

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

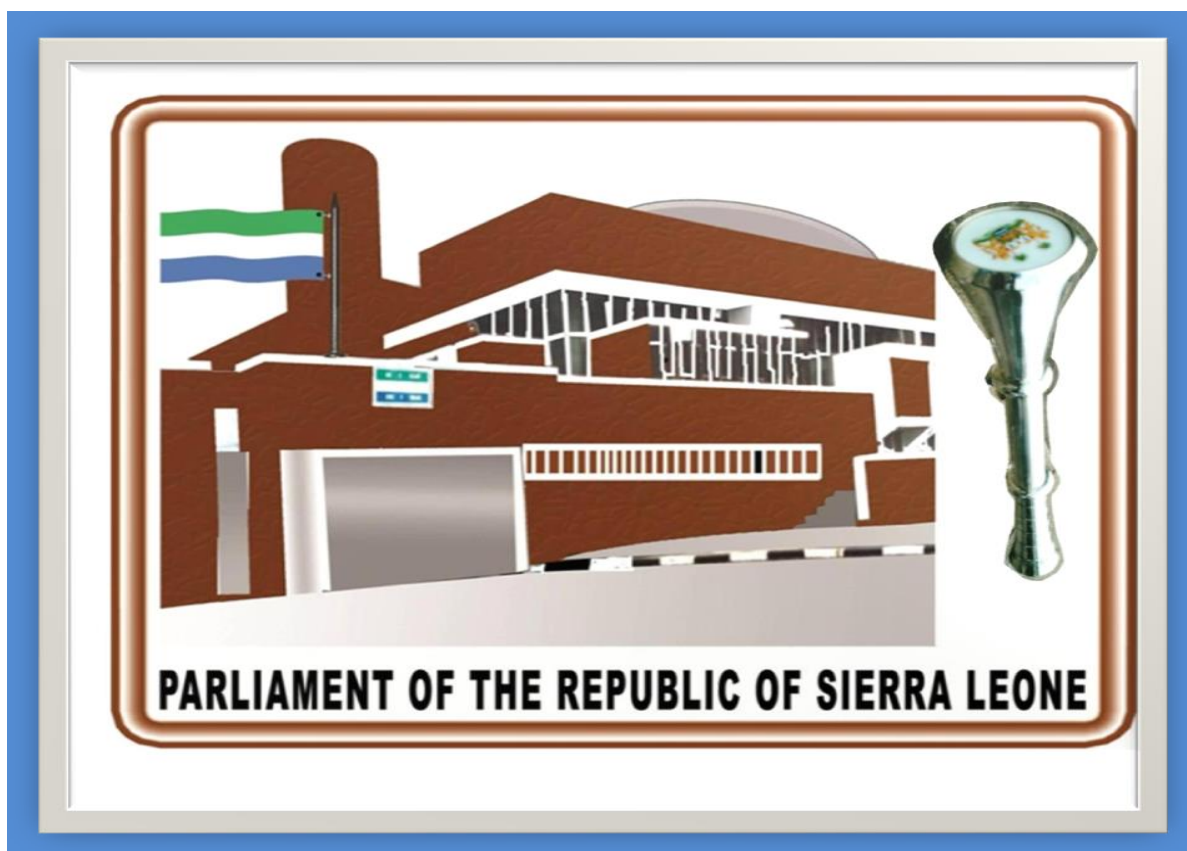
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SECOND SESSION -THIRD MEETING

TUESDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2020

SESSION – 2019/2020



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Tuesday, 17th March, 2020.

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THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE RATIFY THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENT WHICH WAS LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON THURSDAY 20TH FEBRUARY, 2020:

CABINET DECISION TO ESTABLISH THE SIERRA LEONE FOREIGN SERVICE ACADEMY
AND PROPOSAL FOR THE RATIFICATION OF THE AGREEMENT WITH THE PEOPLES
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SERVICE ACDEMY.



