

AU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

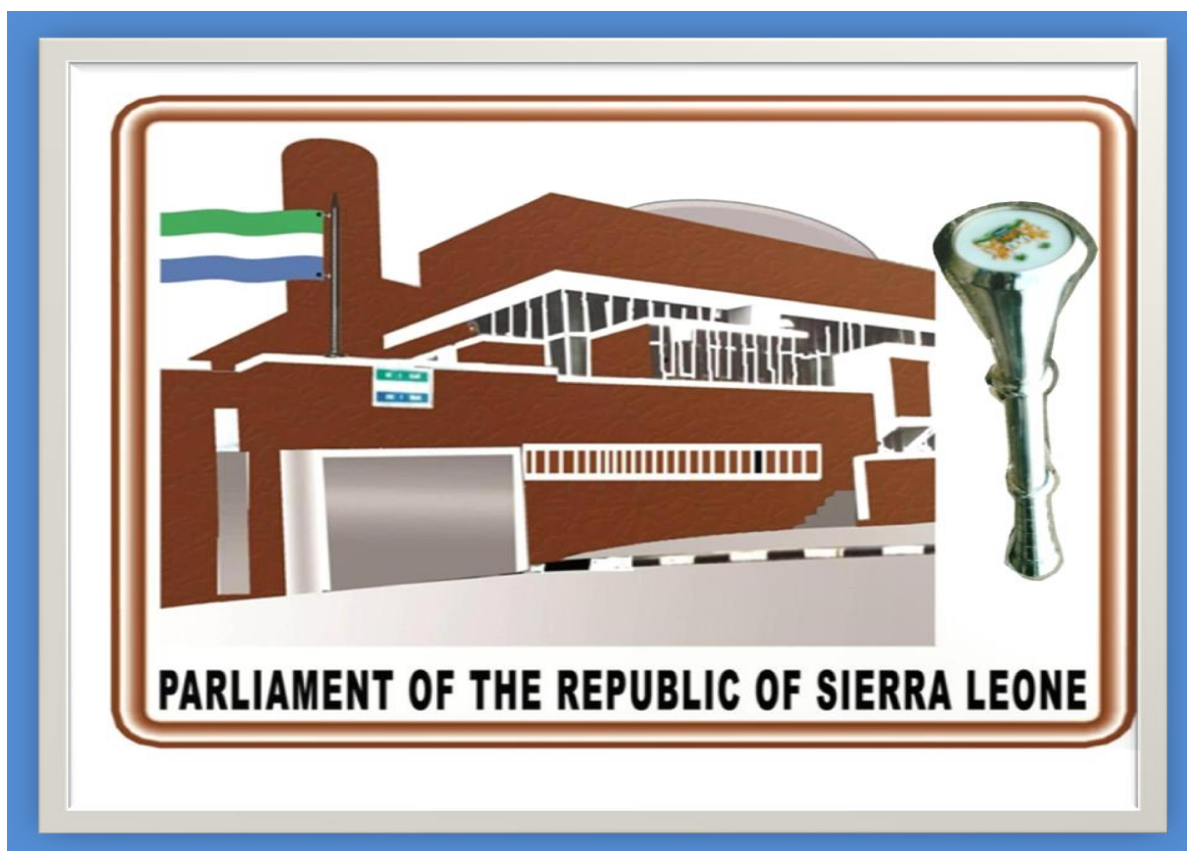
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION –FIRST MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 16th AUGUST, 2023

SESSION – 2023/2024



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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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 on Wednesday, 16th August, 2023.

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[THIRD ALLOTTED DAY]



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Wednesday 16th August, 2023.

I. PRAYERS

The Table Clerk, Alimamy Bangura Read the Prayers

The House met at 10:20 am 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]*

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR TUESDAY 15TH AUGUST, 2023.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Record of Votes and Proceedings. Pages 1 to 4?, Page 5? Can a Member please move?

HON. JOSEPH LAMIN-WILLIAMS: I so move, Mr Speaker.

HON. SARTY BANYA: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings for Tuesday 15th August 2023 has been adopted].

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: I have a list of Eighteen Members, and I am going to go strictly by this list. Honourable Members, you do not have any reason to get up because I already have the list and I have eighteen names. So I am going to be very, very strict about time; five minutes and nothing more, please Honourable Members. Otherwise we would sleep here, thank you very much for your understanding.

IV. MOTION OF THANKS TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT, RTD BRIGADIER JULIUS MAADA BIO [THIRD ALLOTTED DAY]

PROPOSER: HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA

SECONDER: HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE

BE IT RESOLVED:

"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 WEDNESDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 2023.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Alice Kumabeh...

HON. ALICE J. KUMABEH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I start, I want to thank His Excellency the President for his Presidential Address that he laid on the Table of this Honourable House on the 3rd of August 2023. It was a very brief one, but tailored strictly to the People's Manifesto.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start with the second pillar of the People's Manifesto which is talking about Human Capital Development; nurturing skills for the 21st Century Industry.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the past government made a lot of gains in this area, and under this particular pillar, health is a priority. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I said, this government has recruited nurses, built Health Infrastructures across the country, initiated Mobile Health Clinics in the various districts, and most importantly, reduced the maternal mortality in this Country. All of us are aware that Sierra Leone was always on top of the ladder when it comes to the issue of maternal mortality in the world. However, due to the Leadership of His Excellency the President, that has been reduced drastically. I personally appreciate the government for that.

However, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Government needs to pay attention to the only hospital on the main land part of Bonthe District, which is the UBC Mission Hospital in Mattru Jong. That Hospital was contracted to the Sewama Resources Company Limited in 2019 by the Government of Sierra Leone for rehabilitation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I speak, the Main Patient Ward of that hospital is not complete, the perimeter fence has just started; it has not gone anywhere, and the general condition of the Hospital has become so much deplorable; it has scaled down from over forty beds to ten beds in the Triage. Patients hardly go to that hospital now due to lack of space.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, of the 107 staff strength at the hospital, only **40%** of that number is on Government Payroll. The Hospital Administration is currently finding it difficult to pay the staff due to the huge difference between the staff strength

and that of low patient turnout. Also, there is a School of Nursing attached to that hospital for the teaching of nursing students, but where and how would these students do their practicals when the hospital is going through all these constraints? It's really a pity for those of us who saw and knew the operations of that hospital in the 70s and 80s

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, a wider population of Bonthe District depends on that hospital for referrals. About **75%** of the District's population which is on the mainland is dependent on that hospital.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the duration for the contract was eighteen months and was supposed to have completed in August 2020. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am calling on the Minister of Health to pay keen attention to that hospital for the benefit of the Nursing School and the wider population of Bonthe District. Mr Speaker, permit me to quote Mahatma Ghandi who said, *"it is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver"*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would now touch on the 4th Pillar of the People's Manifesto which is talking about Technology and Infrastructure Initiatives. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Government has been so magnanimous, and has made tremendous gains in making bridges and roads across the country and I appreciate that. Mr Speaker, some of the contracts left behind by the Tolongbos such as the Mabang Bridge, the Rogbere Bridge and the Moyamba Road were all completed on time, but the road construction between Mattru Jong and Gbetema is very slow for the comfort of my people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the expected duration for the construction of that road was 3 years but the pace at which the construction is going is very slow. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave the indulgence of the Minister of Works and Public Assets and the Sierra Leone Roads Authority [SLRA] to please monitor that road construction. We want it to be completed within the December 2025 stipulated timeline.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now touch on the number **1** pillar of the People's Manifesto which has to do with Agriculture, and it is the heartbeat of President Bio's Government. If you take a look at Agriculture, you would realise that much was not achieved during the last Parliament, but we hope this time round the president has put everything in place to let agriculture go into full gear. I am sure the people will not be ready to listen to any excuse this time around because they want to be fed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, agriculture has the ability to make or break this country, and by extension, the Sierra Leone Peoples Party [SLPP]. So I am craving the indulgence of the Minister to do his best to feed the people of Sierra Leone. If that does not happen, then the SLPP will definitely be in problem, and we do not want to see that because we want the Sierra Leone Peoples Party to remain in governance and the APC to remain in permanent opposition.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to talk to the Minister of Agriculture to monitor and pay special attention to the massive agricultural site at Tormabom Rice Farm, for example. The Committee on Agriculture from Parliament should also be doing periodic checks to massive agricultural sites in order to enhance effective productivity. According to Augustine S. Cofier, "*good food is the beginning of sincere happiness*", and Sierra Leoneans need food in order to be happy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will not take my seat without saying thanks to His Excellency the President for his contribution to women. I therefore want to take this opportunity to thank the President for making the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act a reality, and for giving the women of Sierra Leone **30%** quota in every sphere of life *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Alice Kumabeh.

