

*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

# **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

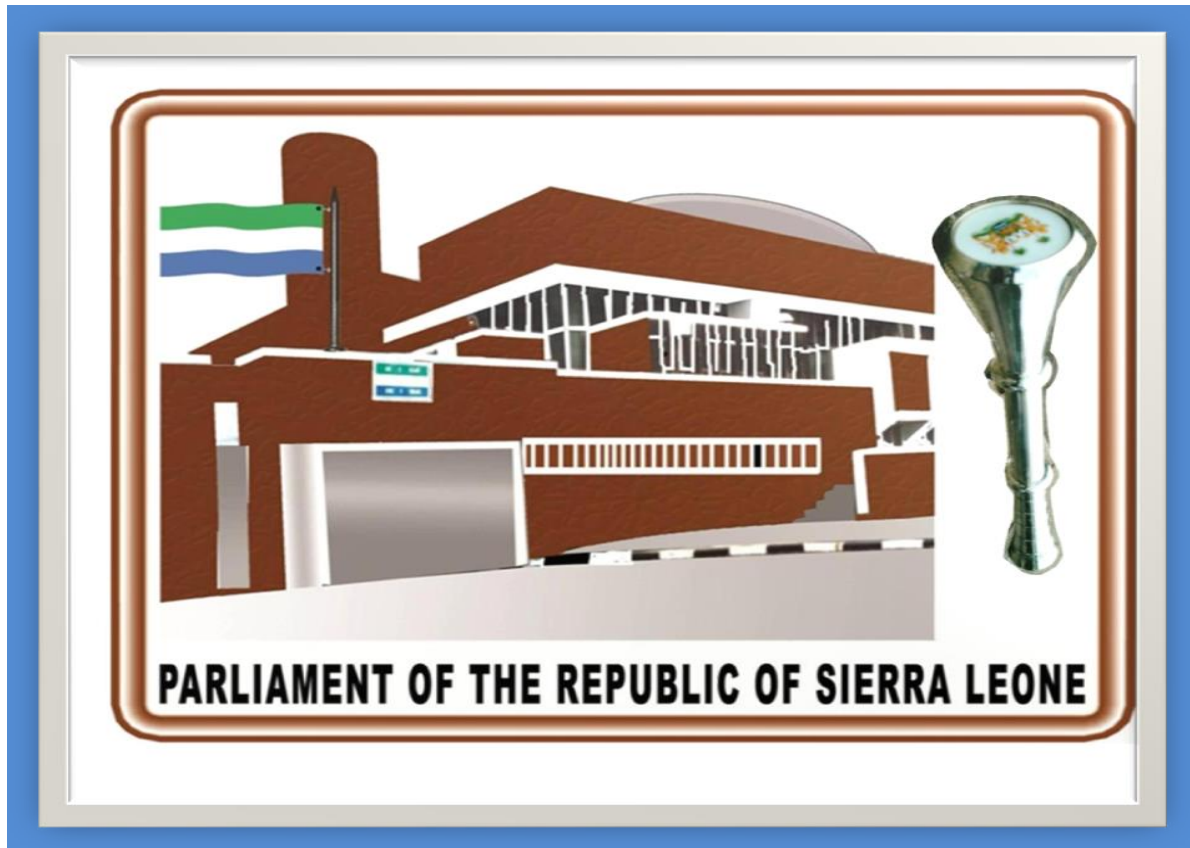
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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**FIRST SESSION –FIRST MEETING**

**THURSDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2023**

*SESSION – 2023/2024*



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

# **PARLIAMETARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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**VOLUME: I**

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First Meeting of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament  
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House  
held Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2023.

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**(FIRST ALLOTTED DAY)**



*THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE*

## **Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House**

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### **FIRST SESSION – FIRST MEETING OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

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Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2023.

#### **I. PRAYERS**

*[The Table Clerk, Mrs Bintu Weston, read the Prayers]*

*[The House met at 10:00a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]*

*[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas in the Chair]*

The House was called to Order

*Suspension of S. O. 5[2]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we shall now consider our record on Votes and Proceedings for Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2023 starting from page five. Any amendments on page five? Page six? Page seven? Page eight? Can someone please move?

**HON. ABDULAI OSMAN CHARLES:** I so move.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any Seconder?

**HON. REBECCA YEI KAMARA:** I so second Mr Speaker.

*[Question proposed, put and agreed to]*

Honourable Members, let me draw your attention to S.O. 10 [3] which reads Mr Speaker may at any time ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair temporarily without formal communication to the House. I am afraid the weekend has been most unkind to me I know you are all very concerned about my health, but I did nothing more than you yourselves did, you just narrowly escaped catching the flu, so I don't want you to catch it from me. So on that understanding I will now stand the House down for five minutes, and I ask the Deputy Speaker to kindly take over as the presiding officer for today. Deputy Speaker, I am leaving behind a list for you which was submitted to me indicating those who wish to take the Floor, I will now stand down the House for five minutes to allow the Deputy Speaker the opportunity to preside over this House.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker Point of Order. Mr Speaker, because of the sensitive nature of this Debate this is the first Presidential address to this Republic. We are expecting MDAs to be fully represented to listen to the opinion of the representatives of the people of Sierra Leone. So I move that we do a roll call of MDAs that are here because MDAs should be represented whilst we discuss the statement of the President. I so move Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I totally agree Honourable Acting Leader of Government Business, is there any Seconder?

*[Question proposed put and agreed to]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Let me first and foremost call on the Clerk to bring me the roll call, you have a register not so? Bring the register call out the MDAs that are present.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, sorry to interrupt we sent out public notice, but I realised that there is an induction of Ministers and their Deputies through their administrative protocols so we have already sent out the information that they should be here and they should not send somebody below the rank of a Director if the Permanent Secretary is not coming. So they have asked us to give them leave for today, thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Deputy Leader are you okay with that? This is a note of caution to all MDAs to ensure that your representatives are here tomorrow, and up to Friday of this Debate otherwise you will be held in contempt. Thank you very much.

**TABLE CLERK: MOTION OF THANKS TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT DR JULIUS MAADA BIO**

**PROPOSER: HONOURABLE MATHEW S. NYUMA**

**SECONDER: HONOURABLE BASHIRU SILIKIE**

**(FIRST ALLOTTED DAY)**

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to move this Motion that we the Members of Parliament here assembled wish to thank His Excellency the President for the address he so graciously delivered. The occasion of the State Opening of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone in the Chamber of Parliament on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2023. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I don't intend to say much on this, but I want to beg with your leave Mr Speaker to lay the matrix of this Debate, and also to digress a bit further, so that we can see how best we can also deliberate on issues that affect Sierra Leone, and these are policy statements made by the President in this Well of Parliament. So I want with your leave Mr Speaker, as the substantive mover of the Motion before my

Seconder coming in to make this statement succinctly, but also a little bit detailed, so I will be in between whether I am going to be brief or I will really ask with your leave to give me an extension.

Mr Speaker, I will start with my very self by saying thanks to His Excellency the President by making citations of different paragraphs and also making references to statements that he has made from the Fifth Parliament starting from 2018 right down to 2023 when he was closing down the Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I may like to start as I said the very first sentence in this paragraph that is paragraph one, and it is in his statement. Parliament plays very pivotal role in the governance system in terms of policies and very consistent in policy drive. Mr Speaker, for me to be consistent and speak to the Presidential address let me with your leave Sir read this first paragraph. Page one, paragraph one "I address this Sixth Parliament of our industrious Republic with a profound sense of honour and gratitude having once again received the resounding mandate of the people to serve this great nation for another five years".

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, he has given us a clear line that he has been given the mandate by the people, but he went further in talking about democracy, democracy is pivotal around our people, and he said let me quote him again in paragraph six the third line, he said "a government of the people by the people and for the people cannot be fully realised if we systematically exclude half of our population." So we are saying those who are ought to represent we should represent them in the interest of our country. We have the constitutional obligations, so boycotting Parliament, avoiding Parliament when you have been voted for is not good for the democratic system of the country because Sierra Leoneans voted for you. So what he has done is to redefined the context of democracy, that if you exclude half of your people, and if you don't take the issues of democracy centred around people that is why he said government of the people, by the people and for the people. So we take note of that, but Mr Speaker in pushing the democratic drive as I said in my earlier statement, President has been very consistent in his policy drive, so what he has done is to bring out the five pillars of what

he is going to do in this second term given to him as he expressed in the first paragraph of his Presidential address.

Mr Speaker, with your leave in paragraph fourteen he has highlighted the big five stating clearly the intentions that he wants to do. First, he talks about feed Sierra Leone and if you go to paragraph fourteen in tandem with twenty five where he started to elucidate on the big five starting with feed Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, let me read paragraph twenty five page four recognising this profound interconnectedness, "the flagship feed 'Salone' initiative is an unwavering testament to our commitment to forging a self-sufficient Sierra Leone where agricultural productivity thrives, hunger diminishes, and societal resilience flourishes". So it is very clear what he has said for all of us that this is the top most level of his priority. He has talked about feed 'Salone' and he has given a detailed account in that particular paragraph so his attention must be drawn to the issues that were raised that we must talk about fighting hunger and food sufficiency.

Mr Speaker, as I said inter alia the President has been very consistent in his policy drive. Take the Presidential Address from 2018 to 2023 even the farewell statement given to this House he has been very consistent talking about agriculture and food security. When I am going to do my concluding statement I will give citation paragraph by paragraph but for now he has been consistent, in as much as he is consistent he is asking us to join him to talk about the issue of feed 'Salone' under the rubric of agricultural and also food sufficiency.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, he also made twelve points in this statement drawing our attention to specific issues but let me just highlight two. Mr Speaker, if you go to paragraph twenty seven under the rubric where he said Mr Speaker with your leave to achieve these noble objectives my government has pledged to do under the feed Salone project. So what he is saying is trying to direct Members in this House that in as much as I am making a policy statement these are my own objectives, and these are my pledges. So we also need to help the President in achieving some of these, because it's the same vein he did in fighting for women's empowerment.



Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me just read the first paragraph talking about the Maputo Declaration that you should put 10% of your GDP for agriculture. Paragraph 27 sub clause [1] augment the government budget allocation to agriculture to minimum of 10% please take note of that, then the other one bullet under the same rubric twenty seven bullet two formulate policies that foster competitiveness in local rice production. So when you are debating we are also looking forward to you not only in accepting the statement given by the President when you are saying thanks, but also critic the pledges that he has made, so that we can see how we can forge ahead as one nation. We have to work in unison to ensure that we achieve the feed Salone project, if we don't work in unison we can never achieve this feed Salone project.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the fifth one he said to provide financing option that mitigates risk to private sector investment in processing and value addition that's what he said. But Mr Speaker, let me draw your attention because he has mentioned talking about feed Salone during the 10% minimum quota and the Maputo Declaration he said the minimum 10% of our GDP allocated to agriculture. I cannot remember exactly but let me say paragraph 52 of the supplementary budget if my memory can serve me well the Minister said capacitating the private sector in job creation is very important. Also in the opening statement let us do allocations that will give us productivity in service delivery in the just concluded debate for the supplementary budget. So let us take into cognisance what we have said in some of our policy statements coming from this government, but in 2022 financial year Mr Speaker I said we have been driving the agriculture and food security carefully S.O.[2] 'saful saful for achieve watin we wan for achieve saful saful'. So what they did for the financial year 2022 they introduced what we called the snap subsidy to push price production, whilst sustainably working out programmes for those who are in the vulnerable bracket. We know if you look at the scheme in terms of distribution and productivity people in the rural areas they are massively suffering even in terms of production.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, they allocated in the financial year 2022 budget 88.8 Billion Leones for rice production as a programme to woo the farmers, to give

them incentives where they can help them for rice production. If you calculate that one, and their projection for the next five years it went as far as 700 Billion Leones that is what under the agricultural credit facility roll out in the financial year 2022. Mr Speaker, this is how far His Excellency the President has gone to talk about agriculture and food security, I was just talking about the allocation given that is the spirit and the dictate of what he has done about the 88.8 Billion Leones, and in total in the next five years that is for 2022 right down to 2027 we tend to spend over seven hundred Billion on that. So spending a huge amount of such money in agricultural productivity, Paramount Chiefs, Members of Parliament we rely on you to come on board. So today it is not just ordinary thanksgiving to His Excellency the President Mr Speaker is for us to critic some of these things, and proffer solutions not on tribal lines, and not on regional lines, but how we can solve the problems of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I said I am laying the matrix I will come in my wrap up to give a detailed account of what do we intend to do under feed 'Salone'. Next I want to talk about the human capital development, under the rubric human capital development, let's go back to paragraph fifteen in tandem with paragraph twenty eight. Mr Speaker, human capital development nourishing skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century industries. Mr Speaker, with your leave let me just entreat you with paragraph twenty eight "my government commitment to human capital development recognises its importance in fostering stability and driving progress within developing nations, over the past five years our flagship programme free and quality education has propelled us to remarkably achieve result in an unprecedented surge in school admittance, and university entrance examination pass rate".

Mr Speaker, when we started there was a whole lot of suspicions and doubts that if we are going to achieve, the free and quality education but this President has moved with the spirit of the Constitution, he was not in governance when they drafted the 1991 Constitution Act number [6]. Mr Speaker, it is very interesting that we should understand that education talking about the side note in the Constitution section [9] of the Constitution talked about educational objectives. Mr Speaker, with your leave let me

read that paragraph, so that we can understand why do we need to talk about the human capital development under the rubric on education in the Constitution. Section [9] Mr Speaker that has to talk about right to education, opportunities must be given to all you don't need to discriminate. Section [9] of the 1991 Constitution Mr Speaker with your leave the government shall direct its policy the side note is educational objectives. "The government shall direct its policies towards ensuring that there are equal right and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels". Mr Speaker, with your leave we have started to cater even before his administration, but he has made more effort in ensuring that we cater for every group based on the constitutional drive, that is sub section [9].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave again let me read this provision to bring to the attention of Members. We are all under the Constitution, and we have the responsibility to uphold the Constitution to the highest esteem. So you have established first that we should talk about development following the spirit of the Constitution, talking about the educational sector. Section [9] sub sections [1b] in the Constitution save guard the rights of vulnerable groups such as children, women and the disabled in secured educational facility.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is in this light that today we are talking about development of human capital in various folds in different platforms, in this very House in the Fifth Parliament. We talked about a progressive Parliament where we enacted the gender Bill it was enacted with the efforts of everybody in this House. We all had our own day to contribute to the gender empowerment scheme, by enacting it you don't just talk about policies, but given them stronger legislative support by making strong laws. So Mr Speaker, let me draw your attention I made a very general statement in paragraph [7] and he said today there is 25% increment in women's representation in direct elections that has to do with representation of Members of Parliament, so we are talking about his own very statement in paragraph [7] from 15% to 30.4% as a representation for the woman. So it is a very good drive, and he has been very consistent in the previous statement coming from His Excellency the President from the

Presidential Speech from 2018 that we need to empower women, we need to do more for women, because it is the only way that we can forge ahead as a nation. So curbing gender parity and he used specific words I will quote him again in paragraph [7] he says "The presence of more women within this Parliament and our democracy enriches the tapestry of our nation infusing it compassion, empathy and resilience". There was series of bashing, people were even challenging us that we cannot achieve it, but we went further beyond their imagination to strengthen the spirit of the Constitution, and today we have this representation here. That is what we should do as a nation that is why in his statement, he made Parliament very pivotal that he said Parliament is not a mere law making body, but to also make sure to draw the inspiration of our people. We have seen women are lagging behind there is no way we have to look at that and say we are growing as a nation, we cannot grow without the women. So it enriches the tapestry of our nation that is the statement he used in paragraph [7] it is there.

Mr Speaker, the President made thirteen point pledges under this same rubric, let me take you to the same paragraph [32] page five he said to realise this aspiration my government pledges the following, and I will just take few. One, ensuring and continuous allocation of substantial government budgetary resources towards education based on budget allocation is 22% for education. So much he has added that the policy statement made in one of the budgetary statements from the Ministry of Finance they have also allocated in their policy drive up to 2026 I think it is coming from 2022 financial year. They said we are yearning to have 22% allocated to our GDP for health, the reason why I have mentioned health is because he is coming to talk about health under the same rubric that you have to nourish the brain that is why he said in the caption he said nourishing skills you can only nourish and progress when you have a very good health system. So he said allocating resources and more budget as he has done for the agricultural sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, again bullet two under the same rubric he said persistently expanding access to primary and secondary education that is in line with section [9] of the Constitution sub section [2]. Mr Speaker, but I will not go back to that

I am just making references when I will come in those provisions under the same provision given in the Constitution I will read those provisions, but let me just draw your attention to what he has said. He is still moving in line with the spirit of the Constitution. The other one is eight he said extending free health care services to all school going children nationwide, so that is in line with the spirit of the Constitution because he is very futuristic he said I am making budget allocation for my people going up to 2026 22% of our GDP will go towards health care system, that one also he has captured quietly in this statement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, under this same rubric the tenth one formulating a robust plan for effectively implementing the gender equality and women's empowerment [GEWE] policy 2020 and the GEWE Act 2022, so I have been telling you about consistency in the President's agenda by means of policy drive. He said in 2022 and he made it very clear there was a whole paragraph for that I will make references to those paragraphs when I would be making my wrap up. He said in fact I am talking about women right across the sector. He went to agriculture, mining sector, and labour and now he is talking about the enacted GEWE Act 2022, so he said he will give a formative drive towards that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we don't need to be selfish we are representing our people. We should represent their interest. Mr Speaker, you are sitting there because you are educated, you are called today Honourable Deputy Speaker Segepoh Solomon Thomas because you are educated. We should not take that one away from our people, if they are not educated today let us point the fingers at we the Politicians that is what President Bio is saying let us change the trajectory. Let us look at us and come together to follow the spirit of the Constitution, and we have to be futuristic as he is doing for us, so Mr Speaker that is just a brief statement for that one. Mr Speaker, let's talk about the third one that has to do with the youth employment, paragraph [16] in tandem with paragraph [34] in the same Presidential Speech. Mr Speaker, permit me to read this provision again under the rubric of youth empowerment scheme a catalyst for democracy, economic productivity, and national security.

Mr Speaker, paragraph [34] “youth unemployment persistently prevalent within our society presents a formidable threat to sustaining economic growth, stability and the overall prosperity of our nation”, and paragraph [35] though I tend to argue which I have done on several occasions. Paragraph [35] he said in Sierra Leone the youth demographic encompassing individuals between the ages of fifteen and thirty five, Mr Speaker this is the age I am questioning everyday life itself is not homogenous. We are following best practice, but we need to design our own practice in terms of helping our own young people. The demographic range that is being used in Europe cannot be used in Africa, because when you are below the age of ten you are deprived, so I have argued and questioned the new bracket age fifteen to thirty five. We were deprived when we were below the age of ten not as what we received from our parents or from the government.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are just from campaigning, we have talked to our youths and we are looking at them. Mr Speaker, sorry for taking you aback under Pa Kabba’s regime it was Dr Denis Bright who championed the youth policy in this same Chamber. Talking about fifteen to thirty five years, so somebody stood up and said Mr Chairman can we now have a clear policy guide line in tune with the policy statement or policy Act that youth should be between the ages of fifteen to thirty by standards? The Chairman Said S.O. [2] ‘bra you see wae man dem don deprive dem man dem dae you dae call youth’. He started calling young generations by District when they stood up we realised that they are all over the age of forty. So we were unable to accept the policy depriving our young people not to get the facility when in that bracket, so I stand tall to argue against the youth bracket of fifteen to thirty.

Mr Speaker, let me draw your attention to this same rubric about job creation as I said inter alia when you educate the people you give them jobs and we have to put in place all in the scheme. But what is lagging is youth unemployment; if you educate them you don’t give them jobs you make them more dangerous. So empowering the private sector is key in our drive because we have enacted series of Agreements we have passed in this Well supporting the policy drive of His Excellency the President. The

President has said we are going to make hundred thousand jobs every year the thing that we can help the President in this drive. Are we going to succeed? If we are going to succeed all of us in this policy drive in this Presidential Statement he has given us his pledges let us see how best we can help him by doing our oversight functions very well.

Mr Speaker, let me just go to paragraph forty, and let me draw the attention of my Colleagues when they are doing their Debates. Paragraph forty under the same rubric he said to realise this vision my administration will undertake the following measures under the youth employment scheme I will just give few bullets. Bullet one [1] provides targeted incentives encompassing both tax and non-tax benefit to encourage private sector employment of youth. There is no way we have seen where people are talking about S.O. [2] 'oh government nor gi me wok'. Honourable Mohamed Bangura seated over there lived in Canada for a very long time, he was there as an ordinary resident, he has denounced that one long time ago. What we can do is to empower the private sector which is very key. How are we going to achieve it? By putting us on our toes going after the MDAs, monitor the private sector, or open the space giving them the privileges they need to have, so that they can employ more people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, bullet two he says establish a dedicated fund to reimburse private sector expenses for recruiting, training, and up scaling youth employees. So he is just speaking to the fact that we need to empower young people by bringing in the private sector. As I said in my statement in the just concluded supplementary budget the Minister said we need to make more push to the private sector, if we are talking about unemployment, or we want to curb the issue of unemployment, and looking at the constraint employment on our young people. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the next he talked about before going there we have heard about the temple run as Pope Francis refers to as the watery cemetery. They are not going there because they want to do it; they are going there because of greener pastures, so these are the reasons why the President is saying I want to create hundred thousand jobs every year, but including the private sector. Mr Speaker, if our policies

are deterring them to employ young people let us remove the barriers because this House can do it, so that we can support the President in his drive.