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

SECOND SESSION – THIRD MEETING OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

Tuesday, 17th March, 2020.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 10:45a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

[The Speaker, Hon. Dr Chernor Abass Bundu in the Chair]

The House was called to Order

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY 5TH MARCH, 2020

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS [*Chief Whip*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to move that we amend the Order Paper to have a new item 5 which reads as: ***"Felicitation to the new Speaker of the Fifth Ecowas Parliament."***

HON. DR. KANDEH K. YUMKELLA [*Leader of NGC*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, could we also move that we put another agenda item on Coronavirus Preparedness? We believe, it is important enough to look at Corononavirus holistically, not only from the health point, but also the potential Economic impact. We want to know what the Government, Central Bank Governor and the Minister of Finance are doing for the ultimate impact.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, listening to colleagues from the Sierra Leone People's Party [SLPP] side, we want to do a special session, in fact on the 'Coronavirus Preparedness.'

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH [*Leader of Opposition*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to support the position of Honourable Dr Yumkella. The modus operandi could be discussed, but the fact that we need these people to come and tell us how prepared they are, is something we have been discussing along the walls and corridors of Parliament for the last few days. So, it is very important that we follow that queue.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS [*Leader of Government Business*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I definitely endorse that position, but instead of adding other items on the Order Paper, I would suggest that we take a particular day, even if it is tomorrow to invite all the players involved in the fight against the Coronavirus to come to this House and actually explain to us about the preparedness. We need the Clerk of Parliament to ensure that all the players, we will agree now to come up with a date,

before we stand down the House as would be determined by the Honourable Speaker to explain to us on the preparedness of the Coronavirus. I Thank you.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have just heard that there is a Cabinet Meeting tomorrow, so, probably we would take that into consideration.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have two motions on the Floor. We shall take the first one which says: "*The Motion of felicitations to the new Speaker of the Fifth Ecowas Parliament*" [Applause]. Any Secunder to that Motion?

HON. LAHAI MARAH: It is not the Sierra Leone Peoples's Party's [SLPP] business, this is for the entire country. Mr Speaker, I so second.

THE SPEAKER: You have heard the Motion which has been seconded.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Motion of Honourable Dickson M. Rogers to amend the Order Paper has been carried]

THE SPEAKER: The second motion is from Honourable Kandeh Yumkella concerning the Coronavirus Preparedness. Just as a background, I do not know whether you were here when we invited both the Ministers of Health and Internal Affairs to brief us on the state of preparedness of the country in anticipation of the virus rearing its ugly head in Sierra Leone and we had a quite good meeting on that occasion. We followed it up with our passing here of a certifacte of solidarity with the Parliament and the People of the Peoples Republic of China and invited the Ambassador who also came and made a statement to the Well. But of course, on both of those occasions, public concern had been limited to events that were unfolding principally in China and in Europe. Now, those events have come dangerously close to our shores. It is my understanding that one confirmed case has been found in neighbouring Guinea and also in neighbouring Liberia and that is caused for concern, not only to this Parliament but to the entire country. So, I was just wondering whether having an item on our Order Paper will surface considering the hightened public interest this matter has taken or whether we should be contemplating a special session. So, I would ask Dr Yumkella to address the House on that before I make a ruling on it.

HON. DR. KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would go for a special session in this Well on that topic. I think it is important enough to give a broader ramifications on Coronavirus. We were discussing a few minutes ago that, the reason we need to look at it more seriously is that the last time Ebola was in three countries, so everybody came to help. But this time, those who should help also have their own problem. It means that we have to be even more vigilant to avoid its arrival here or if it comes, we should be more vigilant to make sure we are doing what we should do. It is important for us as Members of Parliament to also be at the forefront of preparing communities in case we have the outbreak *[Applause]*. The case in point is Rwanda, they took action even though it had not arrived there. We do not have to wait until it arrives.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, secondly, the Central Bank of Nigeria just did a Press Release now on economic measures to put in place. So, it is for that reason that some of us believed, in fact a special session here would be very educative to the public. So my Motion is, I move that we have a special session on Coronavirus Preparedness in Parliament, inviting to this House those who are in the frontline of helping us to prepare, particularly the Minister of Health, Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank.