HON. ALPHA F.M JABBIE: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to lend my voice to His Excellency's speech of 3rd August 2023.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I first of all want to congratulate His Excellency and his Vice for the indisputable victory in the recent elections of 24th June 2023. I also

want to thank His Excellency and his Vice and the team of dedicated Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Directors and us the Parliamentarians of the Fifth Parliament for a very successful first five years term [2018 to 2023]. I consider it very successful because of the massive achievement made by the Bio led Government amidst all the disturbances by the opposition and the external shocks brought about by the Covid as well as the current Ukraine-Russian war.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these achievements were made because our President is focused. He ignored all the distractions that came on his way because he has a mission to make Sierra Leone attain the status of middle income country by 2035. His Excellency mentioned that on 3rd August, 2023 in his speech on page 10, paragraph 59 during the State Opening of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to make a quotation from the President's speech in Parliament in 2022, where he said, I quote; *"beneath every nation and the people lies a foundation that was built yesterday"*. We are all aware that the President and his Government inherited a foundation that was tattered; an economy that was in austerity, but then he braised himself to the task ahead and said, to achieve that success, *"this is the foundation we seek to lay by making investment in education"*. And true to his words, as soon as he got into office in 2018, he embarked on the Free Quality Education to expand education generally in the whole country. This is because without education in any country we will find it very difficult to forge ahead, let alone to industrialize.

We therefore want to thank Mr President for the achievements he made in the educational sector. The Free Quality Education brought many changes in this country; it propelled this country to another level.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave your indulgence to allow me to go through some of the achievements made under the Free Quality Education.

- First of all, there was an increase in the enrolment and retention in schools, plus radical inclusion.

- There was also an increase in teachers employment- over five thousand teachers were recruited, as opposed to no employment of teachers during the 11 years reign of the previous regime.
- There were also many new Class Rooms and more Examination Centres established throughout the country
- Teachers' salaries were increased to more than **45%**, including other incentives
- Payment of tuition and examination fees for external examination classes [NPSE, BECE and the WASSCE] to the tune of Billion Leones every year.
- There was also provision of teaching and learning materials in the tertiary and higher education sector; University sector was also expanded and strengthened by making three additional Universities i.e. the Kono University of Science and Technology, Milton Margai University of Science and Technology and the Eastern University of Science and Technology in Kenema.

Mr Speaker, apart from that, about seven Technical Vocational Centres were established across the country. There was an increase in University and Technical Vocation Admissions; the amount of Grant-in Aid that was given by this government was unprecedented. Also to crown it all in the education sector, the Student Loan Scheme has been established and people have started benefiting from it.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for us in Falaba District, we want to thank His Excellency immensely because we benefited from the Free Quality Education. For two years in a roll [2021 and 2022], Falaba District topped the whole country in the NPSE. That is no mean achievement for a district that is very new and that was considered very backward. So we want to thank His Excellency immensely for that achievement. However, we want to request that the Technical Vocational Institute established there be transformed to a Constituent College of any of the Universities of Science and Technology. Doing that would help us a lot because as it is, we find it very strenuous to travel from Falaba to any of the Universities in the other Provinces.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to now zoom in on Feed Salone. It is very shameful and embarrassing to see Political Party Leaders going to market places from

one table to another asking for the prices of basic commodities like onions, pepper etc. That is not a very good political leadership; they did all those things just to sabotage the government. For all you know, some of them do not even have backyard gardens in their homes, yet they go round asking for the prices of such basic commodities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is very shameful and embarrassing to see abled bodied young men and women protesting along the street and chanting **S.O 2**, “we wan eat, we wan eat”, very shameful indeed! Mr Speaker, we have the ideal weather conditions and very good soils to grow enough foods to feed ourselves.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is also very shameful to see Sierra Leonean traders moving from Sierra Leone to Mali, which is largely a desert country to go and buy pepper and groundnut. It is very shameful to see Sierra Leoneans again going to neighbouring Guinea with whom we share similar weather conditions to buy onions and Irish Potatoes. It is very shameful and embarrassing for Sierra Leoneans to become over dependent on importation of rice, our staple food when we have vast stretches of land and ideal weather conditions that we can use to grow enough food to feed ourselves and even export. So it is against this backdrop that our President, the visionary President decided that enough is enough, and that we should try to embark on agriculture through the Feed Salone Program. In fact we had started to support agriculture in the first term by launching the support to Chiefdom Youths Farms and to other major stakeholder farmers throughout the Provinces. His government brought in more than four hundred [400] tractors I supposed, to help support Agriculture, although that again was sabotaged. It was sabotaged by disgruntled politicians as well as wicked Service Providers and District Agricultural Officers.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Feed Salone has been brought to save us from all the embarrassments that I mentioned earlier and to also help save us from the high cost of unnecessary expenditure of hard-earned foreign exchange to bring in goods. It also helps to save our dignity and self-respect that we had almost lost as a result of our dependence on other countries to feed us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Feed Salone can be used as the starting point to create jobs for our large army of unemployed youth that is found everywhere in this country. This can also help to reverse the rural-urban migration; movement of abled bodied young men and women from the rural areas to urban areas, leaving older men and women in the rural areas. How much work can the aged do to be able to feed the entire nation? Very little!

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President outlined several measures on pages 4 and 5 of his speech that will be taken to ensure that Feed Salone succeeds. Please permit me to read one or two of them. First one says, *"...to augment the Government's Budget allocation to Agriculture to a minimum of **10%** [Interruption]"*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable, one minute more.

HON. ALPHA F.M JABBIE: And, *"to enhance livestock productivity"*. Mr Speaker, livestock productivity in the country is dwindling. There can be no better time than now to try to improve on that.

Mr Speaker, the president also outlined the need to establish a domestic institutional feeding program, like in the Military and Educational Institutions in order to be able to grow food and feed them. Also highlighted by the president is the need to promote training initiatives and incentives to attract vibrant energy of youths towards the realm of agriculture. As I was saying, this can be a very good instrument to reverse the trend of movement from Rural to Urban areas.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I sit, allow me to quickly zoom in on the Youth Employment Scheme. The Youth Employment Scheme is a very good venture that this Government is trying to take. As we have all seen, the President is somebody who has passion for the youths. He has demonstrated that by the composition of his Cabinet and the programmes he outlined and carried out during the past term. A lot of youths were given opportunities through the Youths in Fisheries, Youths in Agriculture, Youths in Car Wash Projects, and also the Free Quality Education that was introduced to cater for the present and future youths of this country. The expansion of the

Universities, increase in Tech-Voc and the launching of the Student Loan Scheme were all undertaken in the interest of the youths. In his second term, the President is trying to create Five hundred thousand jobs.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in conclusion, I would like the Ministry of Agriculture to come up with a blue print showing us the Parliamentarians how they intend to go about implementing this Feed Salone Program. I would also like the Ministries of Youths, Social Welfare, Internal Affairs and other line Ministries to come up with a master plan to show us how they intend to handle the issue of Kush which has become a menace in this country.