Mr Speaker, paragraph eighteen in tandem with paragraph forty two in the Presidential Speech. Paragraph eighteen is giving you an insight, and it is taking you to paragraph forty two for proper details. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, paragraph 43 which I read for the edification of the House again, "my government is fully committed to revitalizing the public service emphasising delivery, fostering a culture of professionalism". We have said there is a gap between the Ministers and the Deputy Ministers, because some Ministers want to usurp all the powers, but we are saying there is also provision in the Constitution in section sixty two saying Ministers are in charge of their Ministries they did not really specify, or by structure the Deputy Minister is the principal assistant to the Minister, so in between the two there is an administrative organ which we called the Permanent Secretary. So we have started it from day one Mr Speaker in our Committee to approve the Ministers, so under enhancing public service architecture, empowering democracy and national development. Paragraph forty two reads, my government is fully committed to revitalising the public service emphasising delivery, fostering a culture of professionalism, meritocracy and continuous improvement ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency in servicing the people of Sierra Leone that is the first one in paragraph forty three. Mr Speaker, in as much as we are looking at the private sector, and the public service all of these should play a pivotal role in ensuring that the President achieves his objectives what he has outlined here. So this public service is key to the heart of everybody, so let me just take you to bullet three under this same rubric.

[Suspension of S.O. [52]

**THE SPEAKER:** Proceed Mr Leader.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, as I was saying to things that have to do with the public service, in terms of meritocracy, professionalism is good for us also. The President has made some pledges in revamping the public sector service delivery. So he



said in paragraph forty five [one], conduct a comprehensive review of policy and legal framework governing the public service, ensuring professionalism appeal to Sierra Leoneans professionally who aspire to serve the government. Bullet three, enhance incentives to promote productivity, and a merit based work force recruitment and progression system. And the last bullet seven implements the wages and Compensation Commissions Act of 2023 to spearhead welfare of public service, and safeguard the wellbeing of its dedicated members. Mr Speaker, we were in a meeting where in fact the President has just mentioned about sanitising the wage Bill, and in the Fifth Parliament we enacted the wage Bill. It is a process that we have to rollout, first we have to set the Commission, and together with the Speaker now we engage the Ministry of Finance that this is a time for you to encourage the public sector workers that I cannot be in one sector with the same level of employment, or with same level of ranking. For example I am a Director in Parliament, and the other one is a Director in another MDA and he is getting more than me reasons for that we don't know. We have been very careful in discharging our responsibilities in the interest of the people.

Mr Speaker, so what we have done is to have the wage Commission to start looking at these salary grades, let us look at the wages of our people. Even if as it is said by the Minister in the supplementary budget that the GDP we are having we can still accommodate the wage Bill where you can get people of the same rank having the same level of salary. It should not be business as usual it should be scrutinising the wage Bill in the interest of this nation, so he has said it and he has given a statement. He has given in that light seven points that we need to look at.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the last but not the least that is technology and infrastructure. We have said so much about all of these like feed 'Salone', about youth unemployment, and about the educational human capital development. We are just talking about reforming the public sector now we are talking about the technology because this is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century is more of technology. So that is why we are trying very hard in this Well of Parliament for you to have your tablets, but it is not the end we are going to continuously train our MPs, so that they can be in line

with the modern technology. But as time goes on we are going to upgrade the system that is the reason today we can see the IT personnel they are moving round. It is going to be mandatory and the responsibility of Parliament with this administration all of us to ensure that people are IT. Thank you very much the Department of the ICT for work well done you should be in the Chamber directing us what we can do.

Mr Speaker, paragraph seventeen in tandem with forty seven where he talked about the detail of his model of technology. Forty seven let us look at the first bullet under forty seven he said "envisioning a future of robust economic growth, socio economic progress, and boundless innovation. Our Technology and Infrastructural initiative is an indispensable corner stone of our transformative agenda". And look at paragraph fifty three page nine he has given detail of what he intends to achieve. To achieve these objectives my government pledges the following strategic action, and let me give you an insight of four of the bullets. Bullet one under the same rubric expands the switch system to encompass all Commercial Banks and financial institutions. Bullet seven ensures the completion that is under the infrastructured programme now which I want you to take note of. Mr Speaker, as I read this bullet I am deliberately referring to the infrastructural development. We should come out very clearly in our report in tandem with the spirit of the President's ambition to take the trajectory of our country in terms of infrastructure. Bullet seven to ensure the completion of southern and northern transmission line projects connecting strategic locations such as Mamama, Songo, Rotinfunk, Buya, Moyamba, Rutila and Pujehun.

Mr Speaker, we are here for business and we want to change the trajectory of what we are doing, we should be futuristic for our nation that's the only way we can do it. The other bullet is bullet nine the electrification of District capitals in all sixteen locations it can affect me in Gbokakajama Bolabanyama, it can affect you coming from Pujehun where Honourable P.C. Kebbie is living that is the inspiration, and the intent of our government that's what we want to do, and we are expecting those coming from those locations to say it here when we start the Debate.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, bullet ten increases incentives in road construction within key agricultural production and fish processing zones throughout the country so thirteen points given under this drive for us to achieve this transformative growth has to talk about innovation infrastructure. We should be seen working in this trajectory. We should not aid and abet like others we should aid and abet with reasons supporting His Excellency the President. We are representing our people by making good policies for this nation, and if we don't do that it will be woe upon all of us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have heard the President talking about transformations in changing the trajectory of every election. We have just completed the multitier elections 2023. For every election there are ramifications we are not scared of that, but there is also provision in our Public Elections Act the views of the observers and views of our local observers both local and international we should take them very seriously. In the Fifth Parliament we did reforms that have to do with electoral systems we have, so President said I am going to form a committee who the Vice President will be in charge to look at our electoral reforms.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we should believe in strengthening institutions by making laws, so that institutions can be strengthened not to build monsters in our institutions, we can only strengthen the institutions by legislating good laws that keep us in unison. Today there are challenges within the electoral systems, after every multitier election there are differences always. In American and Europe people are challenging it, and it is not a new phenomenon, we should stand tall to challenge the issues that we are facing during our elections. He has not run away from what he has seen. He has pushed that we did some reforms in the Fifth Parliament which I referred to as the progressive Parliament. We did so many reforms there are others we did not do, because of constitutional provision that has to do with referendum, and that is what we should do. He has called on us that in this Well he said I am going to form a committee to put the Vice President in charge. Honourable Paramount Chiefs you are anchored the beacon of our hope, and the President carries our vanguard of prosperity.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you are guiding us in our localities those who we think they are the rock of our survival are the Paramount Chiefs going down to the Section Chiefs. There are challenges we cannot shy away from that, but let us believe in the rule of law. Take the stage and talk to the people we are not woods we are humans, we are not fools or we are not God, but we are human we can listen. Its only God and fools that cannot change, but President Bio is a righteous man we have seen it all.

Mr Speaker, he has talked about transformation and talked about all other things I will not bore you much, but I will end with this note in paragraph sixty three. He has talked about our civil liberty in paragraph sixty one, paragraph sixty two, but let me end with paragraph sixty three Mr Speaker with your leave then I take my seat. Paragraph sixty three let me read, it falls upon our shoulders to safe guard this democracy, to support our citizens as we propel the economic fraud, and to create a safe and stable atmosphere where every Sierra Leonean can flourish holding their heads high with pride on the global stage.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have given you detailed matrix of what I am expecting you to debate and for you to criticise you cannot be killed, but with reasons and proffer solutions and talk to us because we are not God we are not fools, but we are just humans. We are liable to mistakes President Bio is not God, but he is human as you do, but he is a democrat. He is a democrat with all democratic credentials given to him from a Military man who took power, and gave power to a civilian government, and he came obeyed all the rules governing democracy with all the vices with the innuendos and the aspersions today he is the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and let us copy the good work of President Bio. Let us don't be sycophants to his policies let us be the people of substance who can talk to the President about what he is intending to do, because he has all the policies. Mr Speaker, as I end with paragraph fifty three may the Lord bless us all I will come again in a different form. I will come to wrap up all what you have said this is just an insight to all what is here. The Crocodile will come in a different fashion, but I will come in a more holistic, because every view is not

homogeneous. Mr Speaker, I move to give chance to my brother a friend with whom am well pleased. Mr Speaker, I move that the thanks of His Excellency the President in the occasion of the State Opening of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic. I so move Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, the question is that we the Members of Parliament here assembled wish to thank His Excellency the President for the address he so graciously delivered on the occasion of the State Opening of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone in the Chamber of Parliament on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. Honourable Members as a matter of fact the Leader of Government Business has said everything that you should have said, so I crave your indulgence for you to summarise in five minutes the remaining points, he has said everything for you so there is not much you have to say again. So just go to the juggler and summarise in five minutes. Thank you very much Honourable Deputy Leader.

### **QUESTION PROPOSED**

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to begin by thanking His Excellency the President for graciously delivering this address on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will start with paragraph two Mr Speaker with your leave I read "I extend my heart felt appreciation to the citizens of this noble land for the unwavering trust they have placed in me personally, and in the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party in continuing steering the course of our democracy towards sustainable progress and prosperity".

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to join His Excellency the President to appreciate the people of this Republic for not just reposing confidence in the Sierra Leones Peoples' Party and His Excellency the President, and also voting for us as Members of Parliament overwhelmingly. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President has given a lot of respect, a lot of confidence and I have challenged us as a Parliament to help him in the furtherance of his agenda.

Mr Speaker, in paragraph three with your leave I read within the hallowed Chambers of this esteemed Parliament I am humbled by the weight of its significance. Mr Speaker, the significance of this Parliament as it is stated in the 1991 Constitution cannot be over emphasised. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will continue in reading paragraph fifty six of the speech of His Excellency the President in tandem with a statement that was delivered to this House in December 14<sup>th</sup> 2012 by the former President Ernest Bai Koroma. Mr Speaker, in section fifty six of this speech His Excellency said I quote in this very Parliament where no party has attained the two thirds majority the need for dialogue and negotiation resonate with utmost urgency. We must find common ground within the political divide through unity we can achieve stability, progress and prosperity in our democracy. Mr Speaker, let me reference the speech delivered to this Parliament on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012 by the former President Ernest Bai Koroma.

