

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

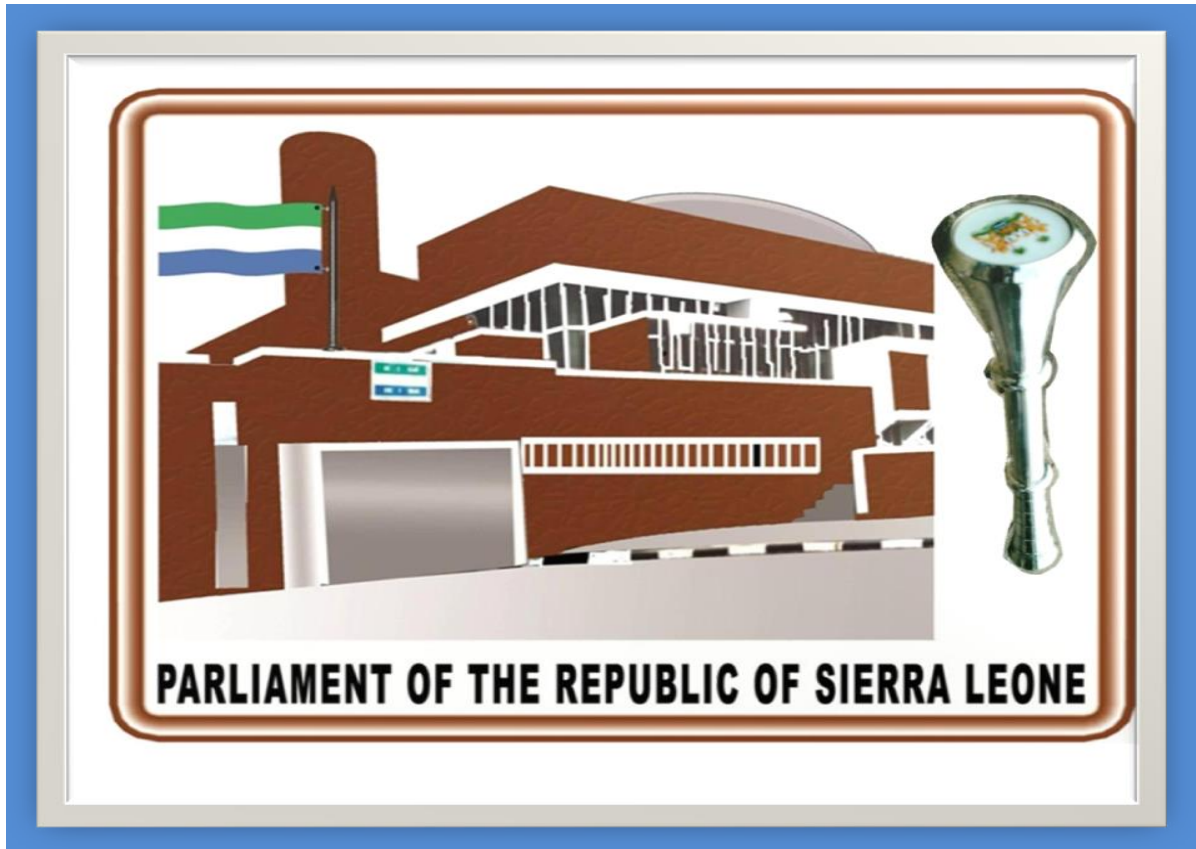
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY, 7TH MARCH, 2017

SESSION – 2016/2017



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: I

NUMBER: 11

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Tuesday, 7th March, 2017.

CONTENTS

I. PRAYERS

II. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST MARCH, 2017

III. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LOAN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND THE SIERRA LEONE PRODUCE MARKETING COMPANY, DATED 15TH FEBRUARY, 2017.



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Tuesday, 7th March, 2017.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 10:35 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]

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave the indulgence of this Honourable House to amend the Order Paper. I want item 'b,' which has to do with the Minister of Trade and Industry be deleted because the Minister is unavoidably absent. He spoke to me this morning and I want to apologise on his behalf.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members that is the proposed amendment. I take it that there is no objection.

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST MARCH, 2017.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before we proceed to the next item, I want to inform Honourable Members that those who are in the habit of calling the Clerk of this House or any of the clerks-at-the-Table for their names to be marked as 'absent with excuse' is untenable and unacceptable. My directives then is that anyone who does so should be marked absent without excuse. The Standing Orders and the 1991 Constitution of this country are very clear on such issue. If you know that you would be absent, your excuse has to be done in writing to the Speaker.

