, I want to admonish them not to allow personality conflict to interfere with their good work they are expected to do. Team spirit is one of the effective methods in achieving positive results in any organisation. You will always succeed by the benchmarks you have set yourself to achieve. In other words, team work is good for every institution and you are expected to put the interest of that organisation first. You are not going there to be recognised, but the institution you are going to represent. What usually happens with our public officials is that they allow personality conflict to control their actions, which is very bad for the development of that institution. The team should always claim the accolades instead of individuals. Please, don't be like Donald Trump when he said **"I will make America strong again."** We don't want those kinds of leaders in this country. It should not be Madam Valnora or Mr Hassan Lama Bundu, etc. It has to be 'us' or 'we.'

With those pieces of advice, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to encourage this Honourable House to speedily approve the nominees before us. Thank you very much.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI [*Minority Leader of the House*]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I did not teach the three nominees as some of my colleagues did in the past. That is because they did not attend Christ the King College, where I taught for several years. It was in that school that I taught Honourable Foday Rado Yokie when he was a small boy in form II. He was very troublesome and he is still troublesome [*Laughter*].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start by thanking the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service for the interviews they did a few days ago. In as much I would have loved to be there, unfortunately I was not because I had other pressing issues to attend. However, I have read their CVs and I have no reason to doubt the recommendations of the Committee on Appointments. It is left with this House to approve or disapprove the recommendations of the Committee. For the past few sittings, we have been dealing with nominations pertaining to either the establishment of Boards or approval their members.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Chairman of the Board is here with us, Ambassador Bangali and I am not surprised that he is here this morning. He is here to give support to members of the Authority. This morning, we are here to approve the Director-General and two members that will sit on the Authority. Also, I was reliably informed that country-wide examinations are being conducted for the applicants that will go out into the field to conduct the National Civil Registration.

Talking about the nominees, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will briefly say that Mr Foday has appeared before us maybe three times. If approved, he is going to be at the apex of that Authority. We did question him a lot when he appeared before us the other time and we have seen the work he and his team did as the Registrar of that Authority.

The name Valnora Edwin is a household name in this country as somebody said earlier. When it comes to civil society matters, good governance, transparency and accountability issues, she has been either on 98.1 FM station or the other media houses to talk about issues bothering on governance in Sierra Leone. Her positions on those issues were always clear.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not know Mr Bundu, but what I know just now as he appeared before us is that he is the Majority Leader's brother. Being a teacher and also a businessman, I think they are all very well placed for the positions they have been nominated to serve. All of them have proved their mettle and I think that prompted their nominations.

Having spoken about the nominees, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I now come to the institution they have been nominated to serve. The National Civil Registration Authority is very important and the Director-General has clearly outlined what he sees as his responsibility since he is going to be at the helm of affairs. He said that the Authority is meant to provide accurate information on births, deaths and marriages. In addition to that, the Authority is also meant to provide accurate data on the demography of Sierra Leone, which is no child's play. It is a very important task and it is the basis for proper planning. If we fail to know those who are in Sierra Leone, their status, their socio-economic situation and their demographics, then we cannot properly