Mr Speaker, if you read the statement that was delivered by the former President paragraph four the statement that was delivered on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012. Mr Speaker, with your leave I make reference, "Mr Speaker in my last address here I told Parliamentarians in the habit walking out and boycotting Parliament that they might be boycotted by the people. Well I have looked around for some of my friends, but I have not been able to set eyes on them is it true that the people boycotted them, how many were boycotted this just shows that dialogue is better than boycott. I hope my good friends will take note of this and acknowledge that the days of walkout and boycott are over as they do not serve any useful purpose". Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that was the exact statement of the former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone in 2012. Mr Speaker, when the President came and he noticed that most of his friends who boycotted Parliaments were not voted for by the people in 2012 he advised us that boycott are far past, and we should not be boycotting. So Mr Speaker in tandem with section fifty six of this statement I will join His Excellency to call on my Colleagues who have been voted for by the people of this Republic to come and take their seats and join us in the progress of this nation. They have been advised long before now in 2012 by Ernest Bai Koroma the former President that boycotts will not help them. We are

also joining His Excellency the President to encourage them Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that boycotts will not serve the purpose. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President is very clear in this speech that power is in the hands of the people, and when the people have exercised their rights in voting for you, and you have taken party grounds against the wishes of the people the people will definitely pay you back in 2028. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the best way forward in any situation is to negotiate because we have laws that are guiding this Parliament and the people of this Republic.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President has given us his manifesto, and the President has challenged this Parliament, and in the next five years with the support of this Parliament the government must succeed. He has given us Mr Speaker the five point manifesto that he wishes to achieve in the next five years of his governance. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to urge this Parliament that it should not be business as usual, if the President should achieve this dream this Parliament should be pivotal.

Mr Speaker, let me zero in on some of the dreams, some of the aspirations that His Excellency has concentrated on. He started Mr Speaker by telling us that this time round Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President will be dealing the first most priority of his agenda is feed 'Salone' which is agriculture. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as a Parliament we will be following up the future Chairman of Agriculture and team Members that will constitute that Committee will be following up on the line Ministries that would be responsible. Mr Speaker, if you read through paragraph twenty two to twenty seven Mr Speaker, Mr President was deliberate in telling us that the only way out of the current quagmire that the world is facing that is agriculture to feed ourselves. Mr Speaker, in paragraph twenty seven the President said to emancipate ourselves from the shackles of food import dependency of course in Sierra Leone whatever we eat we are importing, which endangers vulnerability and compromises our sovereignty. My government will invigorate agricultural productivity, propelling inclusive

growth, augmenting food production, alleviating hunger, blustering export earning, creating employment, opportunities and nurturing resilience.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, His Excellency went further to say that to achieve all of the above my government pledges Mr Speaker that is what I want this Parliament to concentrate on, and that is why at the beginning of this Debate I said MDAs should be represented. And we hope the Ministry of Finance will tailor their budget for 2023 in tune with this statement. Thankfully Mr Speaker before now we used to have the budget been read before the Presidential statement. Today we have the Presidential statement been read, and we expect the Ministry of Finance to tidy up the budget towards this statement, because we will be following on these statements and these promises that His Excellency has given to us. Mr Speaker, my government pledges to augment the government budget allocation for agriculture to a minimum of 10% Mr Speaker this is for the Ministry of Finance. The President has told us and we want to see it clearly in the Budget that the seeds for Agriculture would be increased from where it used to be to a minimum of 10% in the Budget Mr Speaker. We would not want to see a situation in which the President would say one thing and the Budget says another. We will want to have a Budget that is tidy up with what the President is telling us so I want to make it very clear Mr Speaker, that the next budget we want to see a budget that is tidy up with what the President had said Mr Speaker, 10% of the budget should be allocated to Agriculture excuse should not be tolerated and I believe if these allocations are not done, this Parliament would not approve budget that would be coming from the Ministry of Finance. Formulate policies that foster competitiveness in the local rice production this is for the Ministry of Agriculture and for the Committee that would be looking at the Ministry of Agriculture these are the policies we should be looking for policies that would encourage local Farmers and competitiveness within the local Communities. These are the things we should be looking for and I would encourage this Parliament to look at the promises made by His Excellency because in the next five years these are the promises the People are going to rely on to vote us in



or otherwise. But we are very sure as a Parliament we have done the needful at the end of the day we are assured the people would continue to give their confidence to us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if the Agriculture Sector should be improved if we have good yield we should empower ourselves and we should invest in research. His Excellency has promised us that Mr Speaker, to invest in research to enhance yields for priority crops such as cassava, cocoa, coffee, cashew and life stock production we would be following up with the Minister of Agriculture. These are the policies of His Excellency the President we are not just here to praise sing but we are here to remind the Ministers responsible that we will be following up with them and these are the things that we expect them to achieve before the end of the five years. Expand the cultivated area for rice by adopting mechanization and irrigation technique in the nation's rice bowl; we will be following up Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, providing financing options that mitigate risk for private sector investment in processing and value addition that is the major challenge we have. Mr Speaker, if the government has told us that they will be providing financial option that will mitigate risk of course we all know currently what is happening when you go to the bank to loan, the interest rate is extremely high at the end of the day you will be working for the banks and the risk is extremely huge when the planting season goes bad you are at the mercy of our commercial banks. I am very pleased with this decision taken by the President.

Mr Speaker, the President also talked about the human development notching skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in 2018 when we took over our major promise is to provide free quality education. We started and today we are in a very good footing we cannot say here authoritatively that all is well, but we can say enrolment is high. We can say we have more female students in the Sciences today and more pupils are taking the BECE, NPSE and WASSSE. We can say there is a culture that every home that has pupils are sending them to schools because education is a priority and the message has reached every household of this country. We cannot say it is okay but I am very confident His Excellency did hugely in that sector. Mr Speaker, His Excellency has said he will continue from where we stopped.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you read page 32 with your leave I will read "our efforts will be directed towards bridging the gap in the missing middle of the labour force while nurturing talents for professional roles in both the private and the civil service". Mr Speaker that is the exact situation we are in now as a country. The middle level is so weak; we have two sets in Sierra Leone the upper or the lower. It is either you are rich or you are poor and the middle level that is why the 6334 was created. I am happy His Excellency has highlighted it the 6334 was created because we want to bridge the gap between the middle level and the lower level so that we have an average. Mr Speaker, you notice of late everybody is running to the university some of them doing courses that are not valuable to national development. Government is the biggest employer in Sierra Leone and in advance countries you barely see government workers. Our brothers and sisters who live abroad they will tell you it is difficult for us to see people working in the government sector but today even people working for the private sectors are all yearning to come to government institutions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am happy the President has said he will revamp and rejuvenate the middle level by building technical and vocational institutions. Before now it was agreed that from JSS 1 to JSS 2 you should be examined to know if you want to go to Senior Secondary School or if you want to go to senior tech vocation institutions. The teacher should be in the position to have studied the output of the child to know if this child is really fit to go into Senior Secondary School or to go into technical vocational schools. Mr Speaker, I can say when the 6334 was formed there were schools that did not have SSS but they have technical vocational. I am happy His Excellency has said he will rejuvenate these institutions because when once you go into these institutions you will learn skills and you will be able to be useful in the community. His Excellency has said he is planning to create these institutions in every Chiefdom for instance in Baoma Chiefdom where I am representing we are struggling before now my people used to do mining today there is no way you can benefit from mining if you don't do mechanized mining. It is either you do mechanized mining or you waste your time so the unemployment rate in my Constituency for instance is huge so I

am very pleased His Excellency has said he is bringing technical vocational so that when we have the technical vocational that would change the narrative of the young people. I am happy His Excellency has told us he will bring more technical vocational institutions to restore the middle level.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, His Excellency has said youth employment scheme of course Mr Speaker in the interviewed I told the Minister that he tried to build a lot of car washes all around some of them even though there are challenges they have not been used because of the position they have been placed but he did very well and he should do more because His Excellency has promised us five hundred thousand jobs and at the end of the day we are going to ask him for these jobs. He has promised us on a yearly basis this is the beginning of the year but he is going to provide for us one hundred thousand jobs. Mr Speaker, as a Parliament we should not wait until the end of the year let us challenge ourselves that in the next six months we would call the government Ministers to come and tell us what they have achieved in creating jobs for people. We should put them on their toes we have so much powers as per the Constitution as Members of Parliament they should be coming here explaining to us about the job His Excellency has promised because there is no way this President who is talk and do would say something that he would not deliver.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me read page 40 of the speech with the heading youth employment scheme to realize this vision my administration will undertake the following measures. Mr Speaker, the committee that will be responsible let us look at these measures and let us follow up on these measures. His Excellency has highlighted in his speech to provide targeted incentive, encompassing both tax and none tax benefits to encourage private sector employment of youth and that is one major problem the private sector has been crying for tax incentive. The taxes on the private sector are extremely huge that most businesses are falling out. I am happy the President has said he will give tax incentive and that is the only way you will encourage the private sector. We are going to follow up and we are making sure that the budget should be tiding up with this statement. We are waiting on the budget to see the tax

incentive that the President has told us he will do for the private sector because this tax incentive will encourage the private sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President has said he will establish a dedicated fund to reimburse private sector expenses for recruiting trading and up skilling youth employment. Mr Speaker, we are waiting on the government and we are waiting on the budget if the budget speaks otherwise then we would begin to challenge them that what His Excellency has said is not what the budget has captured so I am advising the Ministry of Finance please take note on the statement that has been delivered by His Excellency and tailor your budget towards the statement establishing youth opportunity centres in every District headquarters towns serving as a vital support hub for youth pursuing employment exactly what I was saying Mr Speaker when these institutions are created the young people in our District headquarters will be opportune to visit these areas and learn. Facilitate access to capital for aspiring young entrepreneurs seeking to establish their ventures. Mr Speaker, facilitate access to capital is not just facilitating this capital should come with lower interest rate. Mr Speaker, when you go to these micro credit institutions they are even killing our entrepreneurs. In my village Yamandu half of the women ran away from that village because they went and took micro credit and in fact there was a huge syndicate between those that are bringing this micro credit and the women in my village. Mr Speaker, half of the women ran away because of the pressure on them instead of facilitating for these loans we should also encourage those micro credit institutions to lower the interest. Their interest rate is above 50% so Mr President I am very pleased when you said you will facilitate access but just don't facilitate access make sure you lower the interest rate so that the entrepreneurs will be able to thrive especially with the period that we have not been able to control the exchange rate. So please my appeal to government is to encourage the interest rate to be lowered even Members of Parliament we are suffering because of the interest rate. The interest rate is huge.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President has said he will create a comprehensive data base to monitor and track youth employment across the public and