THE SPEAKER: Your point is well noted Honourable Member. You have just reminded me of two countries that are in a similar situation as ours, Rwanda and Ghana. I will put the Question in due time *[Undertone]*. Honourable Members, I want to draw your attention to something very important and that is, we should be extremely proactive, we should not be caught unprepared. And as the Honourable Kandeh Yumkella rightly observed, when we had our Ebola experience, it was localised to a very great extent to Africa. So, it was easy for us to seek help from outside Africa and within Africa as well. But this time, the sources from which such help came the last time are now under attack. So, they are not likely to be eligible to come to our aid. Finally, I want to draw the attention of the Honourable House that, you go and look at Section 29 of the Constitution, the kind of development that we have seen happening is what Section 29

tries to capture and address. So, it is not just to come and talk, but I owe it to all of you to draw your attention to that provision of our Constitution, so that we can utilise it, if necessary. Having said that, now, I will ask for a Secunder of that Motion.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH [Leader of Opposition]: Mr Speaker, I thank you very much. Mr Speaker, my advise to you is that, not to do it the way you did, but I agree with you on the point you raised. Mr Speaker, Section 29 of the Constitution must be critically looked at this point in time and the earlier we utilise it, the better we solve our problem *[Applause]*. And for those outside of this Well who are also presuming that they could be more religious than us, not religion regarding the subject matter under discussing, we are equally interested in the implementation of Section 29. But be that as it may, until Section 29 is being utilised, we should endeavour to ensure that we support Government at all cost in ensuring that this issue is addressed to the latter. We should not hide under the guise of Section 29 pretending that until Section 29 is implemented what has been brought forward so far should not be complied with. We owe ourselves a duty and the people of this country an obligation to ensure that we comply with all the measures that have been brought out so far. All the citizens and residents of this country must comply without hiding under the guise of Section 29 of the Constitution. Because people are pretending that if Section 29 is not applied they are not under obligation to comply. It is a must that we all comply with the regulations. On that note Mr Speaker, I want to second the Motion that was moved by Dr Kandehe Kolleh Yumkella. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The Motion is that: A Special Parliamentary Session be held at a time to be appointed by me to discuss the full ramifications of the Coronavirus for our country even though we have not yet received a reported case. But for all we know with the recent arrivals, there may well have been a latent case waiting to rear its ugly head somewhere. Let us hope and pray that is not the case.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[The Motion for Special Parliamentary Session to be held on the Corona Virus has been carried]

THE SPEAKER: Therefore, I will now suggest Thursday, the day after tomorrow to have the Special Parliamentary Session devoted exclusively to a consideration of the preparedness of this country to combat the threat of the Coronavirus.

Therefore Honourable Members, we will ask the Clerk to inform the relevant Ministries Departments and Agencies [MDAs] to make themselves available to the House in the course of that debate.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS [Chief whip]: Thank you Mr Speaker for catching your eyes. Mr Speaker, in addition to what you have said, I also want to suggest that we stop using the Electronic Register outside *[Applause]*. Let the Clerk be taking the register manually. And Mr Speaker, I want that to go beyond...[interruption]

THE SEPAKER: Anything that is in the area of precaution is welcome, prevention is better than cure.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: The Veronica bucket outside is not just enough Mr Speaker. This morning I told one of the Sergeants at Arm that, every entry point in this House must have a veronica bucket.

THE SPEAKER: We should also have sanitizers on every desk in the Well of the House.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: And Mr Speaker, if possible, I do not know, if we can also encourage other MDAs, all those offices that do use Electronic Registration to cease forth with. I do not know if that can go beyond this Well, because it is also very important. Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I want to recognise the Honourable Bashiru Silikie.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE [Deputy Leader of the House and Government Business]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members,

because of the seriousness of the Thursday Meeting with the MDAs, I would suggest we ask the media Houses to have it as a Live Broadcast, so it can also be a sensitization to the entire country. So let us have a live coverage on the Thursday Sitting Sir.