plan. Consequently, accurate and reliable data on the demography of Sierra Leone is very important for proper planning. It is a very important task because it is the basis of planning for the development of this country. If you provide wrong data, then you come out with wrong policies. If the data is accurate and reliable, then we expect good planning for the development of this country. That is the position and the work of this Authority.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before we passed the Act that established that Authority, we held a pre-legislative hearing on that, where various concerns were flagged up. One of the issues that came out strongly was the issue of using the data for the National Electoral Commission [NEC] registration and voting. That was very topical and is still topical. Clarifications were asked and answers were given, maybe not to the satisfaction of everybody. I want to emphasize here that national registration is for everybody in this country. For someone to partake in the electoral process, he/she must have attained the age of 18 years and above. We have seen that the issue of NEC conducting the voter registration after the national registration exercise has been done. The advantage is that it gives opportunity to people who would not be captured by the National Registration Act. It also gives them another opportunity to be captured, especially if they are eligible voters to be captured when the voter registration is being done.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take you back to the 2007 elections. We did one election which was only for Parliament and the Presidential. In 2008, when we were about to do the Local Government elections, we had to do another voter registration because there were citizens who would not have been qualified or eligible to vote by then; but in 2008, they would have qualified and that gave them the opportunity to exercise their franchise. So, this question is becoming topical. We really need to rationalise and debate on that issue in order to compartmentalise the functions and imports of the National Registration Authority and even the functions, objects and the imports of the NEC, but in relation to voter registration.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as we ratify your nominations this morning, we don't want you to shy away from these issues because we want to see the total involvement of everybody in Sierra Leone. If we do this, I think there would be total acceptance of the outcome of our democratic process, of which election is one of those tenants. So, this is very important for us as a nation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if the applications are out, where are they supposed to be taken? They are supposed to be taken to the NEC offices in the provinces and in Freetown. This means we still need to decentralise the National Registration Authority. The National Electoral Commission offices are everywhere in the fourteen districts of this country. In the same token, therefore, we expect an important institution of such nature to be decentralised in all the fourteen districts of this country, so that people who are not able to come to Freetown could be registered in their immediate localities. As we speak, a lot of people still don't have their National ID Cards simply because of the problems of coming to Freetown. In fact, even if you decide to conduct a mobile registration exercise in the provinces, it will not capture everybody because there are people who are far away from the registration centres. That is why decentralisation is very important. We have decentralised offices like the National Electoral Commission [NEC], Political Party Registration Commission [PPRC] and many other institutions that are key to the growth of our democracy. These are the things I want you to work on very seriously. Campaign for Good Governance has offices in every region, which is very good for our democracy. It is important because democracy is all about participation; and that will only happen if government is brought to the door steps of the people. In other words, you can only participate if the resources of those institutions are decentralised. We may not take it at the Chiefdom level, but at least we may start with the districts, so that when funds are available, we can proceed to the Chiefdoms.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the three nominees are well placed and we hope that they will put the country first. Madam Valnora is in a very special and delicate situation. She has been a supporter and promoter of democracy and good governance in this country. If this House approves her nomination, she is going to be part and

parcel of that institution. I hope that you will draw a clear line between what you think is supposed to be and what you do not. If the oven is turned on and you cannot bear the heat, I will not tell you what to do, but I know you know what to do.

With these few words, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank them in advance, so that they can go about their work, especially now that their exams are ongoing. They have to go and put modalities in place for the registration exercise in January. I thank you all very much and God bless us all *[Applause]*.

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU *[Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, almost all those who spoke before me were claiming to have known the nominees. Well, I want this House to know that I know them very well. Through family ties and friendship I know Madam Valnora, Mr Foday Kamara and Mr Hassan Lama Bundu very well. I will just associate myself with the positive sentiments they have expressed and wish them well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I just want to make a few comments to the institution these nominees are going to serve. We all know that the National Civil Registration is similar to the National Population Census and the Election Registration. However, the National Civil Registration Authority is going to be doing its duties on a daily basis. Every day, new babies are born, people die, people from other countries come to this country and marriages and divorces are taking place. I know that we have not been opportune to consolidate all of that and that is why we have put in place the necessary structures to take care of that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the establishment of the Civil Registration Authority is very important for us because when it comes to the National Population Census, there are people who are always expressing political sentiments. Some people are only interested because of political reasons, thereby leaving other relevant areas. Also, when it comes to the National Election Registration, we all have our various reasons for participating. I am sure the National Civil Registration, if properly handled, the extraction of the National Voters Registration should not be controversial at all. If we have the correct or accurate information from the National Civil Registration, we will be