Mr Speaker, Transportation is another problem in this country *[Interruption]* Mr Speaker, please give me another minute.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Jabbie, you have taken all the time.

HON. ALPHA F.M JABBIE: Please permit me just to round up now, Sir. Mr Speaker, Urban Transportation and transportation to the rural areas is also another major challenge for the people of this country. I would like to appeal to the President to look into that problem and see how he could bring new Busses to ply the streets of the cities and to the provinces. The National Airline Industry also needs to be made competitive to reduce cost of travelling outside the country. On that note, I thank you very much for your indulgence *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Members, you do not really need to touch on all the areas; you handle specific areas and deal with them properly so that you allow the others to take the other areas and have their discussions on those other areas. Thank you very much Honourable Jabbie.

HON. YUSUF MACKERY: Mr Speaker, when this debate started we agreed to invite all MDAs to occupy seats in the Well so they could listen to what Members are saying, but up till now the place is empty and there is no explanation to the House why they are not around. So Mr Speaker, I really want you to take action on that, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I totally agree with you. Is the Clerk here? Is Mr Clerk around? *[Undertone]* Okay, this is an order of this Parliament; do a final letter to all the MDAs, make sure they are here tomorrow; otherwise they will be in contempt.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I know the Public Notice is out, and because of time, I would advise that you send a very strong message instead of writing a letter. They should be here before or after lunch and for the rest of the debate. We should be very strong on that.

THE SPEAKER: So tomorrow morning we would be doing roll call to know the MDAs that are here. All MDAs that are not here for this debate, latest tomorrow, you have yourselves to blame. Thank you very much. Yes, Honourable Mariama Zombo.

HON. MARIAMA M. ZOMBO: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am Mariama Zombo of the great Pujehun District. It is an opportunity for me to debate the Presidential Address as a first timer in the 6th Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, thank you for granting me this opportunity again.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me take this opportunity to thank His Excellency for a laudable, powerful, potent and compelling address which expresses his Government's plans and aspirations for Sierra Leone in the next five years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, allow me to feature Paragraph sixteen [16] of the Address which focuses on Youth Employment Scheme. This is a Cartelist to Democracy and National Security according to His Excellency, and we had the opportunity to make gains in these areas in the last years which I would like to mention briefly.

In Youth Employment, we boosted 70 Fishing Communities, created 28 Car Washes, 190 Youth Farmers and 2000 youths trained under the Youth Service Scheme, **25%** of which secured jobs. In addition to that, 411 young entrepreneur businesses were supported, and youths were able to secure microfinance and loans in five years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, His Excellency in his address did not focus on the details of the 2023 Manifesto but it is implicit as captured in this statement; "*our*

government will unleash a focused initiative to create abundant job opportunities-provide our young people with platform to flourish and contribute to our national progress”.

And in the Manifesto, we are saying we would offer five hundred thousand *[500,000]* jobs for young people in this country. We are also in line with Paragraph [40] of His Excellency’s Speech which says; *‘design a targeted program to generate employment opportunities for young girls out of school’.*

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my village, Potoru in Pujehun District, women and young girls are also taking Kush, and that is a looming disaster in our Constituencies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we want to have a Gender Responsive Approach to the Youth Employment Scheme. Let me therefore take this opportunity to suggest to His Excellency and the Government that there should be deliberate inclusion of young girls and young women in incentive based ICT and creative industries to ensure gender equality in ICT.

Mr Speaker, our theme for International Women’s Day 2023 was *‘Digit or Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality’*. This is hinged on employment of woman and girls, closing the gender gap in ICT and reducing socio economic inequalities. We want the women and the girls to be considered in our ICT programs for young people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Youth Employment Scheme mentioned in His Excellency’s Address is part of a vision enshrined in our 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, Acts **No.** 6 of 1991. Chapter 2, Paragraph 8 of section 3[a], which state that *“the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring every citizen, without discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, shall have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment”.*

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, zooming in on Paragraphs 35, 36 and 37 of His Excellency’s precise Address which mentions youth in drug addiction, productivity, delinquency and his quest to harness their boundless energy and potential, I must appeal that huge sector investment *[public and private]* be made in the entertainment

industry to tap on youth potential, create positive pleasure spaces for our young people, foster inclusivity and economic growth for social cohesion.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us reflect on how Nollywood in Nigeria has employed so many young people. Our youths are idle and frustrated and they are far below the happiness index globally; 130 out of 140 countries, according to the World Happiness Report 2023, done by World Population Review.

Mr Speaker, this same 1991 Constitution, Act **No.** 6, Paragraph 8 subsection 3[b] states that:

“the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that conditions of service or work are fair, just and humane, and that there are adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religious and cultural life”.

Mr Speaker, our youths have the right to leisure and entertainment as that would also contribute to economic growth.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to go to Technology and Infrastructure initiatives which are captured in Paragraphs 17 and 48 of my president’s speech, and analyse our Government’s Technology and Infrastructure initiative which border on the middle income and outcomes through innovation and robust infrastructure. I would further dig deep into the review of the Renewable Energy Sector

Mr Speaker, my submission to His Excellency and this House is for the SLPP Government to take more radical steps in investing in gender responsive Solar and Hydro Power in our rural and urban communities in order to reduce dependency on oil importation and provide low cost electricity.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the demand for solar energy in my dear Pujehun District is clearly seen in the activities of young entrepreneurs; young people are involved in phone charging, entertainments, and they use a lot of Solar Energy. The demand is getting higher and Solar Power installation and its purchase by young people is growing. We must not leave the women and the girls behind in trainings involving the

installation of this simple Solar Power equipment; let us be gender responsive in our infrastructure drive.

Mr Speaker, His Excellency's statement in Paragraph 48 mentions that the government approach will be to propel our development by leveraging renewable and non-renewable energy sources.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, from 2018 to 2023 our government made giant strides in the energy sector which included:

Increase Renewable Energy capacity from **10%** in 2018 to **35%** in 2023; nine out of sixteen Districts are now connected with electricity, and **31%** of households are electrified.

I am hoping that the government would fast-track electrification of Barrie Chiefdom, Kpejeh, Makpile Chiefdom, Sogbema Chiefdom in Pujehun District through the Ivory Coast Transmission Line in the South and the North of course.

Mr Speaker, from 2023 onwards, His Excellency and his government, according to Paragraph 52 will be expanding production for productive application through a dedicated Rural Energy Directorate responsible for expanding access to energy. Imagine the government establishing a Directorate just for the expansion of access to energy in all provincial headquarters in rural areas in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, electrification of all district capital would be possible and doable. The 2023 Manifesto further outlines establishing 350 Mini-grids to reach 88,000 households with renewable energy. In this same Manifesto, our government says we would connect over 200 communities to Renewable Energy, Solar and Hydro Mini-grids, and we would complete the expansion and upgrading of the existing Hydro and Solar Power systems in this country; Bubumna and so on.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, our government is determined to expand the private sector intervention in EDSA, and we would transform EGTC to focus more on transmission and dispatch. Finally, we would be more transparent and accountable in the energy sector.