private sector. All of what the President has put on paper can be enhanced if the interest rate is lowered. There is no way the private sector can be enhanced with the rate at which the economy is going.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, enhancing service architecture empowering democracy and national development. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave let me read paragraph 45. "In revamping the public sector architecture my government conduct a comprehensive review on the policy and legal frame work governing the public service ensuring its professional appeal to Sierra Leonean professionals who have vowed to serve the government". Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will also support His Excellency by saying we will review the policies and legal frame work so people who are fit for jobs will be the people to be employed because the only way our public sector can be enhanced is when we have the right people gainfully employed. It is not who we know or we are coming from the same tribe or the same village if we continue like that Mr Speaker we will not have the intended goal of His Excellency the President. Establish a centre of government delivery unit within the Presidency forcing the cohesive connection with smaller delivery unit within line Ministries. That is very good we have also seen the President be true to his words he has appointed somebody to coordinate the coordination of government Ministries maybe this is what he wants to achieve. He has told us he has appointed Dr Gbonda to serve in that capacity. We are wishing him well if exactly what the President has told us is why he was appointed for he will enjoy the maximum support of this Parliament. Strengthen the performance management of Ministries, Departments and Agencies by reviewing existing frameworks and developing a robust Performance Management policy. Mr Speaker, this is very good on paper but Mr Speaker I want to challenge this Parliament that in achieving these policies the President has said he will put on paper the Parliament of this Republic has all the powers as per law, I will encourage all Committees in this Parliament to follow up on MDAs. It should not be business as usual because at the end of the day Mr Speaker this Sixth Parliament will be asked what we did to enhance what the President has told us. I know the reasons

why the President is putting up strategic policies to enhance public sector because maybe Parliament has not taken its rightful space in society. Parliament has not impressed as much as it should so I am challenging this Sixth Parliament and I am challenging all of us, if you are given responsibility as a Leader of a Committee, Deputy or a Member of the Committee please we expect the MDAs to complain you rather than the reverse. Mr Speaker, before now we see Members of Parliament, Committee Chairmen coming to complain MDAs let us have the reverse. Mr Speaker, I know you will be very pleased to see MDAs coming and complaining the Committees myself and my Leader we are very serious on that, that Committee Chairmen and Committees should take their rightful positions as per law. We want to see MDAs complaining rather than Chairmen coming S.O. 2 'pa we sermon da committee e nor kam' you have all the powers. This is the Sixth Parliament we can understand in the Fifth Parliament it was a hung Parliament. This Parliament is our Parliament and we should be seen doing in our jobs, if we don't do we are not just going to be disappointing ourselves, but we will be disappointing the people who voted us. So the fact that this speech is the shortest in the history of this Parliament I have seen so far I want to challenge and conclude Mr Speaker, Honourable Members by challenging this Parliament. All of what has be stated in this speech can be actualised by this Parliament. All of these policies there are laws governing this Parliament and providing oversight on the Executive.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Committee Chairmen I want to reiterate I have spoken with my Leader we are giving you free hand and make sure whatever you do, you do within the spirit of the law but we are giving you free hands. The Leader told me that the Supervisory Committee will be monitoring activities of Committees in this Parliament and even Committees that will be announced, these are Sessional Committees. Committees Chairperson will be rotational henceforth as per performance let nobody think after Committees have been announced he or she is going to be permanent Chairman or Deputy Chairman to those positions for five years. So I encourage Members of Parliament to join His Excellency the President in achieving his promises to this nation. We have a place and we should take that rightful place so that

His Excellency in five years' time will be proud as he did in the Fifth Parliament. I thank you very much Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I have nine names and I am going to go strictly by the nine names. Except probably if there is any other Honourable Member that is interested, if you are interested for today let me know of course the Leaders have said everything so I give you five minutes.

**HON. BERNADETTE W. SONGA:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are here to thank His Excellency for his speech to us last week. I will like to focus on health. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as per our Constitution section 8 sub section 3b clearly states what are the responsibilities of the government to its people with regards to health. When I looked at His Excellency's speech Mr Speaker paragraph 11 page 2 of the President speech in tandem with bullet point number 1 page 23 of the peoples manifesto they both highlighted the gains that we have made as a government and as a country in terms of health. Mr Speaker, in 2018 if I remember well when we came to Parliament the life expectancy of Sierra Leoneans at that time was 53 years so if you live above 53 years you are lucky and because of the seriousness of this government, because of the gains we have made as a country the life expectancy has now moved from 53 to 61 that is a massive jump. Mr Speaker, it's not by magic that tells you that we have a serious President who is concerned about the wellbeing of his people. Mr Speaker, the mortality rate of this country in 2018 was very high. We were among the least countries at that time from 2018 to now we have had 60% decrease in that aspect that tells you something is happening in the health sector. We have had mobile clinics even down to Segbwema.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, only last week Thursday we saw in Bo District that the Minister of Lands and the Minister of Health went there to acquire 500 acres of land to build a specialist unit that His Excellency spoke about last week in less than a week they made a visitation to ensure that it happens this is a serious government looking at the health of its people. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members health in this country has been more like a joke. We are now starting to see hospitals being renovated because

when you look at Panguma Hospital this government has renovated it to its standard. We have Rokupa Hospital and we have a brand new hospital built in Jojorma. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there has been a huge revamp in the health sector, and we would continue to make gains in every aspect of it. Mr Speaker, last year it was in this very Well that we repealed and passed into law the NMC Act 2023 which is the Nursing and Midwifery Council Act. Mr Speaker, that was over 70 years due as a Parliament when we passed it last year. What does that mean for the health sector? It now means we have a council that monitors and it does not just employ and give pin codes to nurses and health professionals but it monitors their professional conducts for the first time in this country. We will have the NMC being responsible for monitoring and evaluating and disciplining health workers. That council requires a budget line this Parliament will be charged with the responsibility to look at the budget that will be in front of us to see whether the duties and responsibilities that we have given to the NMC will be carried out well as per the budget that will be allocated to them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to ask for your permission to start a national discussion on a very important non-communicable disease something that this country is suffering from hugely and we have been overlooking it. The discussion has started but they are not to the level that we should be asking ourselves whether we are doing justice to ourselves and this nation that is mental health Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, our country is in crisis because every day you talk about substance misuse that is mental health Mr speaker we are shying away from it. I want to thank His Excellency because in the people's manifesto, he stated that very soon he will be constructing mental health facilities in the provinces because all these years we only have one mental health facility in this country that is the Kissy Mental Hospital that facility is over stretched. If you have mental illness in my village in Constituency 008 you will have to be brought back to Freetown, because there is no mental health facility in Kailahun District and the entire regions. His Excellency has committed himself to ensure that we have mental health facilities in the provinces that is a good one we pray that it comes to pass. But Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the discussions I want to



start today in this Well is how well we are tackling our mental health issues. Our youth are perishing because Kush has become the order of the day. What are the reasons? What are the underlined causes? What is making our youth to turn to substance misuse? There are things we are not looking at Mr Speaker. We have a Mental Health Act that is as old as 1902. Are we serious as a country? Mr Speaker 1902 that is a law that is well over due to be repealed. I spoke to someone in the Ministry of Health, and I said what are we doing if we don't have the budget line, how are we going to treat mental health in this country? He said Honourable Member; we don't have a budget line because there is no Act. And I said what happens to the Act? He said it is at the Law Officers Department on the shelf laying there. Now I challenge all of us Mr Speaker to use your good office to ensure this Bill comes to Parliament because His Excellency has shown the will power. Why I said so Mr Speaker? He said it in his speech that he will build facilities to enhance mental health. He has even appointed the Presidential Adviser for mental health the first time in the history of Sierra Leone.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Songa one more minute.

**HON. BERNADETTE W. SONGA:** Mr Speaker, please give me two more minutes. Mr Speaker, young adults even us as women are going through postnatal depression without being noticed in this country. As a health professional Mr Speaker, we recognise these things, but what is the treatment solution in this country we don't have one. A man was telling me how his wife has refused to born when she has just given birth to and even when the baby was crying she does not feel like touching the baby she feels depressed because the mother is suffering from depression. Mr Speaker, our nation needs help let start a broader discussion about mental health. His Excellency in 2018 6% of the budget of this country was allocated to health, from 2018 to now he has increased it to 11.6% and he has stated that this budget coming he is going to increase it to 15%. I thank His Excellency and I am pleading with him and this nation that the 3% that is going to be added in the health budget let divert it to mental health in tackling the mental issues of this country. A lot needs to be done but we can start with the 3% of budget allocated. How do we do that Mr Speaker? How do we start tackling

it? Let us start by doing a public health service by educating our youth on drugs and substance misuse. I am kindly pleading with the Leadership and Colleagues please let us do our work properly, the oversight roles into our hospitals and health facilities cannot be overlooked. Today His Excellency is providing us with health insurances for public workers. We have a responsibility to ensure those services are effective and fit for purposes. Our oversight role can ensure that people are doing what they are meant to be doing. Mr Speaker, as I take my seat I want the discussion to carry on mental health. I thank you Mr Speaker.

**HON. OSMAN C. ABDULLAI:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me join my Colleagues to have a bite on the Motion of Thanks of His Excellency the President which he graciously delivered on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023. One of the things I want to throw light on, that this President is a very grateful President in his opening speech. In his first paragraph he was quick to thank and congratulate Members of Parliament and the Speaker for their re-election to their offices again, especially for some of us coming back who survived the tsunami. It was not only State House that suffers the tsunami, Members of Parliament also. You know when His Excellency reached at that point he looked at MPs to see whether some MPs are there and he shook his head when he saw me here because it was very unprecedented why I am here, thank you very much His Excellency for the speech. Also in one of the areas page 2 paragraph 6 I want to really dilate on the gender issues which His Excellency actually talked on during the speech that he delivered the increase in the election of women to Parliament 30.4% this was a manifesto commitment he made and that was achieved. I think that was very laudable on the part of the government of Sierra Leone and Parliament because we are part of that history making because those documents passed through here. It was not easy but we were able to meander our way to pass that Bill. My question is what next for you elected Members of Parliament especially the women folks to help the Government on gender issues, not only to benefit the elites, the few educated women that made their way to Parliament what about their counterparts out there, the majority how is this going to impact their lives? I do not