able to save cost. That is exactly what the extraction of the Civil Registration Authority means.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my own advice is that whenever we register citizens and foreigners, let us allocate a permanent number to people, so that we can see how people use their birth or divorce certificates for personal use. We have witnessed a situation where you see the father and his son/daughter working in the same office. What is more disturbing is that the son will be retired at the age sixty, whilst the father will still be working in that office. That is a fraudulent activity, but sometimes we laugh at it. It is a pathetic situation, Mr Speaker and it has to stop. How do you explain that? With the National Civil Registration, Mr Speaker, we hope some of those issues will be looked into very critically.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Veronica Sesay was expressing her fears in terms of taking the registration exercise to the remote areas. There is one area we have not considered during the legislative process of Civil Registration Authority; i.e., the role of the Paramount Chiefs, Section Chiefs and the Village Headmen. These are statutory bodies. I am not sure there is any village without one or two educated person[s]. I am sure this will serve as motivation to enhance the work of the officials because some places are very difficult to traverse in terms of the remuneration you are going to pay these officers. If properly communicated or coordinated, the village headmen will perform many functions in terms of providing vital information on births and deaths within their localities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the question is how many of those places are being reached out to solicit authentic information? In the villages, for example, when somebody dies, it is the business of everybody because people will not even go to their farms. This means that the information is available. When a child is born, it is the joy for everybody in that village. We are not reaching out to the relevant authorities. We rely on Contractors and Consultants. Well, Contractors and Consultants are there to make money. I am not in any way discarding the information those people are

supplying you, but you have to crosscheck the information. We have the right officers in this country, but we monetised these positions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if a village headman is given the responsibility, he can perform multi roles and this has been happening. When you go to a village, you must report to the village headman. We have abandoned that practice, but it is very important. We defeated the Ebola epidemic because we gave responsibilities to our village heads and they perform exceptionally well. Most of the criminal activities that are taking place are not happening outside Sierra Leone. Marijuana cultivation is not happening outside this country, but inside this country. Where do you think the piece of land where the cultivation takes place belongs? It belongs to a chiefdom, a section and a village. If that is the case, why are we finding it difficult to trail those criminals? We are now paying the Paramount Chiefs and they are expected to do their jobs. They are paid to perform a national duty. The resources we are receiving here are not enough to do what we are supposed to do, but because we want to provide a national service, that is why we are working so hard for the future of this country.

Fortunately, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Chairman and the Director-General are here. I want to appeal to them to ensure that they use the services of those village headmen and the section chiefs. They would help in getting accurate data we would like to use for proper planning and development. Make sure you monitor the officers in the field. I am saying this because when you give them job, they will say the salary is not enough for them and the next thing they do is to dodge the job. We need accurate and reliable data we can use to plan well.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to commend and wish them well. We hope that they will place Sierra Leone first. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Motion on the Committee of Appointments and the Public Service has been ratified].

THE SPEAKER: Lady and gentlemen, on behalf of Parliament, I congratulate all of you and I wish you well.

V. PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

RTD MAJOR PAULO CONTEH [*Minister of Internal Affairs*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is always a privilege to be in this Honourable House. I have received a number of questions from this House, but before I answer those questions, let me set the scene as far as passports are concerned. Originally, Section 7 of the Immigration Act, 1964 states thus: **"It is the Minister of Internal Affairs who is responsible to fix the price of a passport, whether new or renewable passports."** Second, I wish to state here that a passport, even though it is a right, but that has not been exercised by every Sierra Leonean. It is only the privilege few. Privilege few because these are people who can afford a ticket to travel outside Sierra Leone. For instance, if you want to go to the UK, the minimum price for a return ticket is 1,300 to 1,400 USD depending on the airline. And if you have a Sierra Leonean passport, you will need a visa to enter the UK. For a six months visa to the UK, it cost £87. For two and five years visa, the costs are £330 and £600 respectively.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you take all those amounts into consideration and the amount you have to pay to travel to Lungi, particularly when you are using the private boat [which is 40d one way], it is very expensive to travel overseas, particularly to the UK. Therefore, when it was decided that the price of a passport should increase from Le 100,000 to Le 500,000 for 5 years, which is the life time for a passport, it meant we were paying a Le 100,000 for a passport per year. If you add all those figures, you will get Le 500,000, which is still within the range.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I now look at the questions from this Honourable House.

1. What is the current fee for our passport? Well, the price is still Le 500,000 per passport.
2. Is there any increase in the passport fee? There is a proposed increase in the fee to Le750.