Mr Speaker Honourable Members, a clarion call in all of these is to give gender smart energy and equal access to infrastructure for women, men, boys and girls. For example, a solar lighted home in my village in Pujehun at night is a protection from sexual predators who move in the dark- *[Hands off our girls]*. Studies by boys and girls are enhanced at night, and girls are protected when the place is bright. Give us gender smart infrastructure, give us gender smart energy! With that, women will spend less time on daily task like cooking, and with a cold Solar Fridge in the home, preservation of food is ensured. A Gas Stove saves a woman from a smoke free kitchen and labour from carry wood. I would like this government to always remember girls and women when promoting or prioritizing issues pertaining to the energy sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members let me delve into Paragraph 7. His Excellency is committed to women's participation in political space. Mr Speaker, we are finally happy that the GEWA Act 2022 is moving in action. I wish to again thank His Excellency for this powerful address, and to the 5th Parliament for enacting the GEWA Act. Giving women more seats today in the 6th Parliament; **28.2%** of 149 seats is way above the **18.4%** average in the West African Parliament, according to a recent publication by the Inter Parliamentary Union. **30.4%** elected representatives and the **15%** rise is awesome in our country, but I hereby plead to His Excellency to appoint more females from Pujehun District to leadership positions. So far, only one Pujehun woman has been appointed, and there are more who are qualified and ready to serve. The two of us who are here in Parliament from Pujehun District have met the **30%** minimum for Parliament but we are still craving for more seats for Pujehun District women. So Mr President, I am appealing for you to kindly consider Pujehun District in the upcoming appointments. On that note, I want to thank you all, and thank His Excellency for his great address.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Zombo, thank you very much for that wonderful debate. I just want to caution that don't be too district conscious, we have other districts that are also interested, and as I seat here the women of Bonthe are also very much interested, and even the Kailahun women are extremely interested. So be nationalistic, do not be

district conscious. But in any case, thank you very much Honourable Mariama Zombo *[Laughter]*. Honourable Ibrahim Kabba, you have the Floor.

HON. IBRAHIM KABBA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say thank you to His Excellency the President for his love shown to the citizens of this country, and for always bringing initiatives that would propel this country to another level.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to pay tribute to the Honourable Members that have spoken on the Five Key Initiatives of the president; Feed Salone, Human Capital Development, the Youth Employment Scheme, Technology and Infrastructure and finally, Revamping the Public Service Architecture. Mr Speaker, the fact is that all the Members of Parliament have in one way or the other considered the importance of the Big Five.

Mr Speaker, I also want to say thanks to the citizens of this country for handing over their trust to His Excellency the President and the SLPP Government for another five years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me narrow my submission on one of the Big Five; and that is Feed Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the achievement of the Feed Salone initiative by this government would help us in many ways.

Firstly, it will free us from the pains of food import dependency.

Secondly, it will also free us from the problems currently faced by our people regarding food cost and availability.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to be honest with you, we have some of our people out there who cannot even afford a meal for a day. The president has therefore demonstrated the political will, and it is now left with us the Parliamentarians and Cabinet to collaborate in order to achieve this dream.

Mr Speaker, permit me this opportunity to ask the House a simple question; can we feed Sierra Leone? Yes we can because we have all that is needed to feed Sierra Leone.

We have the fertile land, enough water and sunlight, it is only the political will that was needed, and today our president has given us that direction and as a Parliament we must give him our full support.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw your attention to a place called Ogu Farm Community. The Ogu Farm Community is in the Western Rural and in Constituency 110. During the interregnum in this country, we had a cut off from food supply from the provinces and it was the Ogu Farm Community that supported the Western Area with vegetables. Today, that particular community is challenged; people have grabbed all the swamp lands to build houses.

Mr Speaker, as MPs, our three main responsibilities include representation, law making and oversight. Therefore Mr Speaker, I am asking this Honourable house to go to those communities to see how best we can protect the remaining land that has not been grabbed yet.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in talking about food, we must also not lose sight of the fisheries which has to deal with our protein aspect. The Western Rural communities like Tombo and Goderich are areas where we mainly get our fish from. However, those communities have got their challenges also to deal with. We have both licensed and unlicensed industrial vessels that normally destroy the nets of our local fishermen and go scot-free. Even when those issues are raised with the Ministry of Fisheries, you would find out that there are people in that ministry who connive with those industrial vessels. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have over 12,000 registered fishing boats in this country and we need to protect them because they own the waters and they own the seas.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now take a look at the area of electricity. Over the past five years, I am happy to inform this House that the people of Sussex have been enjoying electricity but we still need to take electricity to the rest of the peninsular. Our people in communities like Baw Baw, **No.2** and Tokeh need electricity to help preserve their fish on a daily basis.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the achievement of the Big Five changers is very significant to us. That is why some of us are waiting to see what the Ministry of Finance will allocate to the Big Five changers, especially the Feed Salone initiative.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I take my seat, I want to leave you with few words; *"he who feeds you rules you"*. I therefore appeal to this Honourable House to come together to see how best we can feed Sierra Leone. From what I heard from the Paramount Chief from Kambia District, Kambia District alone can feed Sierra Leone if we properly utilize its available fertile land and Research Centre. In view of that, I ask that we move and take the right direction for us to succeed, I thank you all and God bless us all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Kabba for your contribution.

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to debate the Presidential Speech.

Mr Speaker, I am Honourable Edward George, JP of Moyamba District. I want to use this opportunity to say thanks and appreciation to His Excellency the President for the appointment of young people to the Cabinet, and I also want to use this opportunity to appreciate His Excellency for creating the platform that encourages the participation of my colleague youths in this House of Parliament. As you can see, there are so many young people that make up this 6th Parliament and I want to congratulate them all for making it to parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to continue with thanks and appreciation to His Excellency for a wonderful State Opening Session on the 3rd of August, 2023. I am pretty sure that for the past couple of years, this speech has been one of the shortest, finest and to the point; it was just 45 minutes but to the point.

Mr Speaker Honourable Members, everywhere you go today in this country the topic of discussion is Feed Salone. But I want to ask these questions; are we really ready to work to feed the people of this nation? Are we ready to make sure SLPP stays in governance for the next 50 years?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there was a handing over ceremony few days ago by the previous Minister of Agriculture to the current Minister, and it would surprise you to know that only documents were presented to the new minister. Where are the tangible items like the Tractors and other equipment bought by the government over the last five years? Are we saying we are going to start everything afresh to feed people of this nation?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as far as we the young SLPP Members of Parliament are concern, we want our party to stay in governance and keep APC in perpetual opposition. In that regard, we call on our Ministers to do the needful in order to assist the president of this nation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as Members of Parliament in this 6th Parliament, we are no longer Constituency MPs but District MPs. I therefore want to use this opportunity to ask the Leadership of this House to make sure we sit with our Ministers this time round to discuss and to see how best we can take this nation forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as far as agriculture is concern, if you go to the Ministry of Agriculture you would realise that most of the ones given money or other supports to do agricultural business or farming are not being properly monitored. If you check the records, you would note that huge amount of money is said to have been disbursed to farmers on a daily or yearly basis. My question now is, who are these farmers and how are they being monitored? What is the produce we get from these farmers we claim to have spent so much money on?

Mr Speaker, we are here today to complement the effort of the President because he alone cannot do everything. I would assure this House that His Excellency the President has a very good intention for this nation, but are we ready to support him to achieve his dream?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to suggest to this House that the Big Five changer Committees must be constituted by Members who mean good for this nation;

MPs that would monitor Ministries and MPs that would not take these Committees as their personal Committees.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we know of Honourable Members in the 5th Parliament who were Committee Chairmen for five good years without presenting any Report to this House.

Mr Speaker, as Chairperson of the PAC, you would agree with me that for the past five years in the 5th Parliament, no Chairperson in this House reported any MDA or Ministry for investigation *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker Honourable Members, our role is to support the President to achieve his goal and dream. But Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we had colleague MPs who did their jobs on selfish basis. Mr Speaker,...*[Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable George, be guided. You have not taken the podium to lash out at colleagues.

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: I am not, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Now listen, go to the subject matter under debate; go directly to the President's speech.