THE SPEAKER: I agree with you Honourable Member. Maybe, we need to do more than that. I know it is customary for Africans to shake hands for our greetings to be acknowledged as complete. But let us impose on ourselves a new culture similar to the Indians whereby we greet by keeping your hands to ourselves with a simple sign. I think we should all observe the new culture of greeting. Let us avoid hand shaking on voluntary bases to start with. So, please, if anybody stretches his hands towards me and I do not receive it, you must understand the reason. Honourable Daniel Koroma, you have the Floor.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in addition to what have been suggested, I am also adding the purpose of compliance. So, let the Clerk takes note of all the MDAs that are supposed to be here on Thursday and let it be announced. Let them be mentioned that the following MDAs are supposed to be here on Thursday, let it not just be by implication. Let the Clerk announces their meeting with Parliament on Thursday.

THE SPEAKER: I will leave that to the Leader of Government Business.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: It is a suggestion Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Let us proceed with the Business of the House.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, can I be the last speaker?

THE SPEAKER: On what?

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: On the Coronavirus Preparedness.

THE SPEAKER: Wait until Thursday. We have Business to do, so let us start the Business of the House.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Sorry, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: What Standing Order [S.O] are you standing on?

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, it is for the sanitization of the handles of the doors. It is important, that cannot wait until Thursday for the door handles to be sanitized every 30 minutes.

THE SPEAKER: Do you have a donation to give?

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: We have a budget.

THE SPEAKER: Do you have a donation to give to Parliament?

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Except I buy chlorine. I can buy chlorine and bring it here, they would mix it and sanitize the handles of the doors for every 30 minutes.

THE SPEAKER: Very well then, do so.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Thank you Sir.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I know this item is over now, but I want to bring your attention to a correspondence between myself and the Office of the Clerk. There is a correspondence of which you are very much aware between myself and the Office of the Clerk in respect of a Motion that was supposed to be included on today's Order Paper and based on the correspondence I got so far, that Motion was ruled out of order by Mr Speaker. The letter dated, 11th March, 2020 and then with another follow-up letter dated 12th of March, 2020 and after the 11th of March, I also replied to the said letter and then yesterday 16th of March, I received another correspondence through the Office of the Deputy Clerk for me to show reasons why my letter which I stated that the Motion has nothing to do with the ruling of Mr Speaker that was made on the 5th of March in Committee Room One and I have that letter here. So, I am duly bound to answer your queries; this query is dated, 16th of March, 2020.

THE SPEAKER: How did you start your Notice of Motion? Honourable Daniel koroma, what form did your Notice of Motion take?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I started with a Notice of Motion, that Notice of Motion has been duly filed to the Office of the Clerk.

THE SPEAKER: Have you followed up in writing?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: And you have been receiving replies in writing?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Why can't we continue with that procedure?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, at this stage, I do not think... *[Interrupted]*.

THE SPEAKER: The last correspondence you received, your attention was drawn to the fact that transpired in Committee Room One and was concluded and settled. There seemed to be all false with the point you were making, but if for any reasons you believe that the point you were making in your Motion is substantively different from that which we addressed in Committee Room One, then by all means, I am giving you the opportunity to elaborate on that in writing to the Clerk for my attention. We have not yet reached the stage for you to raise it here.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Well Mr Speaker, as far as I know, the issue that gave rise or that underlies that Notice of Motion, I believe those issues are so urgent based on Section 93 [4] and I believe it should have been done today. In fact, today is even belated, because Parliament was adjourned the last time, our intention was to raise it on the last adjourned date, but the Sitting was postponed for today and because of Section 93 [4], it is of so much public importance that I believe further delay would not be good for this country. That is why I deemed it fit that I inform this House now based on your instruction as to why we need to proceed with that Motion, how and why it has nothing to do with your ruling. Your ruling stands and it is not in any way interfering with that ruling that has been dispensed with. It is okay. My Motion is on different issue and it is urgent based on Section 93 [4].