3. When are these new rates effective? That should have been effective since the 1st of November, 2016, but with the intervention of this House, we have decided to wait the outcome of this meeting.
4. Upon what legal instrument has your Ministry made this increase? The new fee is levied under the amendments of the agreement of the 11th February, 2014, signed on the 3rd of August, 2015 on behalf of the government of Sierra Leone, represented by the then Minister of Internal Affairs, Honourable J. B. Dauda and Net-page Sierra Leone Limited, represented by its Managing Director, Mr Jamal Shallop.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for clarity, let me look at certain provisions in this agreement. According to clause 5 of the agreement of 11th February 2014, the initial sale price of E-passport, as agreed between the parties, shall be the Leone equivalence of 120 USD per unit of E-passport and the rationale was in accordance with the rate of exchange at the time of execution of the agreement, having being the equivalence of Le500, 000 or thereabout. The rate of exchange then was above Le4, 000 to a US dollar and by virtue of that change in the exchange rate after the execution of the agreement and in order to maintain the unit cost of the E-passport in Leones as Le500, 000, the parties hereby amend clause 5 of the agreement to read: **"100 USD instead of 120 USD and this to be reviewed periodically based on the inflation rate in Sierra Leone."**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, question 5 says, what is the cost of an application form? The cost of an application form is Le10, 000. Initially, the cost was slated at Le5, 000 without taking into consideration the cost of printing. However, when the job of printing was taken to the Government Printing, it was realised that 5,000 could not cover production of administration cost; hence the increase to Le10, 000.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to make the point that as we go through a very difficult period, our main focus should gear towards putting in place economic policies that would reduce the dollar, so that if the exchange rate drops, I will be happy to also reduce the price of a passport. If we have a situation wherein the dollar would be exchange for Le4, 000, then we will certainly charge the equivalent fee; but as at

now, there is not much we can do. This is where we are and we have to face it squarely. People are grumbling all over the country about subsidies, but I want to state in this House if we continue to subsidise our services, we would never develop as a nation. For those of us who have been fortunate to live in the UK or in the United States know what I am talking about. We pay for everything and that is why those countries are developed. We even went to the extent of subsidising passport in this country. How can government continue to subsidise for people travelling to the UK? My Aunt in Binkolo doesn't need a passport. Why are we subsidising for somebody who can afford to pay a visa fee. We must move away from subsidy, if we want to develop this nation *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these are some of the bold steps we have taken as far passport issues are concerned. In leadership, you must be prepared to take bold steps that are good for the nation. It is not about party politics, but what is good for Sierra Leone. We should stop politicising issues of national importance. We must always endeavour to look at the broader picture. Let us be thinking about Sierra Leone and see where we want to take this nation. I want to restate here that subsidising everything is not going to help us as a people. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Any reaction from the Honourable Members?

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, according to procedure, somebody moved and the motion was seconded by another person. In that case, the seconder of the motion should first of all be given the opportunity to ask supplementary questions.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minority Leader, this is not question time. Please crosscheck with your Standing Orders. The Minister is here consistent with Section 107 of the 1991 Constitution of this country, to explain a government policy. It only happens that in briefing this House, certain questions have been put down, but this is not question time. It is a briefing and the Minister had explained and the questions here only help to explain certain things. In a nutshell, this is totally different from question time. In that regard, nothing has been breached.

HON. BENNEH BANGURA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, during his presentation, the Minister did say that if the exchange rate happened to be Le 4,000 per USD, that would be the time he would think of reducing the price of passport. I totally disagree with him because I strongly believe that only this Parliament has the power to do that adjustment. Therefore, for him to say that it is only when the dollar goes down [which is very impossible at this time for the dollar to go down to Le 4000], before making any adjustment on the price of passport sounds strange [*Applause*]. It is only Parliament that has the power to reduce the price of passport. I thank you very much.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will not engage in any form of debate, but sometimes I am forced to, giving my stand for the integrity of this Parliament. I have said here often times that Members of Parliament should always try to do their assignment very well. I want to reference the statement made by the last speaker. He said that the Minister, during his presentation, told this House that if the dollar falls down, he would reduce the price, but the onus is not for the Minister to decide. I totally agree with that statement, but what I want to correct here is the emphasis on Section 110 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. I have been using this Constitution for the past nine years and I want to inform this House I know the Constitution a bit. Section 110 of the 1991 Constitution is basically telling us about imposition of taxes. The Minister, in his presentation, never spoke about imposition of taxes. He is here on price increment and questions posed to him were on price increment. That was why I said earlier that he had to explain the increase or decrease to us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister also told us that the contract was tagged to the dollar. What is more technical is when he said that whenever the price of dollar goes down, the passport tariff would be adjusted. Well, I want to state here that when it happens and he fails to do as promised, that will be the time Members of Parliament, Civil Society, and the people of this country will have to take him to task. If the dollar goes down, then the price of passport will have to go down. I want to