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: Mr Speaker, I am going directly...*[Interrupted]*

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, Point of Order, **S.O** 34. I heard my colleague lashing on Members that headed Committees in the last session. By the way, not reporting an MDA does not mean there were issues swept under the carpet. If there are no issues to report on, you simply cannot report on them. So let us debate within the context before us.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable George, be guided, go strictly to the debate.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, **S.O** 32 [5]. Mr Speaker, I exactly understand the position the Honourable Members is coming from. Mr Speaker, I was very clear in my debate that this 6th Parliament should take its rightful position in governance. I do

not want the Members of Parliament to dwell on that, he should confide himself to **S.O**
32 [5]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable George, think of relevance

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: Grateful, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I am not doing this in any form of malice or other thing. I am just trying in my own way to assist by presenting what I have seen and heard during the past five years.

Mr Speaker, in the fifth Parliament, there were rumours that Fertilizers and other Agricultural equipment were supplied to Members of Parliament. Mr Speaker, with no iota of doubt, I would tell you that I, Honourable Edward George from Constituency 097 was never fortunate to be part of those MPs.

Mr Speaker, the Chairperson for the Committee on Agriculture in a meeting categorically stated that indeed Members of Parliament benefitted from the supply given by the Ministry of Agriculture but some of us did not benefit from that.

THE SPEAKER: Who was the Chairman?

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: The Chairman was an Opposition MP, for that matter.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Sallieu .O. Sesay?

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: Yes, Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Okay, proceed.

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: Mr Speaker, I am asking the Leadership this time round not to give any of those Big Five Committees to be chaired by the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, we are asking the former Minister of Agriculture to assist the new Minister so the new Minister can continue from where he stopped. We need other Directorates under that Ministry to be around to support the new Minister. It is only when they do that we can succeed in feeding this nation. We want to feed Sierra Leone so that SLPP can stay in governance for the next 50 years.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order; **S.O** 34. Mr Speaker, I don't know why my colleague is asking for the former Minister to be around when it is very clear in the Constitution that the president has the right to hire and fire. When the president hires, it means it has faith and confidence in that individual. We have just approved the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security in this Chamber, why is the MP asking us to tell the President to have the former Minister to be around the new Minister? I rest my case.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, he can tell us his reason

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: Mr Leader, I know you are just coming in, but I am not asking Mr President to ask the former Minister to stay; I am just saying because he has been in that office let him assist the new Minister with the projects he started but could not complete so the new Minister can continue from there.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable, don't you think the new Minister can find his feet?

HON. EDWARD GEORGE: I know the new Minister can do it well, but Mr Speaker, if you have been in an office and a new person is coming to take over, you have to take that person through so he can be on a firm footing. I believe with a practical handing over; not only stating it in the document that I have five Tractors in Bumpeh or in Pujehun as the case maybe, and most times when you probe further you won't find them. So I am just asking the former Minister to assist the new Minister so we can achieve the Feed Salone project.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable, one minute more.

HON. EDWAED GEORGE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I am the President for the young Members of Parliament in this House, so I want to dwell into the youth affairs of this nation.

Mr Speaker, one of these days I heard somebody on the **98.1** FM saying politicians are the ones giving Kush to the youths to misbehave in this country. Mr Speaker, as our proceedings is live, I want to make it very clear that there is no politician, whether seasoned or not, that would support any youth to embark on drugs abuse.

Mr Speaker, for one to also say that youths are taking drugs because they are jobless is totally not true. These youths are using money to buy these drugs, and if you are not working and you do not have any other thing to do, where are you getting the money to buy those drugs? So Mr Speaker, drug abuse is just a habit that our young people have adapted to.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as young Members of Parliament, we want to join the Minister and the nation to actually wipe off these drug issues in the country, I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable George. Honourable Maada Lebbie, you have five minutes. Honourable Members, please summarise your debates.

HON. AMBROSE MAADA LEBBY: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency the President for his speech graciously delivered in this Well and to the people of this country. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me take this House to the Big Five, page 4; Feed Salone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if as Members of Parliament we want to support His Excellency in achieving his dream to feed Sierra Leoneans, there is every need for other MDAs to support the President's Agenda.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw your attention to the Feeder Roads of this nation. If for any reason we want to achieve food productivity, there is every need for the Ministry of Finance to support SLRSA so that SLRSA in turn will support the Agriculture Ministry in reconstructing or rehabilitating Feeder Roads.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the roads in this nation, especially...*[Interrupted]*

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order, 34.

Mr Speaker, we are confused here; we have moved from SLRSA to SLRA, to Road Maintenance Fund Administration. Interestingly, my colleague speaking was the

Chairman for Transport and Aviation but I don't know where he is taking us to. So let him direct us properly, please.

HON. AMBROSE MAADA LEBBY: Mr Speaker, I am referring to the Sierra Leone Roads Authority, [SLRA].

Mr Speaker, the Sierra Leone Roads Authority needs to pay keen attention to Feeder Roads. There are some Feeder Roads in this country for example; the roads leading to the four Kpaa Mende Kingdoms in the Bo District.

Mr Speaker, I can assure you...*[Interrupted]*

HON. SAA EMERSON LAMINA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! Mr Speaker, it is this same Parliament that in 2010 took the responsibility of Feeder Roads from the hands of SLRA to Road Maintenance Fund. Hence, it is no longer the responsibility of SLRA to maintain Feeder Roads, but the exclusive and primary responsibility of Road Maintenance Fund [RMFA].

THE SPEAKER: I think the responsibility still remains with SLRA, except that it is RMFA that provides the funds, but the technical services are provided by SLRA, yes, I think.

HON. AMBROSE MAADA LIBBY: Very well, Mr Speaker.

HON. SAA .E LAMINA: Except it has to do with Trunk Roads or major bridges, but Feeder Roads as he has quoted, that is the responsibility of Road Maintenance Fund, under the supervision of the Councils.

THE SPEAKER: They provide the funds. Let's proceed.

HON. AMBROSE MAADA LEBBY: Very well, Mr Speaker, funds are provided by the Road Maintenance Fund to either SLRA or the Local Councils.

So Mr Speaker, if we are to succeed in food productivity in this country, there is every need for Ministry of Finance to provide adequate funds in that direction. Let me cite a clear example; the Bo-North.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, since the last administration of former Ernest Bai Koroma, it was only when the President wanted to visit my Constituency that the SLRA could rush to do some minor maintenance on that road.

Mr Speaker, for some of us that went to CKC, you can agree with me that the Njala Komboya, Gaylayhumbah, Jangaluba and Gbesehlainga are the Feeder Chiefdoms for Bo District in terms of fruits, rice and other vegetables.

Mr Speaker Honourable Members, those four Chiefdoms alone can feed the whole of Bo District and even other parts of the South if we have good roads.

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

HON. AMBROSE M. LEBBIE: Mr Speaker, let me take you quickly to Paragraph 11; *'the Human Capital Develop Index'*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Human Capital Development has been the key priority in the president's Agenda. Mr Speaker, if we are proudly referring to the Fourah Bay College today as the *Athens of Africa* it is as a result of the products of Fourah Bay College.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Human Capital Development is key in the achievement of the Big Five. The president spoke eloquently about his aspiration for the provision of employment for five hundred thousand [500,000] Sierra Leoneans. Imagine five hundred thousand! Mr Speaker, I want to assure you that the issue of Kush and other forms of drug abuse will be a thing of the past if we provide five hundred thousand jobs for the youths in this country. I am sure people are taking drugs as a result of their situation; they have nothing tangible to do, and there is a saying that *'an idle mind is the devil's workshops'*. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that if we provide these jobs for those youths now abusing drugs on the streets, Sierra Leone will become the Dubai of Africa. On that note, I want to thank you all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Lebbie.

HON. YUSUF MACKERY: Mr Speaker, I am please asking for your protection from those guys disturbing.