THE SPEAKER: That is precisely the point, maybe, you need to convince me. If it is your conviction that the content of your Motion is different from that which we

addressed and arrived at a conclusion in Committee Room One then please do so in writing to us. I am waiting for it on the urgency that you are expressing.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Yes, that is my point under [4] of Section 93.

THE SPEAKER: Well, again, I do not want to begin to split hairs with you but *S.O 25[4]* gives you a little bit of latitude. There is a time frame there, we have not yet exhausted it for the matter to assume the urgency that you seem to underscore.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have looked at *S.O 25[4]* as you have just adverted our minds. But Mr Speaker, are you averse to hearing the Honourable Member considering the fact that it is urgent?

THE SPEAKER: I am not averse, but he is delaying the commencement of the Business of the day. If you had reason towards the end of our deliberations, I would have been more amenable. I want to start the Business of the day.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I will take cognisance of that. May I request pursuant to your last statement, having adverted my mind also to *S.O 25[4]* that by tomorrow you will address it as necessary Sir.

THE SPEAKER: I want to be as accommodating on every Member of this House as possible.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker and we appreciate that.

THE SPEAKER: That is why I am again drawing the attention of the Honourable Daniel Koroma to use the procedure correctly. In my opinion or following your Oral Notice of Motion with a written letter and you have been corresponding with the administration, why don't you continue your correspondence, so that we can reach an understanding?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, it is based on that assumption I have said, we will advise ourselves accordingly. I am just pleading with you that you apply *S.O 25*. Thank you very much Sir.

THE SPEAKER: So, let us start the Business of the day.

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THURSDAY 5TH MARCH, 2020.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings for the 37th Parliamentary sitting held on Thursday 5th of March, 2020. We shall start consideration of that Record by skipping pages 1 to 4 as it is our usual practice and then commence consideration of the Record from Page 5. Page 5? Any comments and observations? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? And Page 9? Can someone move for the adoption of the Record of Votes and proceedings for the Parliamentary Sitting held on Thursday 5th March, 2020?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question, Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for Parliamentary Sitting held on 5th March, 2020 has been adopted]

III. PAPERS LAID

MRS NABEELA TUNIS *[Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have the honour to lay on the Table of the House, the following papers for ratification:

[i] Agreement Between the Government of The Republic of Sierra Leone and The Government of the Republic of Rwanda on exemption Of Visa requirement for holders Of Diplomatic and Service Passports.

[Ii] General Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

[Iii] General Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the establishment of a Permanent Commission for Cooperation.

[Iv] Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic Of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda on Political consultations.

[V] Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of The Republic of Uganda on Political consultations.

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION.

MRS NABELA TUNIS [*Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of the House on Thursday, 20th of February, 2020:

The Agreement between the Government and the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the construction of the Sierra Leone Foreign Service Academy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, His Excellency the President Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, at the first State Opening of Parliament on the 10th of May announced a Policy Commitment to establish a School of Diplomacy to train Sierra Leone's career diplomats. I am pleased to announce that, His Excellency's Government is today taking further steps to fulfil the President's Policy Announcement to establish a School of Diplomacy to train career diplomats. Establishing the School of Diplomacy is one of the key deliverables of the Medium Term National Development Plan.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, under this Agreement, our partners, the Chinese will be responsible for the design, survey and the geological investigation of the Project providing the equipment and materials required by the Project and dispatch adequate technicians to organise the construction work here in Sierra Leone. All the expenses shall be paid out of the Gratuitous Aid under the Agreement of the Economic and Technical Cooperation between the two Governments which was signed in February 2019.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on the other hand, our Government will be responsible for providing basic design data related to the project, reviewing and approving of the detailed design completed by our partners, the environmental impact assessment of the construction handling the relevant land using license procedures in accordance with the project site agreed by both Governments, preparing the demolition plan and completing the relevant demolition work, clearing all above ground and an underground barrier within the boundary line of the Project. Levelling the ground leading to pipelines of water supply and drainage, electricity, providing local material such as sand and stones, the fee required for the project is free of charge exempting all taxes and customs duty related, the security of the Chinese technicians, the Chinese accommodation and construction for the Chinese construction site. We would also bear the cost related other incidentals for the Project.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, therefore, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the construction of the Sierra Leone Foreign Service Academy which was laid on the Table of the House on Thursday, 20th of February, 2020. I thank you for your kind attention.