HON. BENNEH BANURA: Mr Speaker, I wanted to ask what would happen in the case of unforeseen circumstances

THE SPEAKER: If it is an emergency, then you should be prepared to be marked absent without any excuse. This is wrong and unacceptable. What is wrong is wrong and cannot be tolerated to continue. We are in Parliament and we should set good examples. The Standing Orders and the Constitution are very clear on this issue. I do not know, but the unforeseen circumstances are vague here. For instance, if something happens accidentally, then you have to communicate. There are leader in this House and there are Whips. You communicate to them if you have an emergency situation. If you communicate to them, perhaps they will be in position to put that in writing to me or you come and talk to me. Even as that, you would be advised to write formally. This is a very important and we should be ready to do

things that are correct. I am saying this because these letters of excuse are being filed, so that in the event an Honourable Member is challenged, these letters would save him. For instance, between 1996 and this other period, certain people were to be driven out of Parliament because they were absent for so many times. In one of such cases, it was the letters of excuse that were filed that saved a particular Member of Parliament. Again, somebody did that very recently, just the day the person was leaving, a letter was sent to me. If you want to be excused, you have to do that in writing and your application has to be granted.

Honourable Members, Honourable Komba E. Koedoyoma, and Honourable Sidi M. Tunis were here from 2002 to 2007 and all of us went through this process, including the Speaker here. However, we thank God because we have amended that part of the Constitution which was used to bring somebody from the Judiciary to come and preside over us as Speaker. We know better than any other outsider. Please take note of this advice very seriously. You have Whips and Leaders in this House.

Honourable Members, I also want to inform you that when some Members of Parliament want to go for conferences, they usually leave without notification to the Speaker or the office of the Clerk. I want to state here that whenever the Leader of this House wants to go for a conference, he used to inform me about a week or two before leaving; and so also the Deputy Speaker of this House. In fact, the moment the time draws nearer, they keep on reminding me with letters. For the PAN Africa Parliament, it was only the Minority Leader and Honourable PC Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III who wrote letters of excuse. I was never informed about the departure of the other Members of that delegation. The Clerk never told me about other Members of Parliament.'

HON. FRANCIS KONUWA: Mr Speaker, for record purposes, if the Speaker wants to travel.

THE SPEAKER: The only person to be notified is the Clerk of Parliament, and of course the Majority Leader and the Deputy Speaker of this House.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, we need not to over emphasise our absence because the law is very clear that when a Member of Parliament is absent

for thirty [30] days consecutively in a session, he/she loses his/her seat. Therefore, you should not even remind us, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Bashiru Silikie, I want to thank you for that statement. I want to inform all and sundry that I have been very flexible and considerate with many Members of Parliament.

No that note, Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Wednesday, 1st March, 2017. As usual, we go 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 somebody move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Wednesday, 1st March, 2017?

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, I so moved.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. KEMOKOH CONTEH: Mr Speaker, I so second.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Wednesday, 1st March, 2017 has been adopted as presented]

III. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MR MOMOH VANDI *[Deputy Minister of Finance and Economic Development]*: 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 Wednesday, 1st March, 2017:

Loan Agreement between the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company, dated 15th February, 2017.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as part of His Excellency the President's recovery priority initiatives, the Ministry of Trade and Industry was mandated to promote the initiative of the Local Content Policy by sourcing local rice for security institutions,

such as the Ministry of Defence, the Sierra Leone Police, Prisons and the Sierra Leone Fire Force. The Local Content Act requires the promotion of the use of the country's products; and as such, it was agreed as follows:

Ten per cent [**10%**] of institutional feeding of the Ministry of Defence, the Sierra Leone Police, Prisons, and the Sierra Leone Fire Force should be the country's locally produced rice. The initial capital is to be provided by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development on interest free loan bases for the successful implementation of the initiative. The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company is to purchase the locally produced rice from Sierra Leone farmers and supply to the afore-mentioned institutions, particularly during the rice season to avoid fluctuation of prices to achieve Government initiatives. The Ministry of Trade and Industry obtained executive clearance from His Excellency the President for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to release the sum of **Le5bln** to SLPMC. The loan agreement and its provisions shall not come into effect until after the ratification by this Honourable House in compliance with Section 71[3] of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development shall disburse the said lump sum into the following dedicated SLPMC Account at the Union Trust Bank. The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company shall repay the sum of **5bln** Leones to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development over a period of 24 months, with a repayment commencing six months after the date of receipt of the said loan in eight equal quarterly instalment of **Le650mln** at no cost of penalty to the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company. The repayment stipulated on this loan may be repay earlier than the stipulated timeframe under this loan agreement, if the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company is able to do so provided that no such early repayment amount shall be less than the required instalment payment amount under this loan agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company shall pay, in instalments, the sum of **Le5bln** at the required intervals into the Consolidated Revenue Fund Treasury Account number 1100501, held at the Bank of Sierra Leone Freetown. The Ministry of Trade and Industry shall provide oversight

and monitoring of the resources and supply of said rice by SLPMC. The loan agreement shall be interpreted and construed in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Sierra Leone and subject to the jurisdiction of the Court in Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of the House on Wednesday, 1st March, 2017. The Loan Agreement between the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company, dated 15th February, 2017.

[Question Proposed]

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are here again to approve a Loan Agreement between two Government institutions. For the last two Committees of Supply, I was fortunate to be in one of the Committees of Supply where the SLPMC appeared. We recommended that the Ministry of Finance should improve on the budget allocation to the SLPMC in order to avoid the idea of giving them loans. We stated that their budget should be improved; so that they would be able to execute their mandate effectively. If the Ministry of Finance is giving this same MDA loan, the question is why the Ministry failed to implement the recommendations of this House? Parliament has recommended that the Ministry improves on the allocation to this MDA. How can you loan yourself? What is the rationale behind the Ministry giving loan to a government institution at no cost? It should have been prudent for you to improve on their budget allocation, instead of giving them loans.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I don't know what is happening in the Ministry of Finance. It is a very laudable idea because we need to empower the SLPMC, but not in this form. Of course, we need to promote our farmers and we need to empower the SLPMC, so that they will be able to supply the locally produced rice to the Ministry of Defence, the Sierra Leone Police and the Prisons as the Loan Agreement states. Therefore, I want continue to state here that the Ministry of Finance should improve on the allocations to this MDA, if we are going to achieve the Local Content. We cannot continue to give them loans. If these MDAs are created by Government, their budget allocations should be strengthened on yearly bases, rather than giving

them loans. Why are you giving them loan when they are not going to do business? They are going to buy and supply rice to the security forces without any collateral. I am very convinced that the leadership of the SLPMC would pay because I have been in contact with most of them and they have always been explaining to this Parliament the challenges they have been encountering, especially with the Ministry of Finance. Officials of the SLPMC have been appealing to the Ministry of Finance to improve on their budgets.

In recent past, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the supply of rice to the Police, the Military and the Prisons was in the hands of Lebanese. If we are going to entrust this responsibility in our own institutions like the SLPMC that was created by this Parliament, we should support these institutions. This is very good, but I hope and pray that in the next budget, you improve on their budget allocation. Whenever they present their proposed budget to you, you should not reduce it at all. The SLPMC is very important for the smooth operation of the Local Content Policy. I cannot see any reason why you reduce their allocation and all of the sudden, you bring a Loan Agreement to be ratified for them. Why did you reduce their budget in the first place when we people working in that institutions and we have to listen to them as well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if the Ministry of Finance fails to disburse what this House has approved for the SLPMC, how do you expect them to operate effectively? So, I want to know the guarantee that the SLPMC would repay this loan; and if they fail to repay the loan on time, what are the penalties to be imposed on them? I am asking this question because it is very clear on the second page of this Agreement. It seems as if we are just giving them as a Government institution. I want to inform this House that instead of giving those loans to SLPMC, they should be subsidised because at the end of the day whatever they get will be taken back to the Consolidated Fund. In other words, instead of giving them loan they have to repay, let us subsidise them and whatever profit gained at the end of day is taken to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, empowering the SLPMC is a good thing and I hope that they will perform beyond expectation. I am very sure that the Ministry of Finance believes in their ability to perform because you cannot give loan to