THE SPEAKER: You are highly protected. Honourable Members, please allow Honourable Yusuf Mackery to proceed peacefully.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Point of Order, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes Honourable Kemokai, let me here you.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: The Honourable Members is referring to his colleagues here as guys, I want to know whether we are guys here.

THE SPEAKER: No we do not have guys here, we have Honourable Members here.

HON. ABU KEMOHKAI: I am therefore asking the Honourable Members to withdraw his statement.

HON. YUSUF MACKERY: Honourable Members, even if you do not want to listen, please listen to the Speaker's plea.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Can you withdraw the statement, Sir?

HON. YUSUF MACKERY: Withdrawn.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to re-echo my thanks and appreciation to the president for his speech delivered in this House on 3rd August 2023.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for the past three days Members have raised series of points regarding the Big Five. Talking about the Human Capital Development, there are lot of gains being made in that sector by the government. Everybody knows that the enrolment of pupils in schools before 2018 was one million five hundred thousand. But because of the Free Quality Education been introduced in 2018, the enrolment has increased to two million six hundred, which is a clear indication that the Free Quality Education is actually creating a positive impact. The impact cannot be realised now because it requires time for people to see the impact of Free Quality Education. Let us take a look back at the time the then government of late President Ahmad Tejan Kabba introduced the 6334 system of learning; people criticized it then, but now we have so

many Lawyers, Engineers and Doctors who benefited from that particular educational system.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now go to the most talked about Feed Salone initiative. If you look at Page 4 Paragraph 24, the president says *'Food security holds paramount importance in the quest for a stable and democratic society...'*

Therefore Mr Speaker, if we are talking about food security, we also need to think beyond what we are debating here. Food Security generally means people to have physical and economic access to food at all times. So I can say the Feed Salone initiative is nationalistic, visionary but very complex and ambitious.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the government played a vital role over the past five years in making sure we have food security. In 2019, rice production was five hundred thousand [500,000] tons; in 2021, the production was nine hundred thousand [900,000] tons- all of these were piloted by the Ministry of Agriculture.

But Mr Speaker, there are key things we need to take into consideration; we all know that most of those agricultural activities are taking place in the provinces like the Tormabum and the Kambia District. So I am suggesting that the president ensures that the Deputy Minister of Agriculture stays in the provinces to enhance thorough supervision of the activities of the Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the president's intention to allocate **10%** minimum of the GDP to Agriculture is a laudable one. So Mr Speaker, this is the time for us to rise to the occasion. As my colleague Honourable Member said, this is the time for Parliament to demonstrate leadership. Take a look at the Well today, compared to the time we were approving Ministers, you would realise that during the approvals this place would be jam-packed but today, none of them is around to listen to what we are saying. The president who is the Pilot of development also relies on those MDAs to take development to the various Districts.

So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am also calling on the Leadership to let us embark on robust oversight functions to enhance full compliance to whatever we debate here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the president in his address to this House said '*we are going to formulate policies that foster competitiveness*'. I could remember during the days of **James international**, there was a Master Farmer in Kailahun District called Alhaji Umaru. That man was given special attention and motivation that helped him increase his yield.

So please Mr Speaker, in making policies for the Feed Salone initiative we also need to ensure we input special innovative ideas and motivating packages for Farmers to be encouraged to produce more and better yields.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the areas we need to pay attention to is the Research activities. Before now, Njala University was very good in the area of crop research but today people don't even know which particular crop can yield dividend in various areas. So focusing on research once more can help us yield better fruits.

Mr Speaker, Honourable members, we also need to ensure that special credit facility without interest be accorded to farmers. If you go to the Banks today for any loan related business, you would realise that the interest far outweighs the real purpose of the Loan. So please Mr Speaker, I am asking the government to make sure they establish an MOU for special credit facilities for farmers to get loans with no special interest.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw your attention to climate change actions. In whatever we discuss, let us understand that climate change actions some time has effect on our productivity in agriculture. Human activities like land depletion and deforestation creates negative impacts on our agricultural activities. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members...*[Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Yusuf Mackery. Honourable Alex Rogers, you now have the Floor.

HON. ALEX M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, colleague Members of Parliament, I rise on behalf of the people of Pujehun District to add my voice to the speech delivered by our president on the 3rd of August, 2023.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is no denying that five years ago your president, my president and our president, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio stood in this Parliament and delivered very graciously, and pledged to critically support some of the key promises enshrined or stipulated in the SLPP Manifesto.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you would agree with me that most of the promises, if not all that were stipulated in the Sierra Leone Peoples Party Manifesto were tenaciously and resolutely fulfilled. It is against that background that the people of this country voted resoundingly for the president to be re-elected. Mr Speaker, you would also agree with me that at least **80%** of those promises were fulfilled, as we could see evidence of those promises in the area of health and agriculture which is today being considered as the flagship project.

Security should also be taken into consideration. Although one could argue that security is fragile today, credence must be given to this government in the context of implementing or reinforcing the security sectors of this country.

Mr Speaker, I want to limit my contribution to the overarching clue to the realisation of the 72 Paragraph speech delivered by His Excellency the President. Let me draw your attention to Paragraph 3 of His Excellency's speech; the last sentence in Paragraph 3. It says, *"Parliament is not merely a forum for legislation, it stands as a vanguard of democratic ideals and pulsates as the life blood of our nation"*.

This is in tandem with another descriptive role of Parliament that I will read to you again verbatim. Honourable Members, there is a reason why I am citing those Paragraphs and I will dilate on them later.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on Honourable Rogers. Two Honourable Members debated yesterday; Honourable Alice Sandy and Honourable Fala Tengbeh... okay, proceed.

HON ALEX M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second paragraph on the descriptive role of Parliament in Paragraph 61 says, *"Let this Parliament, this beacon of hope continue to lead the way exemplifying dedication to the noble task of nation building"*.

What the president has cleverly done here is that he has made us to understand that Parliament is so much important that even the implementation of those policies stipulated in the People's Manifesto have been linked to our responsibility. Parliament is very much important and Parliamentarians must ensure that indeed we have the powers to make sure we carry out our oversight functions particularly within the context of those policies stipulated in the People's Manifesto so that they are implemented judiciously. This is the reason why I took my time to make reference to those descriptive Paragraphs citing the cardinal responsibilities of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, it is against this background that I want to call on MPs, particularly the Chairmen that are going to be in charge of those Committees to be very vigilant during the discharge of their oversight functions. There should be no business as usual; exercise your functions without taking money into consideration. As Members of Parliament, we have a civic role to play.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of my colleagues from Bo District was making reference to Agriculture as being the flagship programme of this government, and that we must ensure that Tractors and Fertilizers supplied to the Ministry are physically seen and handed over to the new Minister.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President also mentioned that the issue of security is very important in a politically polarized state. For any state to thrive economically, maximum security is needed at all times. Lack of adequate security will distract investors, thereby leading to lack of economic growth.

All of us should therefore come together to ensure that we put in place maximum security in this country. With these few remarks, I want to use this opportunity to say

thanks to His Excellency for his brilliant speech graciously delivered in this Well of Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Alex Munda Rogers.

HON BINTU FATMATA BOCKARIE: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my name is Bintu Famata Bockarie, representing Bonthe District. Honourable Members of this august House, if anyone has told you that President Bio has not done his best for this country, I am telling you with authority that the president has done so well, and has delivered on his promises.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, despite the economic problems that have faced the world, like the Covid 19 and the Russian Ukraine war, President Bio stood his grounds and has delivered for the people of Sierra Leone.