need answers of course but that will be part of us as Parliament and also especially for you the women folks who have made their way to Parliament in your numbers this time around help the Ministry of Gender. For me as Member of Parliament for the past five years I can challenge the Ministry of Gender to tell me how far that institution is mainstreaming gender I have not seen an assessment report on gender audit. I think those are some of the things as a Parliament, as a government we should be thinking especially the Ministry of Gender to see how far institutions are mainstreaming gender. What are the issues in our budget? What are the gender issues not only our physical representation in Parliament but how far are we dealing with the issue of gender? It is a food for thought. As a Parliamentary Committee on Gender, the Ministry of Gender those are some of the issues we should be thinking about. Also His Excellency was also quick to thank the Fifth Parliament we all know that the Fifth Parliament was a hung Parliament. The Leadership of Parliament how was they able to meander their ways to see all the policies of government passed through. It was a very big plus on our parts on both aisles; it was a kind of collaboration and engagement on both sides of the aisles so that at least good policies of government were able to pass through to become laws. He also mentioned about the gains we have made as a country in the past five years. His government made policies relating to strategic policies of our food production in agriculture, education, except a bias person that can assess this particular government a low mark in achieving most of its commitments.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, coming to the current manifesto commitments, I want to look at the feed 'Salone'. Our Ministries are challenged despite the gains we have made already but I want to look at few things which especially the Chairman of the Presidential Initiative, in relation to agriculture, climate change and the like that our Ministries especially agriculture is challenged with this idea of low products for our farmers. I remember when I was in Ghana pursuing a course in agricultural value chain financing when I went for my practical in Cape Coast it was a maize farmer a woman that helped me to get the information to design loan products so these are some of the things we want the Ministry to look at. My Leader was talking about the micro credit

loans those are the areas the Ministry of Finance should look at if you want to operate a financial institution. How do you determine the loan products? We want to feed ourselves do we have brokers at community level that sell fertilizers that make farmers have access to those inputs relating to the use of tractors? We want to mechanize our farming activities it is laborious but there are some appropriate technology that we can use I remember in 2018, 2019 we approved 150 tractors in this Well. The use of those tractors by private sectors I know the story please Mr Minister coming to the Ministry of Agriculture you have to look at the use of those tractors in the care of private sectors for the hiring of those tractors.

Mr Speaker, please just a second to look at the bridge in my Constituency in Bumpeh. It affects you also using that route to Matru Jong or to Bonthe. My Chieftdom is a Chieftdom that is agriculturally viable we are very productive in agricultural activities but the collapse of that bridge has caused very serious problem for our people. As it is when you pass through Bumpeh the market of Bo should have been flourished with new rice but how can these farmers bring those new rice to Bo when they have inundated to go round through Tiama? Even myself as Member of Parliament when I want to go to my Constituency I have to go through Tiama, Mano, Njala and the like so please Mr Speaker, when we resume after recess I will either under S.O. 23 or a private Motion to bring the Minister that is responsible for that road to give us an answer to the status of that road or that bridge from Bo to Matru Jong. On that note, I want to thank His Excellency, again I want to thank the Members of Parliament at least we are able to say a very big thank you to His Excellency for the speech he delivered on that faithful day. Thank you very much.

**HON. REBECCA Y. KAMARA:** I thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today is another day in the Sixth Parliament I know already the Leader of Government Business and the Deputy you know I was telling my Colleagues that we don't need to say anything again because they have said everything in fact they have borrowed our words but nevertheless we still have some to say. I want to use this opportunity on behalf of myself and the people of Kono District to thank His Excellency

our dear father and President of this nation for all his brilliant ideas because a nation will not survive if you don't have people with brilliant and good ideas. I believe in all of these that the President has said in this Well of Parliament he is the Boss but he is not the implementer. He is not the sole owner of the idea all of us have stake in whatever he has said in this Well of Parliament so all of us should brace up to ensure that what our President has said here is being fulfilled so that our people will believe not only in the President but they will believe in us as their elected Members of Parliament. I want to thank His Excellency the President for being consistent in his support to women I know a lot of people have talked about that you know some people are even obsessed with this thing, but let me tell you the President said in his previous statement that no country will survive if women are left out in decision making and our dear President believes that even in the homes if you as a man decides to take unilateral decision on your own without consulting with your wife, you will go and fail until you come back and consult with your wife because women are pivotal in the bringing up of the family in uniting the family. Sierra Leone is one country and we are one people leaving women out will not help this country because we also have stake that is why I said our President has been consistent in ensuring that women are on board the governance of this country and that has manifested in our last election but I want to appeal to us as women today our percentage is high up there we have a role to play to ensure that this percentage does not come down.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have to make ourselves relevant in the day to day execution of our roles and responsibilities in the governance of this country. We have to make this country believes in what the President is saying. We have to show that to the world, that when women are alongside with men pushing for development to ensure there is peace. We have to make sure the world knows that we are relevant in every sphere that any country is taking and that is why our dear President Julius Maada Bio said he is going to follow through and we have to let the last woman in that last village knows about the gender equality and women empowerment Act. During this campaign when you tell them about the GEWE Act they will ask you what is that? They

don't even know if something like that has ever happened in Sierra Leone, so they need to know because the provisions in it are very paramount to us. When you talk about poverty reduction you look at the index women are on top because we take care of the length and breadth of the family. Mr Speaker, let me read paragraph 7 our President said the recent election witnessed a commendable 15% rise in women representation with 30.4% of directly elected representatives as Members of Parliament and even the female Councillors. Women are not merely women as we have enormously defended them in the past, then he went on saying women are policy makers, we are leaders constituting the back bone. So if women are backbones to this country and the society and he went on to say the very anchor of our families the presence of more women within the Parliament and our democracy enriched our nation in fusing it with compassion, empathy and resilience that shows what this particular five years will look like with the presence of women.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to purely look at feed 'Salone'. I want to give an example here that my mentor is in this Well, my mentor is no other person but my Paramount Chief the Paramount Chief from Kono District Paul Samba Saquee. I respect him so much because he serves as one of the examples in Kono that Kono is not only a diamond District when you go to Kono maybe just 10% of the land you will see mining the rest of the land is just languishing and my Paramount Chief has served as one of the example, today he is harvesting palm oil up to 30 to 50 jerry cans of palm oil in his farm. He has harvested a lot of cashew nut so with a type of people like that and so many other Paramount Chiefs in Kono District they are embarked on agriculture not mining and most people in Kono District have moved from mining. Mr Speaker, if I give you a mining pit, you come with investors then I give you a very vast land you come with other investors for agriculture you will find out that you will get profit from the agriculture than the mining because the mining is just a mere gamble. It is just a mere gamble. The seven hundred and nine karats that was found in Kono, where is the money? What has it done for Kono? I am telling you if that money was invested in agriculture especially mechanized farming in Kono, the soil is fertile if you put even

cassava stick there after 2 years, you go there you will get a very good cassava that means the land in Kono is fertile not only for mining. So I am calling on the government not to just find investors for us for mining but to find investors for us to do mechanised farming so that we would feed Sierra Leone. The subsistence farming going on with small cooperative groups I am telling you would not feed Sierra Leone. We are eating more of chemical rice instead of our local rice.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe the rural-urban migration has caused a lot of laxity in agriculture in our rural communities because all the young men have come to the city. If you go very early in the morning to the bus station you would see young men languishing on the streets of Freetown. They have left their villages where they do their farming. Mr Speaker, if you want youth employment to really be fulfilled let us ensure we encourage our youth to go back home to engage in farming. They would be able to get money in their pockets if they do farming and come back at the end of the year to sell whatever they have planted.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I know agriculture is very good but human capital development is also very good because without that all of us would not be seated here. We don't pay attention to that even in our different families to say S.O.2 'meh lef dae enti e mama en papa dae nar ihn bizness if e alaki nar foh ihn sef'. I am telling you if you use that word S.O.2 'if e alaki nar ihn bizness' at the end of the day that boy would become an armed robber and will come for you so we should not overlook it. Let us find ways and means in our Constituencies to advocate to government to empower, to furnish the government trade institutes so that when these youth go there to learn trade they would not only learn it on paper, but there would be practical exercises. If

you go to the government trade centres all over the practical sector is not working is just here in Freetown at Ferry Junction. I am calling on government not to just place these government trade institutes but to use it as a hub where youth would put their hands on the job at the end of the day mining companies and other companies would go there and employ them without that employment would be difficult for them. On this note Mr Speaker, I will encourage all of us to go on with this debate and also to ensure that our government good name goes out there. I thank you Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank you very much Honourable Rebecca Yei Kamara. I am extremely impressed I don't know for Honourable Members here for over five years now I eat what I grow. I am a farmer myself and I don't eat imported rice, I eat my own rice. If you go to my store now I have more than enough for the rest of this year, so I encourage Members of Parliament to go out there to your people lead them in this fine farming team. This should be a farming revolution, let's lead our people and get our people to be involved. Thank you very much Honourable Rebecca Yei Kamara.

**HON. EMILIA TONGI:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. First of all I would like to say thanks to His Excellency for his speech. His speech was very brief, and is one of the shortest speeches but it was well detailed because it entails almost everything we wanted to know. I would also like to say thanks to His Excellency for our 20% and the Parliament is well coloured because women are everywhere and there are smiles on the faces of the women in Parliament. I say thank you to His Excellency if you are watching and may God bless you for what you have done for the women in this country.



Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start by talking about the youth employment and also about agriculture. Mr Speaker, we have a problem with our youth in this country they are dying in the Mediterranean Sea running away from Africa. Our youth are running away from Africa to die in the Mediterranean Sea. Why are they running away? They are running away looking for greener pastures. Mr Speaker, I want you and others to make agriculture a lucrative job. We have people like you, as you have just said you produce what you eat is not only you even His Excellency who is also a Member of Parliament is doing agriculture. I saw it on television it was fantastic. Mr Speaker, they used to give us Constituency development fund if it is possible for the government to give each and every Member of Parliament here that Constituency development fund so that we can get into agriculture it would be okay I am just proposing. We only make His Excellency to succeed in his governance if we also actually join him to make it a success. We are his eyes, his feet, he cannot go everywhere in this country we need to do it for him if we want to continue to sit down here in 2028 the time has come for us to do that. Our friends are away we cannot wait for them. We need to start working and we need this work to be done and he cannot do it all alone. He has given us all logistics here, it sounds so beautiful and he is doing it.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you can permit me presidential initiative focused on youth employment and job creation within the next five years that's one, and then he has targeted to provide insensitive and compassionate both tax and non-tax benefits to encourage private sector employment for the youth and then secondly establish a

dedicated fund to even reimburse private sectors expenses for recruiting training and up-scaling youth employees. This is fantastic, so it means he is going extra mile so that youth can be employed. We are also trying to make sure private sectors come here to create businesses and employ our young people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, health is something that is even if you are poor you don't have anything as long as you are healthy you are half rich. We need to concentrate on health especially those hard to reach areas. Mr Speaker, for the past 60 years I am telling you this there has never been a health centre in one of my sections, I have to do it myself. Maternal death in this country was number one and we are encouraging His Excellency to please pay attention on health because our women are dying, our children are dying and up to today as I speak to you when they go to give birth they spend money, they ask for money from them and this is not good. So the oversight Committee must look into it and make sure they put an end to it because sometimes people will prefer to stay at home and die because they cannot afford to pay the money. The women are ready; we want to make him a successful President. He is well known now in the world and he alone as I have said cannot do it he needs our help each and every one of us in this Parliament. We are his soldiers we need to protect him. On that note Mr Speaker, I say thank you.