somebody you do not trust. We hope that they will not disappoint the Ministry and this Parliament. The sum of **Le5bln** is a huge amount, and we are expecting them to reciprocate by ensuring that the money is spent on the intended purpose. They should make sure that they pay on time because the Sierra Leone People's Party [SLPP] will take over power in 2018 and we will follow up on this Loan Agreement [*Applause*]. I am saying this because this is the tax-payers' money that is going to be taken from the Consolidated Fund and given to the SLPMC.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if this House approves this Loan Agreement, we want this money to be prudently utilised, so that we stop using these Lebanese to procure and supply rice to the security forces. With those few words, I want to thank you very much.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one finds it a bit difficult how to react to the Honourable Member from Bo because he was blowing both hot and cold at the same time. This is one of the excellent performances of this Government. The new system that this Government has initiated is to make sure that these institutions succeed by themselves. Mr Speaker, the SLPMC succeeded after the demise of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board [SLPMB]. Instead of creating a corporation, this Government instituted a company to succeed the SLPMB. The SLPMC has been operating for some time now and this is a special assignment that has been given to this Company to perform. In view of that, the Government and the Ministry of Trade and Industry thought it fit to grant the loan to this Company. A lot of negotiations have ensued, systems have been put in place and they are now ready to implement the Local Content Policy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the SLPMC cannot go to a Commercial Bank to raise **Le5bln**. The good thing that Government has done is that the Government is now giving this Loan to SLPMC to be able to perform that activity. The Agreement between SLPMC and the Ministry of Finance is totally guaranteed by all the institutions and mechanisms that have been built into it. The loan is divided into equal instalments that have to be paid on quarterly basis into the Consolidated Fund. The Government, after all the attributes that have been given and the guarantees that have been secured, the Company will perform. For example, in as much as the

Ministry of Trade and Industry wants to perform and fulfil the provisions in the Local Content Policy, they are ready to give loans to individual business people. The advert has been released and small scale business people are applying to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. So, it is not only SLPMC but individual business people are going to be given loans to implement their own programmes. If that is so, I do not know why the Honourable Member from Bo is doubting the integrity of this Agreement. We have to approve this Agreement because it has to do with the Local Content Policy of this country. I thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Leonard S. Fofanah, with respect to you, you have really tried to explain your point, but don't you think the Honourable Member from Bo has a point? I do not think he is opposed to the Loan, but it is necessary for these institutions to be empowered financially by the Ministry of Finance in order to avoid a situation of this nature.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, that is indeed very true, but the SLPMC is a Company. It is a Private Liability Company created by the Government and the Government wants that Company to stand on its own.

HON. FRANCIS A. KAISAMBA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I believe this is a tripartite Agreement, signed by the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Trade and the SLPMC. I think the Ministry of Trade and Industry is in the middle of this Agreement. That is how I came in as Chairman for the parliamentary Committee on Trade and Industry. It was the Ministry of Trade that sought the Executive Clearance from the President for these funds to be released to the SLPMC. In other words, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is the moral guarantor to ensure that these moneys, once they are disbursed, are used for the intended purpose.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, providing rice to the Military, the Police, the Fire Force and Prisons is something that has been happening before now. I could remember vividly that our security forces used to receive rice supply from Government, but it was stopped later. However, if Government has thought it fit to revive and revamp that gesture for the security forces, I think it is a welcome idea. These are all Government institutions coming together to make sure that this happens. As a Parliament, particularly so when the relevant sections have been cited

that this particular Loan Agreement will not be implemented until it is being ratified by this House, I think we have to welcome this idea as the representatives of the people. I have not seen much controversy in this Agreement at all *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has enormous responsibilities under this Agreement. With your leave, Mr Speaker, I will refer you to Section 7 of the Agreement. It says, **“The Ministry of Trade and Industry shall provide oversight and monitoring of the sorting and supply of the said rice by the SLPMC.”** I am sure the Minister is not here, but the Permanent Secretary and other officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry are here. We will make sure that the provisions in this Agreement are being implemented properly. Without much ado, I want to urge this Honourable House to speedily ratify this Agreement. Thank you very much.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am going to be very brief. Mr Speaker, the whole concept of Local Content is seen built into this Agreement and we all know that the SLPMC is the harbinger of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. The President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, asked several questions at one time about the assets of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board and a good number of people in Government at the time kept asking what happened to these assets. What happened later was that the SLPMC became an idea that was brought to Cabinet by the Minister of Trade and Industry, who thought [and I think a good number of people will agree with him] that it would be necessary for us to effectively utilise these assets by setting up a Company and the SLPMC was created.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the point that has been raised in many quarters is whether it has an agricultural component. Indeed, it has an agricultural component and I also want to state here that this aspect of the loan that we are discussing today has more to do with the Ministry of Trade and Industry than the Agricultural component of this Agreement. We have said that time and again that the Ministry of Trade and Industry happens to be one important entity that should improve the life style of our people in this country. What do we do? How do we do this? We do this by putting in place structures that are necessary to make sure that our people are given a liveable life. We are going to give **Le5bln** to the SLPMC and