When President Bio came to power in 2018, he said he would provide Free Quality Education for all irrespective of gender or tribe, and he has delivered on that promise. President Bio sent over two million children to school for free; the government paid their fees, bought text books for them and sponsored the school feeding programmes. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, mothers and women across the country are saying thanks to President Bio for educating our children.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, President Bio has also done well in the construction of roads and bridges in this country; the Moyamba and Mabang bridge etc. I however want to zoom in on the Imperi Road that our people are grumbling about.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you can bear me witness that the road leading to Imperi is very dilapidated and the people of Imperri are not happy about that at all. Mr Speaker is a witness to that fact because he uses that road to his village. So we want this House to call on the mining companies like the Sierra Rutile and ViMetco to ask them regarding their role in the construction of that road. These Mining Companies are mining our minerals in that part of the country and yet cannot do anything good for our people in Imperri Chiefdom.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am saying this with vengeance because the road leading to our villages is so deplorable that our vehicles get damaged anytime we travel on that road. I therefore want this House to summon the mining companies regarding that problem.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, another game changer policy that has been introduced by this government is the Feed Salone initiative. The Ministry of Agriculture and its agencies must step up to ensure that the Feed Salone initiative does not fail. All agencies linked to the Ministry of Agriculture must present themselves to this House and tell us how they plan to support this policy. The country must start to grow what we eat.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to touch on the Youth Empowerment Scheme. According to the last census, over **60%** of Sierra Leoneans are young people, and Sierra Leone has talented youths across different sectors of life. All what the youths of this country now need is the opportunity to display and exhibit their talents.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we are to move this country to a middle income economy we must provide a labour force that is both skilled and unskilled. The five hundred thousand jobs that the president has promised should not only be focused on Freetown, they should cut across all Districts and Chiefdoms.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the gainful employment of our youth would certainly contribute to the human capital development of this country. I therefore call on this Honourable House to support the president in his Human Capital Development drive, I thank you very much and may God bless us all.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want Honourable Members to be guided by **S.O 32 [4]**. Mr Speaker, with your leave I would read **S.O 32 [4]** for the benefit of Members of Parliament. **S.O 32 [4];** *'a Member shall not read his speech but may read some extracts from books or papers in support of his argument and may refresh his or her memory by referencing....'* [Interrupted]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Deputy Leader, please do not go into that, leave that part.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, we are on records, and we take note of your ruling; we are not against your ruling. All that the Honourable Member is saying is for the records so that those coming next to debate will not reduce the House to some level; we want to maintain standards.

Mr Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the House again to the Vimetco issue brought up by one of our colleagues. Honourable Members, there is no way a company is going to work without an Agreement from this House. As for the statement from our colleague, we know that she is just coming in as a new Member of Parliament, we appreciate her very much for her contribution but we would guide her as we go along. So for the records, talking about the companies taking our minerals away, we ask through your good office that those Records are not captured in the Hansard.

THE SPEAKER: It is alright, the Clerks can take note.

HON. FOYOH THOLLEY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am Honourable Foyoh Tholley representing Tonkolili District. On behalf of my people of Tonkolili, I want to thank His Excellency the President for his remarkable speech in this Well of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to lament on one of the big game change initiatives by the President; Feed Salone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Feed Salone has been in existence all along because the Agriculture Ministry has been existing. All that we need to do now is to add more effort and put modalities in place to monitor the Agriculture Ministry for effective delivery. The technical team at the Ministry of Agriculture needs to move away from Freetown to the provinces for thorough monitoring.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have been doing Agriculture in my home land, Samaya Bendugu but the bad road network to that area has been a serious challenge in boosting Agriculture. I am therefore appealing to the Government and the Minister of Works to help in the road network to enhance the movement of agricultural produce.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, Honourable Foyor Tholley. Our Honourable Paramount Chief Members of Parliament, I have not seen your representation on this list, are you

interested, or do you want to wait tomorrow or Friday? Tomorrow, thank you very much. Honourable Member, proceed.

HON. FOYOR THOLLEY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to zoom in on Human Capital Development. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some of the basic necessities required for Human Capital Development are the same needed for Agricultural productivity. These basic necessities include good roads, electricity and good health. I am therefore appealing to the government to improve on these facilities in order to attain the development we are craving for.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Kinghoo Mining Company for fulfilling their Cooperate Social Responsibilities by rehabilitating some schools and hospitals in their area of operation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank His Excellency the president for the Free Education that my Chieftdom has benefited from immensely. I can proudly say to Members of Parliament that our children are no longer going out of our Chieftdom to take public exams as it used to be. We now have our own centre for examination even though we still have challenges with the structure. The president was there the last time during our Bye Election and promised to construct a Secondary School for our children. I am therefore calling on the Minister of Education to please help us with a Government Assisted Senior Secondary School. We are seriously challenged whenever it is time for the conduct of a Senior Secondary School Examination. The lower level pupils will have to sit at home and wait until the exams are completed. This to a large extent has a telling effect on the academic progress of our children. I am in that regard appealing to the Government and the Ministry of Education to have a look at our problem in that direction.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we must succeed with the Feed Salone, Members of this House should strictly monitor the implementation of the programme, I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution.

HON. SYLVESTER A.M BOIMA [Rtd. Cpt]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to address this Honourable House. I am retired Captain Sylvester Boima from Constituency 98, Moyamba District which comprises of Korray, Kamajai and Kowa. I want to thank the President for his speech delivered on the 3rd August 2023 in this very Chamber. It is a speech that I describe as a foundational truth that lay bare the roadmap for the nation to achieve Middle Income status by 2035.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, according to International Peasant Movement, a nation that cannot feed itself is not free. Taking from that backdrop, I want to refer to Paragraphs 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 of the President's speech, narrating the Big Five changers.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with my background, I would like to straightaway zoom in on Feed Salone. We all know that Agriculture is the bedrock of economic development of a nation, and over **75%** to **80%** of our population in this country is subsistent farmers living mostly in the rural areas.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in order to succeed in Feed Salone we need to come together. In Page 27 of the Presidential Address to this House, the President lays a lot of emphases on importation, expressing his desire to save this country from the bottlenecks of importation. He outlines measures to be put in place to reinvigorate Agricultural productivity. This shows that the President wants to add strength and life to Agricultural productivity. The president in that Paragraph highlights eight measures to put in place in addressing those bottlenecks.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, bullet point one of those measures talks about augmenting Government Budget allocation to Agriculture by minimum of **10%**. I want to inform you that this **10%** is the basis of the Malabo Agreement signed in Equatorial Guinea Summit in June, 2014.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the SLPP Government is genuine and wants to see that Sierra Leoneans go to bed adequately fed. Imagine, since Member States signed this Agreement 2014, Sierra Leone has been completely off track due to bad

governance, misplaced involvement of private people into Agricultural activities and lack of interest by the APC regime. For that reason, President Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio is now paying backlog for this Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, apart from the **10%** from the National Budget and other fundamental activities outlined for Feed Salone, we need to double our efforts. If we have been walking, we need to jog and if we have been juggling we need to run.

Mr Speaker, permit me to quote from a report of the Ministry of Agriculture funded by FAO's Food Security Monitoring System. This report is conducted every year by the Ministry of Agriculture in March to ascertain the planting period of farmers, and also in August /September to determine the harvesting period.

According to the Report, *'a large majority of **78%** of Sierra Leonean population is food insecure.'*

Moving further, the finding says, *'most household cannot afford a healthy diet which has implication on their health and nutritional status in the long run'.*

Mr Speaker, my colleague Honourable Yusuf Macary mentioned that food security is physical and economic access. I also want to add that there is also the need for the utilization of the required balance diet in order to be food secured.

On that note Mr Speaker, I want to proffer the following recommendations as an addendum to the various measures the President highlighted in his Speech:

Firstly, for us to succeed as a nation to Feed Salone, [a concept that started in Brazil, Columbia, Argentina etc.], the Ministry of Agriculture needs to work with Njala University whose primary task is Education, Research and Community Service. There is need for the Ministry of Agriculture to collaborate with Njala University, SLARI and other Agricultural Institutions to chart a way forward for the betterment of this Nation.