**HON. CHRISTOPHA KEKURA VANDY:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank His Excellency the President for his speech graciously delivered in this Well on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my mentors have said it all so I will not take on you too long in

participating in this all important debate. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the debate there are certain things that are very interesting that tells you that you have a President that regards this Parliament and believes in humanity. The President expressed his heart felt appreciation of the people of Sierra Leone for giving him the mandate again for another five years. He extends his thanks to them that he wants to thank the people of Sierra Leone for reposing confidence in him again to steer our ship for another five years. He also recognised the significant of this Parliament because this Parliament is very pivotal to a very large extend depends on this Parliament for him to succeed. He also sent out felicitation and appreciated the Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament and his Deputy you are very good. In the Fifth Parliament we all know was a hung Parliament surrounded by a lot of difficulties but you did everything humanly possible you and the Leadership to make sure that the Fifth Parliament was a very successful one. We ended on a very good footing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President to tell the world that the Fifth Parliament we succeeded that was more the reason again he said I sat before you here today with the composition of the present Parliament we have given opportunities to our better halves. If this Parliament was not a good Parliament that gender empowerment Bill would not have been actualized at this moment but the President was very pleased with the Fifth Parliament that was why when he turned round and saw a lot of women seated, the President was very pleased with the Fifth Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you go to paragraph twelve the 'New Direction' consolidating the gains accelerating transformative agenda. The gains we

made in the Fifth Parliament those gains need to be accelerated that is why the President mentioned in paragraph 12 in his speech. How are they going to be accelerated? So that was why he embodied everything into five different categories. These five different categories he said we need to feed ourselves.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, human capital development that was his flagship program in his first term. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the platform is laid for human capital development, it is clear when the President assumed power in 2018 he proclaimed that the free quality education is going to be his flagship programme and we all saw what he did in that direction. He introduced the free quality education. There was a debate in the Fifth Parliament I gave you statistics on the increment at different levels in the schools because of the introduction of the free quality education. If you want to send a country to a dungeon just deprive them from education and when you deprive them from education you just incite them to take guns to go to the bushes but once people are educated they cannot be easily fooled the President did that in the Fifth Parliament. Mr Speaker in the Fifth Parliament I referred to him as a President of novelty. Since independent Mr Speaker, no President has ever recruited 3000 teachers in ten years. President Bio in five years recruited over 10000 teachers that tells you he is very serious about the human capital development. How are you going to develop human capital when those that are going to impact knowledge are not there? How is that free quality education going to be impacted? What also he did in the public examination classes in the Fifth Parliament, I read out the figures here the money government paid in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we come to subsidies in the midst of all difficulties, we have a challenged economy but he said I am not going to depend on that we need to take the bull by its horn. So we paid subsidies in 2018, 2019, 2020, the figures are out there but I am not going to bore you with that. Mr Speaker, it was in this Well right in your presence I read out the recruitment of the 5000 teachers that were recruited.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the human capital development is accelerated in a very top gear because the platform is also there. We are going at a very faster pace. We want to feed Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, I have seen with my own naked eyes seed inputs are supplied to farmers to embark on upland farming in August and September. Does that make sense? People who want to embark on upland farming you give seed inputs in September, you are just giving them to eat, and when you want to give seed inputs to farmers you give them on time. Mr Speaker, before I came to Parliament let me confess today, I was once a contractor to supply seed rice to CCSL. Mr Speaker, it was at the end of July the money was given to us to go and buy seed rice for upland farming. We brought it early in August and it was indeed August they supplied to farmers. If we want to feed the nation, we want to feed ourselves the Ministry of Agriculture has to be very serious with that. When you are giving seeds input to farmers give it to them on time. We have seen the President saying he is going to revamp the research system because we do not have an improved breed. When we want improved breed you have to go to Ghana, or to another countries. We have researchers here and this research institution needs to be capacitated so they would

also work on hybrid seeds for us so we would have better yields. The Ministry of Agriculture I know the man that have been put to that position he is poised to take our agriculture to higher level.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on energy the President said we want to make sure that the District headquarters towns are electrified in the midst of all difficulties since independent no President has ever taken our own money to electrify one Chiefdom headquarters town. President Bio took our money in the midst of all difficulties to electrify seven Districts headquarters town that is Kabala, Kambia, Moyamba, Pujehun, Bonthe ,Matru Jong, and Kailahun.

Mr Speaker, the last one is about the election. The President mentioned that his government supported ECSL to conduct the June 2023 elections. Mr Speaker, it is common everywhere in the whole wide world elections are challenged. The biggest democracy that is America in the 2000 elections between George Bush and Al Gore there are lot of controversies around their elections but the Republicans did not take back seat that they were not going to participate in governance especially in Miami and Florida those were the two contested areas. The Republicans lawyers asked how is the Florida law related to the federal law and that was the end of the matter. The Republicans did not say we are not going to participate in governance. So at this point in time, I want to crave the indulgence of our Colleagues, I want to thank Honourable Mohamed Bangura and my brother seated by him. We want other Members on the other side to follow suit because all what we are saying we would have been very pleased if we have good number of them seated there today to tell them what this

government has done. Mr Speaker, I know you are growing impatient I will stop here, I will find some other time to talk on energy. On that note, I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to have a bite on this all important debate.

**HON. P.C BAI FARAN BUBU TASS NGBAK IV:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to take a bite on the Motion of thanks to His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio for the speech he graciously delivered to us in the Chamber of Parliament on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. I don't want to take much of your time; I just want to go directly to talk briefly on the project feed 'Salone', and the human capital development. If you look at page 4 under paragraph 27, President is talking about to improve rice production in Sierra Leone and to improve on irrigation and mechanisation for five years. In Kambia District especially my Chiefdom we have the Rokupr Cultural Research Centre. It has been there for over eighty years to do rice research so it has a lot of information about the new breeds of rice and all the agronomic practices that are used to produce rice in all the ecologies that we have in Sierra Leone including mangroves and boliland, but we are having problems in this research station after the war. First of all, the land owners are asking that the leased rent has to be paid it has not been paid for the past eleven years. They normally pay for every five years the last payment was made in 2012 up till now we have been trying to make the authorities try to pay these people but to no avail, and that is not good for the relationship between the staff especially the Director there and the land owners. Secondly, the morale of the staff is going down and that is causing the staff who are the scientists and the middle level staff the number is going down

because their conditions of service is still not good and also the facilities in the research station they need to be improved. They have problems with electricity, internet facility, the roads inside the centre, the housing for staff and they have very good labs but they cannot run without light and this is hampering their work. Also, where the research is being done they are poorly kept because of lack of staff especially to get foundation seed. These seeds are the seeds after breeding the seed that they try to multiply to give out to farmers and then they get more seeds and then they circulate it throughout the country because they have a lot of seeds that can be used for example the rock 24 R.O.K 14 , R.O.K 10 these are very good varieties that are lying there. We don't need to go to Ghana to get improved seeds we already have seeds in Sierra Leone but we need to improve on the facility at the research station. Presently, there is an organisation called Centre for Research Federation based in Senegal. It wants to make this centre as a centre for excellence for mangrove rice research but they have given the research centre in Rokupr two years to improve if not the centre will be transferred to Guinea. They came in January this year and the centre is at 64% the highest level and what they want is 80%. They will be coming in 2025 to do the final assessment so I am asking the government especially the Minister of Agriculture and SLARI to move very fast so that we can do this feed 'Salone' programme and the President has said it in one of his bullet points that we have to improve on rice research. We already have the Scientist there and the place is over 120 hectares of land that has been developed for over 80 years. The centre was opened in 1930s by the British Colonial powers so I want to bring that to the attention of the President to take action. The second point is in



Kambia District we have the rice bowl of Sierra Leone. We have the largest mangrove area in the country and we produce the rice that is called the 'bara bara' rice or 'wala' rice just as you said I don't eat imported rice, I eat this 'wala' rice. So we produce a lot of 'wala' rice but it goes to Guinea the government has to come up with a system wherein we can protect our locally produced parboil rice so that we can able to feed our people. The mangroves have been projected to be about 38,800 hectares of land is a very large area especially in three Chiefdoms the lower parts of my own Chiefdom Margbama, Samu Chiefdom and the Mambolo Chiefdoms are also vast in inland valley swamps. Those that have been mapped already is about 500 hectares but the projected areas is over 12000 hectares and this needs to be developed and we need mechanised farming in these areas and the irrigation system. We have also a large boliland especially in Tonko Limba and Mambolo and the Konmaka Chiefdom in Kambia District going up to 23,000 hectares of land. I am just giving an example for Kambia District if you project this for the whole of Sierra Leone we can produce all our food that we need especially rice just Kambia District can produce enough rice for the whole of Sierra Leone.

So please Mr Speaker, we are encouraging the new Minister coming and the people in the Sierra Leone Agricultural Institute to take drastic action to revamp the station that is in Rokupr and also the Ministry to put more attention in providing inputs seed rice and the fertilizer inputs on time and also to go into mechanised farming in the inland valley swamp and to improve on the irrigation facilities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I just want to touch on the human capital development briefly. Last year, in the grants-in-aid although we have the loan scheme for students but it has not yet materialised fully we still depend on the grants-in-aids the Sierra Leone government. Last year Kambia District we had 62, this year it was reduced to 35 and it is creating a lot of problem for us Paramount Chiefs and other Leaders and also for our students that are in the tertiary level. Normally, we have those that apply for this GIA they are more than 250 students, and last year it was so difficult to get 62 out of them and so this year just 35 so we are asking that as the flagship programme for the last five years of the President and now it is in a very good footing. If you look at page 5 paragraph 32 allocations of funding for this sector is to be sustained or improved or increased so that please our GIA has to be increased for our students throughout the country including Kambia District. I thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me the time to take a bite on this Motion.