we believe that the SLPMC will put this money into good use. We also believe that the SLPMC will provide employment for many of our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to allay the fears of some Members of Parliament that there is going to be a monitoring system on how this money is going to be utilised. We are not just giving away such amount of money to the SLPMC, as somebody was suggesting, for free. We have the Audit Service Sierra Leone that is responsible to audit every Government institution in this country. So, we are very certain that there will be enough monitoring to make sure that these funds are effectively utilised.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not see any difficulty in this Agreement. The SLPMB has been replaced and we now have the SLPMC in our effort to making sure that we provide the necessary content that is necessary for our people. The Local Content Policy is an idea which has been discussed here time and time again, but it cannot be useful if we do not put in place the necessary mechanisms that will enable it survive and be useful. This is why we are coming up with ideas such as the SLPMC, so that the Local Content Policy is made useful.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to make it very clear here that this Agreement does not have any controversy; but instead it will help to enable Government provide what is necessary for us as a people. The SLPMC will also help to ensure that agriculture and industrial aspect of the state are useful to us as a nation.

Again, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to make it clear that there is nothing controversial about this Agreement. This Agreement will help to promote the Local Content Policy and it will also help to ensure that our people are given the necessary facilities to enable them live comfortably as citizens of this country. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Komba E. Koedoyoma, I would like you to represent the Minority Leader [*Applause*]. You are a very senior Member of Parliament.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Agreement before us is very good. Many speakers have spoken about the

importance of this Agreement in the sense that we are now beginning to implement some of the issues we have discussed here, viz-a-viz, the Local Content Policy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my worry about this very Agreement is when the Minister said that **10%** of the locally produced rice will now be bought by the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company to ensure that it goes to meet the needs of the Armed Forces, the Sierra Leone Police Force, Prisons and the Fire Force. My worry anchors on the fact that even under normal circumstance, without the intervention of the SLPMC, our local farmers cannot produce enough rice to feed their communities. If the SLPMC procures **10%** of the locally produced rice, we might be running into serious shortages of our locally produced rice and this will have spiral effect by increasing the price of imported rice in the market. I do not need to be an economist to understand these simple things [*Undertone*].

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Benneh Bangura, the Honourable Komba E. Koedoyoma is educated enough to articulate economic ideas [*Applaud*]. One of the best Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria was a medical doctor.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. To add more to what the Rt Honourable Speaker has said, I read economist at Fourah Bay College during my 1st and 2nd years before I moved to the Honours class. It is not the water-down college that we have these days.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I will not allow that at all. Fourah Bay College is still Fourah Bay College.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. On a more serious note, I am worried about the **10%** allocation of locally produced rice. I would have thought we start encouraging our local farmers now to produce more rice at this time, so that we will be able to have more rice. In the past, Sierra Leone used to export its own locally produced rice; but over the years, we have seen and continue to see that we now have more imported rice from the East. This is killing the spirit of our farmers. Therefore, I want to state here that the **10%** would be too much at this time. I also want to remind this House that this loan will continue to exist for some time; we would have gone to some extent to be able to arrive at that **10%** and that is where my worry about this agreement centres around.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like what the Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Industry said, this is a very simple Agreement. In fact, the Deputy Majority Leader and the Honourable Member from Bombali also spoke about the straightforwardness of this Agreement. Well, I would also state here this is a very good Agreement and it is going to be a good start for the Local Content Policy to be implemented. It is a good thing to see the institution we have created functions effectively.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would urge this Honourable House to approve this Agreement. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Speaker, before the Majority Leader come in, I want to, on behalf of all of us on this other side, wholeheartedly congratulate the Majority Leader of this House, who has openly declared for the flag-bearership of the APC party [*Applause*]. Sometimes it is important to see your colleague aspiring for the top positions. I was one person who said it is good to have one of you as Speaker of this House; and today, we have him. The Speaker has been magnanimous and excellent. It is against this backdrop that I felt proud when I heard the Majority Leader of this House declaring for the most enviable position in the APC. However, I felt a bit disappointed because he failed to first of all come to this House for our blessings. This House would have been the first place to make his intention known before any public declaration. Nevertheless, it is never too late than never. We are still looking forward to that, so that this House blesses him. Having said that, I want to genuinely congratulate you on behalf of all of us on this side of the House.