challenge anybody that Parliament doesn't have the power to determine prices. Section 110 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone only gives us the power to impose taxation. As Members of Parliament, we have to be au fait with the Constitution, our Standing Orders and even the laws we pass in this House. We would take pride in them, especially when we want to make presentations to our listeners. Again, Section 110 talks about taxation and not prices. I thank you, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: What I always believe about this Parliament is the fact that we have educated people. Honourable Benneh Bangura, do you take that as a correction?

HON. BINNEH BANGURA: I strongly believe that Parliament is supreme and we are here to learn and we learn every day. I want to agree with what Honourable Foday Rado Yokie has said.

HON. BASIRU SILIKIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, having listened to the Minister of Internal Affairs, I'm now in the known of what happens between Net-page and the Government of Sierra Leone. According to the contractual agreement, passport price should be increased to \$100 and I don't know why the Ministry did not bring that up in the Regulation that was passed in this House. If they are saying that it is 100 USD, they should have considered the fluctuating trend of the dollar to the Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having listened to the Minister's presentation, I am a bit convinced now that the increase should take place, but this government should also bear in mind that our economy is very weak. The government should try to stabilise the dollar because the dollar is affecting our Leone so much so that the prices of basic commodities in this country have skyrocketed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, a motion to invite the Minister of Finance to come and explain to us what is happening to our currency should be moved. We should not sit and wait for the budget. He should come and explain to us what is happening to the currency. I am saying this because the Leone is becoming useless to the US dollar and that is affecting the prices of food items and other commodities negatively. This is

unacceptable and we expect the Minister of Finance to come and explain to us the reason[s]. Subsidies on commodities are been removed because the exchange rate is hiking. It should not just be left in the hands of the Minister of Information and Communications.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am moving a motion to invite the Minister of Finance to come and explain to this Parliament what is happening with our Leone. There is no way you are going to pay Thomas De Le Rue in US dollar if you cannot generate US dollar in your own. Therefore, I am asking that we invite the Minister of Finance to come and explain to us the current economic status of this country. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Basiru Silikie, you don't need to move a motion to invite the Minister of Finance here. Simply say you want the Minister of Finance to come here and he would be here, just as the Minister of Internal Affairs. What I find very difficult to forgive at time is when intellectuals refuse to accept what is factual. I would advise that before you think of inviting the Minister of Finance to come and explain about the rate of the US dollar as against the Leone, you should engage your colleague, the Honourable Foday Rado Yokie. Honourable Foday Rado Yokie is an intellectual and an Economist for that matter. I have found out that he is true to himself most of the time. Engage him and we will need not to invite the Minister at this point. It would perhaps be premature because budget presentation will take place on the 11th November, 2016, which is next week.

Suspension of S.O. 5[2], being 12:00 noon

HON. KOMBOR KAMARA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand here to speak as a historian and not an economist. The Minister was saying that when the economy is stabilised, the price of passport would be reduced. My concern here is that it has almost become a pattern in this country that when business people create artificial scarcity in terms of fuel for example, the price goes up, when the supply is made available in the market, the price still remains the same. It has been a pattern in this country that when once the price of a commodity increases as a result of the exchange rate in the dollar, it

would never decrease. Therefore, what is your guarantee that when the economy is stabilised and things are normalised, you will reduce the price of passport from Le 750,000 to Le 500,000? We need to have that guarantee, Mr Minister. As the economists have said, we want to believe that this is a very good move. People pay for services everywhere in the world. That is a fact and this Government cannot continue to subsidise for everything we enjoy. The economy would never grow if we continue that way. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Honourable Kombor Kamara has just expounded on a very important point. In other words, the Minister said something that is of interest and that has to be of interest to everyone, particularly those of us that have lived abroad or travel frequently out of this country. I was telling somebody yesterday that if you are walking along the street and you feel like urinating, you can just turn to any corner and do it; but in Europe, if you do that you must pay a fine and if you watch the tickets that you buy to travel there, it is taxed. That has to be understood and appreciated.