**HON. BEATRICE KANGBAI:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say thank you to you Mr Speaker for giving me the Floor to participate in this very important debate. Firstly, I want to say thank you to His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio for his eloquent presentation in the State Opening of Parliament. I want to thank him very much, and I want to say to him Dr Julius Maada Bio has made a mark. He has made a mark in this country through his effort and commitment. I have been opportune to read some presentations on the official of State Opening of Parliament including Dr Julius Maada Bio, I can say proudly this time that this particular presentation is very brief and to the point for this I want to thank him very much. I don't want to thank him alone as

a wife and educated wife I know what it means when your husband is on the table sweating writing, vetting, rehearsing speeches, I am always by my husband helping him either talking to him so that he does not get bore so I strongly believe Madam Fatima Bio has been doing similarly and therefore I wish to say thank you to her. She has done very well been together in part and parcel of His Excellency the President Dr Julius Maada Bio. In my opinion the President has prioritised food security as he says feed 'Salone'. He is asking as I may understand that policies be formulated to foster competitiveness in our local food production. I want to believe institutions having established already to promote this idea. Institutions like the ABC we called Agricultural Business Centres like in my Chiefdom it was established in 2010 with the agenda to provide services for our local farmers but the whole idea of supporting this ABC to my understanding, my experience is like lip service as one of my Colleagues was saying support to these farmers, to these institutions comes in very late. If you are supplying seed rice to farmers I believe that should be done in April or May or very early in June because most people plant their rice in June, but if you are supplying them in July or August is a mere waste because they are not going to use it on the farms. They will use it the way like food for work or something like that, but then the saddest part of it is the land is going to be wasted. They cannot use all the space cultivated because they might not have enough to plant on the land. So I want to believe the existing policies need to be revisited. We need to ask the Ministry of Agriculture to bring whatever policies they have so that we can go through them and see how we can bring in some innovations to make sure our local farmers receive what they are supposed to receive.

This structure if we don't believe, I want to say to you that they could be facilitated and ensure competitiveness amongst food producers and the last bullet diversification of our foods and this reminds me of the learning institutions. We need to go back to the curriculum in the learning institutions, food processing storage and usage should be a compulsory topic in the curriculum. If you know how to process and preserve your food then you can have more food. We are looking at affordability, after processing preserving your food, if you know how to use it then diversification comes in. Some people produce garri but they just use as garri, maybe as a snack, they add few ingredients to it, but they don't really know the other ways you can use them to provide a meal for the family. People do not know that yams, coco, plantain and the other vegetables they can be rehydrated, processed and stored. But how do we use it? That's the reason why we are all hanging on rice. If they know they can make puddings and other food items from their processed foods, I am sure food diversification would come in and then we would not be experiencing food shortage.

Mr Speaker, before I take my seat we are talking of efficiency on the parts of the Honourable Members. I think the Honourable Members need an office space each, not every Member here must boast of convenient or conducive place in this Parliament where he or she will sit to go through his or her papers, but if we have an office space, after work at Parliament we can go and sit in there and do our bit. On that note, I want to say thanks to our President. I thank you Mr Speaker.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise from my seat as a representative of my people of Bo District who democratically voted for me in

that very challenging environment we found ourselves. Mr Speaker, one of the documents in the Republic of Sierra Leone I cherish so much and I really doff my hat to is the speech of the Presidential Address that was delivered by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. I want to say thanks to him and his team that put this piece of document together because it is a twelve page document and it touches the lives of every individual in the country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, history will always repeat itself in this part of the world, in 1971 when the traffic was changed from the right hand drive to the left hand drive there was this repeated news on the radio that S.O.2 'nar foh go saful saful' and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August again this year I had that particular word S.O.2 'saful saful e siddom saful' so I want to say to Colleagues who said that word 'saful saful' thanks to them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to dwell on the human capital development and I will look at paragraph 32 with your leave Mr Speaker "our efforts will be directed towards bridging the gap in the missing middle of the labour force while nurturing talent of professional roles in both private sector and the civil service". Mr Speaker, we are talking about things that we have enacted in this House of Parliament in 2021. We enacted the students loan scheme in this House and that students loan scheme that was enacted in this House is not just a mere document, we extensively debated it and we passed it into law. It was not just an ordinary paper I want to disclose to this House that I have been carefully monitoring it all laws that were enacting in this House in my private time. To you Colleagues who have joined us in this Sixth Parliament men and women worked assiduously to make sure that this particular Bill was enacted in 2021.

When it was enacted today we have ten people who are managing that scheme the administrative persons and it is gender balanced five men and five women and the number of students who have applied for this student loan scheme is 515 post-graduate and Doctorate students. When it was shortlisted, it came up to 94% that are legible for interview which was 458, and out of this 458, 102 applicants succeeded in the available funds which is a total sum of 2.4 Billion old Leones have been disbursed to those students. As he rightly said in the human capital development that 22% of our GDP is allocated for human capital development, and so we can say to ourselves that we are doing the needful.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when my Leader was talking about the free quality education is not just the President who wants to bring in the free quality education but the very people who worked assiduously to put this document together. If you go to section 9 of the 1991 Constitution it says government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy and to this end shall direct its educational policy in achieving free adult literacy programme and if you go to B and C, free compulsory basic education at primary, junior and senior secondary school level and free senior secondary school education. The document has been written since 1991 but it was not enforced because adequate resources were not provided for it, but today we can stand proud as Sierra Leoneans that adequate resources have been provided for it and therefore we are achieving where we want to go. My other senior Leader of the House was outlining women of economic empowerment and as a father of four girls and I was raised by my mum and working with four women internationally one in Scandinavian, one in the United

Kingdom, and two in the United States of America. I stand to work with women and respect women. Mr Speaker, I respect the opinion of my Leader who talked about the banks for Christ sake these are money making institutions so please if we want to support the gender issues and supporting our women let us galvanize another way but don't go to the banks because if we listen to international HSBC their interest rate that he was giving it is not an easy amount \$ 15.5 billion interest rate. When I goggled one of our local banks everything about us is secrecy but when I squeezed my way to the 2016 statistics it says only money and including tax is 1.5 Billion Leones so they are money making institutions. If we want to really galvanize to support our women from our District, from our organisations we make sure that we have basket funds put aside so that we support them. I am saying this from experience; I have set a basket fund for my community where it is very lucrative it is working.

**HON. EMERSON SAA LAMINA:** Mr Speaker, Point of Order. Mr Speaker, I stand on 35[5] I am craving the indulgence of my Colleagues over there that the Member needs decorum so that he can present his points better. I thank you Mr Speaker.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, I believe that justice has been done on this document and that this document will serve us and that I want to refer again the House to Section 60 of the 1991 Constitution which talks about collective responsibility. It is a document that if we all come together collectively that the Minister who are executing these activities that will affect our oversight functions that we would be able to deliver and we would achieve our goals. We did it during Covid-19 when the Members of this House were called upon to assist the MDAs we successfully eradicated

Covid-19. The causality level announced in Sierra Leone at that time it was very minimal compared to other parts of the world. On that note Mr Speaker, I want to call upon my Colleagues of this noble House that we consider collective responsibility and we do the needful in supporting His Excellency the President to achieve his dream. I thank you Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank you very much Honourable Lamin, you are a powerful debater.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Musa Lahai is going to be the last debater after him we adjourn.

**HON. MUSA LAHAI:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will join my Colleagues in thanking his Excellency the President for a speech well delivered in this House dated 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have gone through the speech page by page, I will however narrow my presentation on three key items in the speech which are, the economy, feed Sierra Leone, and the security. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the economy of Sierra Leone over the years has been facing some challenges as a result of covid-19 and Russia-Ukraine crisis. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, government in his wisdom has adopted a lot of radical approaches in order to augment the essential commodities like petroleum products, and food stuff basically our staple food. Mr Speaker, government has been spending Millions of Dollars in order to import our staple food which is rice into this country. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, any nation that can feed our population is above poverty. I think, that is why President in his wisdom among the big five of his game changer he brought in feed Sierra Leone because if we are using Millions of Dollars in the importation of rice to subsidize agriculture by expanding on equipment and other things that will help in creating the required food for this nation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will however make some recommendation to the government though feed Sierra Leone is national issue but there are key institutions I



want government to focus on as the team lead in achieving this objective among these institutions is the Military. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, over the years people have been thinking of the Military based on their traditional role they perform i.e. to train and fight war. The Military in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we have far away moved from that but the Military today they are engaged in engineering construction of roads, farming, and if I can recall for the Sierra Leone Army before the war we have been embarking on the Kontobi Agricultural Project providing food to augment the ration that government provided for the Army. If government will focus on the Army in order to embark on the feed Sierra Leone project they can not only provide food to satisfy their men and women but they can also augment for the nation in order to help because the Army of Sierra Leone is 100% relied on national budget but by doing other things rather than fighting will help them to have additional funds that will augment some of their budget constraints. I therefore please ask government to include the Military. Secondly, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will be happy if government will add the Members of Parliament we are the people's representatives, if President can make us the team lead for instance each and every MP is making a minimum of 20 acres of rice. If you check that with the statistics of MP seated here that is a very good yield that will equally augment the process and you know if MP is leading a process in the Constituency or the District everybody will be on board that is leadership by example. So I will therefore also recommend to His Excellency to add MPs.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you can go to page 70 the concluding paragraph of His Excellency presentation, gratitude must be given to our security, no nation, no democracy will develop without security. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, security is the backbone for any economic development in any nation. It is against this background if you go to the 2022 Presidential Address in the Fifth Parliament if you go to page 89 the President said I have constructed the Myon Mess that will house over 100 military personnel, rebranding the 34 Hospital, constructing the junior and other ranks mess. To the Police as I am speaking there are over 1000 men and women in the police training school doing training. We have others doing international trainings very

recently President has provided over 25 trucks and 12 life vehicles to the Police just to capacitate them to fit for purpose, and at the same time to create confidence in them that is a mindful President that cares for our security.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, no doubt the President is doing this because he is the father of democracy in this country. President believes without peace and security we cannot only miss development but the democracy also would not be completed. I am thinking the President is the father of democracy and he is not thinking of democracy to come but he is thinking of democracy to come and stay and therefore he is encouraging the security and he is giving them the assurance and providing the basic necessities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I can take my seat there is something that is very important we need to know about, I want to bring it to this House for the hearing of His Excellency the President. Mr Speaker, Sierra Leone Parliament I will not be afraid to say is the only Parliament that cannot house their MPs. We don't have office for MPs, the Leadership is by tradition or by default they are having office, but we don't have any office for most of us. With these I thank His Excellency for a speech well delivered thank you and God bless us all.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Musa Lahai and thank you very much Honourable Members for your contributions.

### ***ANNOUNCEMENT***

**CLERK:** Honourable Members are informed that the book on all protocols observed is now available for sale, interested Honourable Members are encouraged to contact the Senior Protocol Officer Zainab Susan Dumbuya, thank you.

### ***ADJOURNMENT***

**MR SPEAKER ADJOURNED THE HOUSE TO FRIDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2023 AT 10:A.M. PROMPT.**

**THE HOUSE ROSE AT 2:30 P.M.**