HON. BENNEH BANGURA: I agreed with the sentiments expressed by my colleague on the other side, but I strongly believe that this is not the right time for that statement. This should have come under S.O. 23.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Benneh Bangura, are you questioning the authority of the Speaker?

HON. BENNEH BANGURA: If that is how the Speaker sees it, I am very sorry sir.

THE SPEAKER: I want you to note that whatever the Speaker allows is law. Mr Leader, without any reaction, please go straight to the Agreement.

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU [*Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business*]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when the Honourable Member from Bo was questioning the idea of Government giving loan to another MDA, I equated that to Donald Trump's father, who gave the present Donald Trump the sum of **\$1mln** as loan. The loan was given to him so that he would be responsible enough to stand on his own. Well, Donald Trump has turn out to be a successful business man in America. I think it is more prudent to give loan to the SLPMC instead of giving them grant. This is deliberate because we want them to be responsible. If they fail to pay, there are punishments. I think this is a good idea and the **10%** is a good start because as the awareness increases for our people, it will increase their productivity.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am also a good farmer and this is very appealing to me. I am going to take that information to my constituents. I also want to encourage colleagues Honourable Members to pass on this information to our farmers. Let their surpluses be provided to the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company. I am sure this Company is very new; and as a result, it is not fully equipped to disseminate this information across the country. Information aired out through radio or television can go a bit far, but sometimes our people are constrained to listen to the radio or watch television. In addition to that, I want to encourage Honourable Members to tell farmers that if they have surpluses for sale, the SLPMC is ready to buy those surpluses.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we know that most of the contracts entered into by either foreigners or local contractors are very expensive for Government. Rice bought from contractors be they Lebanese of Sierra Leoneans or not, have been very dubious and difficult to audit; but I do not think that the SLPMC will enter into any dubious contract with the Prisons, Fire Force, the schools, etc. Therefore, this is a laudable Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and a quasi-government of institution.

With those few words, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank you very much for giving it the support it has received.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to cease this opportunity to thank the Honourable Members for their contributions. I equally took note of their concerns. I want to clarify two issues that were raised. The Honourable Member from Bo raised a concern as to why the Ministry of Finance failed to approve the SLPMC's actual budget. I want to state here that the Ministry of Finance prepares its budget based on the resources available. I believe the SLPMC's budget was prepared under the circumstance we found ourselves. I want to alley your fears by stating here that the SLPMC will pay this loan. It will interest you to know that even though they have not secured the loan, they have already started supplying the security forces. They have already supplied 2,837 bags of rice. This shows that they are committed. I want to assure this House that they will live up to this Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Koedoyoma raised a concern about the **10%** that should be supplied to the security forces. I want to clarify here that the **10%** is not the total rice produce by the farmers, but the budget and required number of bags that this institution needs. The Agreement covers **10%** of that and I want to assure this House that there will be no shortages or starvation. I just want to clarify that point.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of the House on Wednesday, 1st March, 2017: Loan Agreement between the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company, dated 15th February, 2017.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Government by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has been ratified]

THE HON. FRANCIS KONUWA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave the indulgence of the Speaker and this Honourable to permit me to give a

notice of motion to debate the President proclamation on the elections date, slated to take place on the 7th March, 2018.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you will agree with me that immediately after that pronouncement made by the President, lots of debates ensued on social media, television stations, radio stations, etc. A lot of people have been criticising the President that he did not follow the rules and regulations. However, others have been in support. With that in mind and taking into consideration the provisions of certain sections in the Constitution, like Section 73[3], which states that: **“Parliament may make laws for the peace, security, order and good governance of Sierra Leone.”** Also, Section 93[4] of the Constitution states: **“Notwithstanding anything contained in Sections 1 and 2, Parliament may, at any time, appoint any other committee to investigate any matter of public importance.”** The reason why I am saying this is that any sub-committee is a microcosm of Parliament. Therefore, if there is anything of public interest, I am with the view that Parliament has the right to probe into it. It appears as if there has been a lacuna and Parliament has the right to put the record straight. Section 25[1], Paragraph 2 of the Standing Orders is also very clear. Immediately after this sitting, I will tender the document to the Clerk of this House. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Helen Kuyembeh, I see that you have been very much impressed by what Honourable Francis Konuwa has said.