HON. FRANK KPOSOWA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have listened to the Minister and he did make a point which I am going to dwell on. The point is that the Government has to take the bold steps to prevent anarchy, but ensure developments. If it were somebody else, perhaps, I would have asked what he was saying. I see this Minister as a Minister with background of success stories. There was a time when it was virtually impossible to drive around the business district of this city. I had cause in one of my contributions to say it has become habitual for certain people to invoke political patronage so as to instil indiscipline. They always promise to do 'A' or 'B' but at the end of the day those promises are not met. This has, from time to time, weakened our successive governments or leaderships to submit to the wings and caprices of the perpetrators. This man came and takes this bold decision and today it is not a very perfect situation, but we are seeing the light. So, if he stands before us and gives us the assurance that as long as he is Minister, he is going to react correspondingly if the economy improves, I think in the interest of good governance and in the interest of the

development of this country, we should cooperate with whatever arrangement that is now being contemplated to ensure that the people of this country continue to get their passports. Can you stop for a moment to look at the price of the alternative, if you want to travel and you do not have a passport? Please, let us give this matter the consideration it deserves.

HON. MABINTY BANGURA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have heard what the Minister has said. Some of us have the opportunity to travel abroad and we have been out of this country for so long. I have not noticed any problem, as far as the issue under consideration is concerned. The only thing I talk about is the rate of the US Dollar. If you want to travel as a Sierra Leonean and you don't have a passport, where would you go? Just look at the lives that we have lost when young people tried to go to abroad using boats.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Mabinty, people are saying that if you have your passport and you want to travel but you do not have anywhere to go, you have a place to go and that is, Mambolo [*Laughter*].

HON. MABINTY BANGURA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some of us in Sierra Leone don't know the importance of a passport. I am telling you the truth. If you have your passport, it means you have got your national identity. That identifies you as a Sierra Leonean anywhere you go. It is very important and it is one of the things the British and the Americans people value most. The passports identify them as British and American citizens. The problem with Sierra Leoneans is that we want government to do everything for us. What have we done for the government? This is the problem we have in this country. Let us try to change for the better if we want to move this nation forward. We are all Honourable Members and we feel the pinch of everything happening in this country. Things are really difficult but we have to sacrifice for our country. If you go to your constituencies now, your constituents will bring lots of problems to you. For instance, they will tell you that they have not eaten even though it is a lie. What have we sacrificed for this nation? These are serious issues we have to

think about. To me, passport is essential and whatever it cost, we need to have it as our bona fide property. That shows you who you are.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister has assured us that when the exchange rate of the US dollar drops, the price of passport would decrease automatically. In England, for example, when they had inflation, they told everybody to tight up his/her belt. We were there and it was not easy for them. In Sierra Leone, the reverse is the case. People are complaining against even the good things government would want to provide. If I used to eat three cups of rice, that has to reduce to two cups. If we are faced with problems, we should all come together to fight that problem. This is not about politics; it is about Sierra Leone. I thank you very much.

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will start my contribution by congratulating the Minister for giving this brilliant explanation. In his presentation, he compared what we take for granted in Sierra Leone to what operates in other countries. I always had to pay for services when I was in Europe and that is what we should cultivate here. I would advise the Minister not to make promise that when the exchange rate for dollar falls, the price of the passport would fall because you are not responsible for the production cost. We are not producing our passport. That was the same thing I said to Honourable Benneh Bangura that even if Parliament has the right to impose price, I don't think we should do that without the consideration for economic forces, especially in another country where these passports are being produced. In that light, I want to advise the Minister not to make any promise that the price of passport would decrease once the exchange rate for the US dollar falls. You are not responsible for the production of these passports and it is also important that we start realising that. I thank you very much.