Secondly, we need to pay attention to monitoring and data collection for us to succeed as a nation to feed Sierra Leone. In terms of budget allocation, there is little or no attention given to data collection, particularly in the Ministry.

Furthermore, the bed of Agriculture is the soil. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have different ecological background and therefore, in a District for example, if you want to grow ginger, all you need to do is to go to the Soil Division where you can be directed to someone specialised in that particular crop. It is however unfortunate that such division is currently lacking and the Ministry needs to establish Soil or an Agronomy Division.

Also, we all know that the champion for this Feed Salone initiative is the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to inform you that very senior staff at the Ministry of Agriculture [starting from Grade 8] are very demotivated because of poor salary. I therefore want to encourage this House to ensure that modalities are put in place to motivate those staff who are the drivers of this Feed Salone Leone.

Finally Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to end by saying that for us to minimise the post-harvest losses, there is need for us to have the required implements to harvest. I am in that regard calling on everyone to see how best we can provide Combined Harvesters. The Military Agricultural Unit needs to be empowered because as it is now, all the implements they are using currently are not owned by the Military; they are on hired basis. That Unit needs to be supplied with Agricultural implements. On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you very much for giving me the time to add my voice to this debate.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Boima. Honourable Abu Kemokai, you have the Floor.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to join my colleagues to thank His Excellency the President for a speech well delivered.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President in his speech outlined the Five Big Changers and one amongst those Big Changers is the Human Capital Development. We

want to consolidate the gains we have made in the last five years so that that can form a solid foundation for the next five years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Human Capital Development is a very important component in our existence. The late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania once said that man is the object and subject of development, and that if you want to develop a society you have to develop the man because development is for man, by man and of man. And that is exactly what President Bio started in his last five years and we are building on that foundation.

Having said that, for us to consolidate that gains there is more we need to do even in the Human Capital Development. I am coming from a district, Pujehun District to be specific and we are geographically divided; some coming from predominantly Riverine communities and some from up land communities. In the last administration, the Government through the Ministry of Transport and Aviation procured School Buses for our school going kids. I want to report to this House and to draw the attention of the Ministry that our children that are living in those riverine communities did not benefit from that opportunity although they are equally part of the children of Sierra Leone. The only way those children can access their schools is through boats. I want to call the attention of the Ministry that equally, if there is any way we can procure a boat for the children to access their schools, especially during the raining season it would help a lot. Schools reopen next month and the safety of those kids is very paramount. I just want to call the attention of the Minister and all the authorities concerned to note that as a very important component.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, several speakers have spoken around substance abuse by our young people in Sierra Leone. As has been said, many young people in Sierra Leone are morally, mentally and cognitively sick because of the substance abuse, and by the way, there are laws that prohibit the intake of those drugs. We have section 49 [1] of the Pharmacy and Drug Act of 2001 which prohibits the intake of harmful drugs. But what we have learnt over time is that many of those who are supposed to enforce those laws are also part of those abusing the drugs. We therefore need to call

on the attention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and other authorities concerned, including Parliament to see how we can ensure those laws are enforced. The laws are there, but the influx of unemployed young people especially to Freetown is too much. I was driving home the other day and I met a young boy sleep-walking on the road, can you imagine that? So, if we want to attain the Feed Salone dream of the President, we have to ensure that we protect our young people because they are the ones we are expecting to work in the farms.

I noticed that many MPs that spok around the Feed Salone initiative concentrated more on rice cultivation. It seems we are shifting the focus of Feed Salone because rice cultivation is not the only focus of Feed Salone. There are many components of Agriculture that we should let the public know about. We have many areas in the country that are very much productive in cultivating oil palm, cocoa, cashew nut etc.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we came to power in 2018 the President urged politicians to go into active farming. I want to challenge Honourable Members here that not even five of us can claim to be active farmers. If they are let them show up.

HON. BOSTON MUNDA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, Honourable Kemokai. Yes, Honourable Munda, let me hear you.

HON. BOSTON MUNDA: Mr Speaker, the Honourable is trying to accuse colleague Members of not involving in farming without evidence. Of course some of us here are great farmers and he is here challenging by saying we do not even have up to five MPs who are farmers. I am therefore suggesting that the Honourable Member withdraws that statement.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, we have farmers here, serious minded farmers, including myself here. So Honourable, withdraw that statement.

HON: ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, I did not say Honourable Members, are not farmers. Let me repeat myself for the records; I said when we won election in 2018,

the president urged we the politicians to go into active farming because we are leaders representing our people, and that if we want people to follow us, we have to serve as an example in doing what we think is the best for us. And I asked the question that how many of us as Honourable Members that are serious farmers? That was what I said.

HON: BOSTON MUNDA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order. The Honourable did not say so; he said *'there are not more than five MPs who are farmers, and if so let them come out'*.

Mr Speaker, that is an indictment to this House, let him withdraw.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Kemokai, withdraw.

HON: ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, for the sake of sanity I withdraw, but I hold on to my view.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Proceed

HON: ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, I therefore want to call on us all to go into active farming. The only way we can succeed as a country or as a nation is for us the leaders and the politicians to serve as examples. Others may follow us when we serve as examples. I therefore call on my colleagues, even though they are claiming that they all own farms, let us please go into active farming.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I heartily join Honourable Kemokai in that; let's go out to farm. Honourable Members, own a farm. As Honourable Members, it is incumbent on you to own a farm, let us take the lead.

HON: ABU KEMOKAI: Thank you Mr Speaker. I can proudly say here that in the next three years the least I may generate from my farm could be **\$5000** a month *[Applause]*. Yes, I am not joking.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, he is right. Honourable Members, let me shock you; I have almost two hundred acres of Coconut Farm, do you know what that means? The moment I

start harvesting people will be all over the place shouting that oh Honourable Segepoh is corrupt, not knowing that I am getting my money from my farm.

Honourable Members, if I decide to harvest two hundred acres of Coconut do you know how much Dollar is that? So please Honourable Members, go out there and do farming. As Honourable Members, you have reasonable status to get to these people and they would give you land for free and you have people to help you provide the labour. So let go out there.

Of course we are here today but there will come a time when we would not be here anymore. Most of us have decided to retire in our villages. I will never retire in this city because I will not want the kind of noise and bustles all over the place. I have decided to retire in my village and be a millionaire in my village. So please, whilst you are young, strong and healthy, do something to take care of your old age. My pinch of salt! Proceed, Honourable.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for drawing the attention of Members and colleagues to a very important aspect of our lives, which is Agriculture. Whiles we are focusing on feeding Sierra Leone let us take into account our young people. As I have said, many young people in Sierra Leone are morally, mentally and cognitively sick as a result of substance abuse. And the only way we can succeed in feeding Sierra Leone is to have healthy youth because we need these young people to go to the farm and work so we can have adequate food supply in our country. I therefore call on the authorities and the institutions concern [*Law Enforcement Agencies*] to see how best they could tackle this menace in our society. We have seen videos on Social Media showing those who are supposed to enforce the law involving in the same act of Kush intake. It is now very common to see somebody sleep-walking on the streets.

THE SPEAKER: We have Zombies all over the place. One more minute, Honourable Member.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note therefore, I call on all to support the Feed Salone initiative so we can tackle the problem of basic food items.

As somebody mentioned earlier, we have seen a politician walking in the markets to take prices of basic commodities to use that as a means to politicise the global circumstances that is affecting almost every country across the globe. And that is very cheap of any politician to have got himself into such act. I therefore call on all of us to go into active farming so that we can be assured of tackling the issue of basic commodities in our country.

THE SPEAKER: I thank you very much, Honourable Kemokai for your contribution.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr Speaker adjourned the House to Thursday 17th August, 2023 at 10:am. The House rose at 2:30pm.