HON. HELEN KUYEMBEH: Indeed, Mr Speaker.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O. 23 with a mixed feelings. All of us know that that the Ebola Virus Disease [EVD] disrupted the educational system in this country. Usually, the academic calendar for the universities and colleges starts in October and ends in July. However, the outbreak of the disease interrupted the academic calendar. Last year, the academic year commenced in January and ended in August. Again, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology informed us that because of the Ebola, coupled with the exigency of time, that was why the academic calendar was shifted and we were assured that it was going to be corrected this academic

year. This means that the academic year should have started in October. Unfortunately, it did not start and the Ministry of Education told the public that the academic year for the universities was going to start in January. As we speak, Njala University has still not commenced lectures. This is sad for Njala University because the lecturers are on strike.

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: I just want to caution the Honourable Member because we have the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the parliamentary Committee on Education.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very happy because for the past three years, Honourable Umar Paran Tarawally and I have been shouting 'flag bearer,' and the Majority Leader of this House has formerly declared his intention. This means we have inspired the Majority Leader. In fact, we were also expecting the Chief Whip of this House to do same, but he is afraid, whilst the Majority Leader demonstrated courage and bravery.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on behalf of myself and Honourable Umar Paran Tarawally, we want to congratulate the Majority Leader of this House and Leader of Government Business for his declaration. We hope and pray that the APC will not disappoint him. He has not disappointed us in this House and I hope that we will give him our full support. I am not saying this out of hypocrisy, but to emphasise the point that he is one of us. He has been a father to us and he is a product of the Bo School. This means that the next President of this nation is going to emerge from the Bo School. It is either going to be Brigadier Julius Maada Bio or Honourable Ibrahim R. Bundu. We would be having two Bo School boys contending for the 2018 Presidential elections. I hope that the APC would give him the full support, so that we would be proud to say 'he is from Parliament,' just like President Ernest Bai Koroma. Thank you very much and God bless you.

HON IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I stand on S.O. 23 to formerly inform colleague Members of Parliament my intention to run for the flag bearership of the APC. In, 2007, the late Honourable Momoh Pujeh of blessed memory at the first State Opening of Parliament said: **"The Honourable Ernest Bai Koroma was seated where I am sitting and no sooner he left, he went**

to State House. I am praying that when his time expires, I Momoh Pujeh, would leave this seat and go to where he went.” Unfortunately, God has called him home. I pray that the person who is going to replace Dr Ernest Bai Koroma is from this side of the House. I thank you for your sentiments.

MR IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SESAY [Clerk of Parliament]: With the leave of Mr Speaker, here is an announcement with the caption ‘Formation of a Parliament Action Group on the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs].’ Members are informed about the formation of a Parliamentary Action Group on SDGs. As you may recall, the Global Development Trajectory has queued towards the SDGs and the government of Sierra Leone, over the years, has done remarkably well in integrating the SDGs into the national development agenda. During the 71st United Nations General Assembly, the parliamentary delegation, headed by the Honourable Dauda J.B. Kallon, engaged several stakeholders at the UN in relation to the SDGs and the possible role of the Parliament of Sierra Leone. It was clear from the discussions that the formation of a Parliamentary Action Group on SDGs was imperative. Therefore, it has pleased the Rt Honourable Speaker of Parliament to appoint Honourable Dauda J.B Kallon as the focal point for the SDGs, bearing in mind the importance attached to the Global Vision 2030. Membership of the SDGs Action Group is open to all Members of Parliament. Thank you for your attention.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, somebody on that side asked a very good question when I was talking about this question of letters of excuse. He asked about the Speaker and I did say that the Speaker normally tells the Clerk and then the Majority Leader. I also tell the President before leaving. I have to because that is a law. I have to tell the President and the Deputy Speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 11.15 a.m., and was adjourned to Thursday, 16th March, 2017]