HON. NAVO KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I spoke last week, but I did not say thanks to my constituency and my political party for supporting me during the election I worn in Constituency 001. I thank you very much for the support. I am so glad that the Minister compared Sierra Leone to the United Kingdom, where both of us lived for years. In his statement, he did mention what happens in the UK and what

happens here. Well, I want the Minister to know that the lifespan of a passport in the UK is 10 years. As a Minister, have you considered our passport to last for 10 years? You said that people used to pay Le 100,000 per year. Therefore, if the lifespan of a passport extends to 10 years, I am sure the people would be comfortable to pay the proposed Le 750,000. The Minister also said that having a passport is a privilege. It is indeed a privilege, but I personally think that it is a right as well because it is not only used for travelling, but also as an identification as was mentioned by Honourable Mabinty Bangura. Having a passport does not actually mean that you have to travel. In the UK, for example, a child is entitled to a passport the day he/she is born. You should consider having a mobile service in the provinces. I come from Kailahun and I remember that the first time I wanted to have a passport; I had to travel from there to Freetown. That alone cost money and if they enter your details wrongly, you will have to come back to correct them. So, I want to suggest that we put modalities in place for a mobile service to be travelling to the provinces maybe once a month. If that is not possible, the Local Councils or other officials could be used to collect application forms to bring to Freetown and afterwards collect the passports and take them back to the provinces. I would be happy to do that for my constituents, rather than allowing them to come for their passports here. If the cost of travelling here is calculated, it would sum up to a million Leones. So, I want to suggest here that a mobile service is provided. I thank you very much.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI [*Minority Leader of the House*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we were about to increase the price of the passport from Le100,000 to Le500,000, this Parliament did have a pre-legislative meeting to explain the reason behind the increase. Now that there is an increase in the exchange rate of the US dollar, the price of the passport is going to move from Le500, 000 to Le750, 000. My concern has been the sensitisation and education of the general populace and even this Parliament. The Minister can say the agreement says this, but I think before the 1st of November, the Minister should have come to this House. He did not come here to sensitise us. He came here because of the concerns that have been raised by

Members of Parliament and those concerns are coming from the general public. I think the public should be adequately informed about issues of this nature. They should be prepared because it is not every member of the public that would be previewed to the contract that was amended and signed. I think this pro-activeness can go a long way. Educating the public voluntarily can solve some of those fears. We know that the exchange rate of the US dollar is up and that affects every other commodity.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we go back to memory lane, there was a pressure on Members of Parliament for the increase of passports prices from Le100, 000 to Le500, 000. The newspapers were hitting very hard on Members of Parliament. A lot of bad blood was created by the public against us, but we were in a better position to explain to the public that when we had the pre-Legislative meeting, all these situational analysis of what happens in other countries came out succinctly. That meeting even prepared us to be in a better position to go out there and rationalise the new situation. In future, you should engage with Parliament and the wider community when you want to do something, so that when we go to our constituents, we will be in a better position to prepare them for what is going to happen and to explain the rationale to them. We may not be able to reach all and sundry, but the newspapers and radios will inform them, so that you reduce the tension. We know exactly what is in the agreement, but sometimes we also have to put human face to some of those things. That is what I have to say, Mr Speaker.

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU *[Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will just do some corrections and some observations. I know that passports are not only used for travelling, but I can tell you that passports are not used for national identification in some jurisdictions. In the UK, you are forced to use your passport when you are flying either out or within the UK. In the USA, you don't use passports to fly or travel by road within the country as long as you have your ID card. That is what we are doing in Sierra Leone. The National Identification Cards are very useful for that purpose. You need passport when you want to travel out of the country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe we have heeded to the Agreement and we all know that the Minister has explained the need for the price of the passport to be increased. However, I want to use this opportunity to remind members of the public that we have a very outstanding Constitution in this country, which placed responsibility on everybody; but judging from the discussions and interventions, it seems as if other people have abandoned their responsibilities, especially citizens and putting the whole burden on government officials. All of us know that if you look at Section 13 of the 1991 Constitution of this country, the roles and the duties of citizens are spelt out clearly. Most of this hardship we are facing today is because the citizens are not doing their own job. If we talk about smuggling at our borders, it is entrenched in the Constitution that as a citizen, you should not allow that to happen. It is a national obligation in the Constitution. If you see somebody destroying government property, and say 'it is government property,' that bystander is also a party to the destruction. I am saying this because when the government deems it necessary to replace it, it is your own tax that they are going to take again to replace that property.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have been appealing to the people's representatives to do our own bits, as spelt out in the 1991 Constitution. I am sure there is an area for public officers, there is an area giving mandate to Members of Parliament, Ministers, the Police and everybody. This question of 'what government has done' is not helping this nation. We need to educate our people, just as we are doing here this morning. We have to give some education to our people and this can only happen if we embark on robust sensitisation throughout the country. You would not actually know how ignorant a lot of people are until when issues of such nature come out. Some of the statements coming from these so called educated people are terrible. Sometimes you would be ashamed because of the kind of respect you have for them. Passport is a very useful and I hope we would be calling other Ministers here to come and explain certain things to the people's representatives. I say so because the level of education out there is very limited. Some people understand, but they refuse to accept. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I would like to openly commend the Honourable Bashiru Silikie for igniting this debate. For the past few weeks, he has been so passionate about this passport fee. It will interest this House to know that even before the Minister came to the Chamber this morning, the Honourable Basiru Silikie met me and said that he had done some research. According to his readings then, he found out that certain things were in place. That is what all of us have to do if we are to maintain our dignity as Honourable Members of Parliament. So, on your behalf, I commend him for being very true to himself.

RTD MAJOR ALFRED PAOLO CONTEH *[Minister of Internal Affairs]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me begin by thanking Honourable Members for the positive comments about me. Let me try and see if I can answer the issues that have been raised. I would like to start with the Honourable Benneh Bangura. He said that it was impossible for the dollar to go down. The second question he posed centres around the authority to increase fee. However, the Honourable Foday Rado Yokie has eloquently dealt with that issue and he has conceded. Mr Speaker, on the issue of 'the impossibility for the dollar to go down, who would have thought that the English Pounds Sterling would drop by 15% when compared to the dollar? That is happening right now. So, let us don't give up on Sierra Leone. If we have proper economic policies, the Leone is going to rise again. I strongly believe in that *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the next issue I want to talk about is one raised by the Honourable Member from Port Loko, Honourable Kombor Kamara. He wanted a guarantee that if the dollar drops, the price of the passport should drop. I want to put my neck on the block and I will stick to that promise. I hardly make promises but whenever I make one, it is from the heart. Therefore, whatever I say is what I believe in. This is something I have discussed with the Contractor and we have agreed that if the dollar drops, it has to be reflected on the price of passport. I want to give that assurance. Moreover, Honourable Navo Kaikai suggested that we consider the life of a passport to increase from five to ten years. This is something I would take back to the technical team at the Immigration Department.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, the point made by Honourable Navo Kaikai is one that has also been exercised in my mind. It used to be ten years. Why the reduction from ten to five.

RTD MAJOR ALFRED PAOLO CONTEH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when it used to be ten years, I wasn't born by then. I have to take that issue to the technical team for further consideration. Whether passport is a right or privilege, the Majority Leader has emphasised that. As the Majority Leader was saying, in the United States, if you want to move from one state to another, all you need is your driver's license. They hardly use their passports and there are people who are born in the USA without passport. They don't apply for it because they don't travel out of America. For instance, President Bush Jr. only travelled out of America when he became President. Some of them don't have any reason to travel. In the UK, there is so much emphasis on passport because they don't have a National Identity Card.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if I allude to the previous deliberation on the mass civil registration, it is another big advantage. If you have a national ID card, then you don't use your passport for identification within the Mano River Union and ECOWAS countries. You would only need to produce your ID card, which the National Civil Registration Card would provide.

Again, the Honourable Navo Kaikai spoke about mobile service. Well, that was why I have been advocating for the establishment of the Civil Registration Authority. When that office would have been fully established, we would make sure that we go to every district and chiefdom. Her argument is in place because there are people who are living in Kailahun and other places in the provinces who are paying above Le 50,000 as fare to come to Freetown. If the price of an ID card is Le12, 500, there is no need for somebody to spend more than Le 100,000 fare. If the project we are trying to implement comes to fruition, we will have offices in every district.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Minority Leader spoke about consulting this Honourable House because you are the people's representatives and you have to take the message to your people. However, it is on record that as soon as I

was appointed as Minister of Internal Affairs, my first appointment was to the Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs just to familiarise myself with them. So, I take her point and it won't happen again.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think these are the questions. Thank you very much. I appreciate and I am always happy to be here.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr Minister. You are released [*Applause across the Floor*].

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 1.15 p.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 8th November, 2016 at 10:00a.m]