Question Proposed

THE SPEAKER: Obviously, the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee should lead the debate on this one.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would have been surprised if you did not recognise that fact.

THE SPEAKER: No, I wonder why I tended to be unifocal this morning.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Foreign Affairs Ministry has laid on the Table...*[Interrupted]*.

THE SPEAKER: I want to be able to conduct only one meeting here.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO [Deputy Leader of Opposition]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the document that has to do with: [a] The setting up of a system that will ensure Sierra Leone improves on its academy system in running the Foreign Ministry of Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to congratulate the Foreign Affairs Minister herself for consistently making this point very clear that, it is important for us to modernise the system that has to do with the Foreign Affairs Ministry of this country. I want to also note that the relationship between Sierra Leone and the People's Republic of China is old to the extent that we can predate it to the period when Sierra Leone actually led the move in New York for the acceptance of China to be part of the United Nations [UN] Security Council. Whether we like it or not, it did happen that day and again today, we have a Foreign Affairs Minister who is in the process of repeating that process of modernising the relationship between us and the Chinese people. When we helped to bring back China to the International Community in New York, the Foreign Affairs Minister at that time S. A. J. Pratt made it very clear that, history was made and that the Permanent Secretariat at that time headed by I. B. Taylor-Kamara also noted the fact that the relationship between China and Sierra Leone will continue to grow.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, after stated that, the relationship did grow and it will continue to grow. Up to this time we have seen quite number of developments in the area of growth. So we on this side would want to make sure that, that relationship continues to grow. *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister coming here today further strengthen the relationship between China and the people of Sierra Leone, you are merely strengthening that position as well and you are speaking our own language and we will continue to support you in that regard. So I want to make it very clear that, we on this side will continue to support progressive programmes such as what Madam Minister has just suggested this morning. Mr Speaker, we also want to make it very clear that as time goes on we will continue to support the relationship between China and Sierra Leone *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I saw a Chinese gentleman a few days ago, he was actually going to shake my hand, but I stood and just told him that, it was not necessary. But he made one statement during this very trying period, he said: "Honourable Ibrahim Ben Kargbo, you people must be thanked for the support you are continuously giving us during our trying time." I am sure the Chinese gentleman was referring to the Coronavirus and other difficulties that are now being challenged by the Chinese people themselves. So, Mr Speaker, we may talk about the diplomatic relations between China and Sierra Leone today, but more importantly we on this side would want to note the fact that, we appreciated the fact that China is going through difficult times. Even during the difficult times, they are still taking out money to help us develop Sierra Leone and this is why we would continue to support the Chinese people and we would continue to stand by them. Coronavirus is a disease and Coronavirus is not the kind of thing that we want to embrace. But the fact of the matter is that Coronavirus is a global disease and which all of us should see it as a serious threat. It also means that, we will continue to stand by the Chinese people in this regard.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in concluding, I want to assure Madam Minister that we on this side are very satisfied that the improvement of the Diplomatic Community in this country is most necessary and we will continue to ensure that we become part and parcel of this whole process. Mr Speaker, I have one or two Members of my Committee who would want to make a statements on this arrangement. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member. I now recognise Honourable Bashiru Silikie.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank Madam Minister for bringing this important document for ratification. I want to thank His Excellency the President for continuing the relationship between Sierra Leone and the China. I want to thank the Chinese Government for this support given to this Government and to the people of Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am of the view that, we should have career diplomats. We have diplomats who are politicians and some of them have no business in working in our diplomatic missions, because they have no knowledge in Diplomacy. For some people who have travelled, we see it clearly that some people are occupying diplomatic offices that have no business there because they have no knowledge in Diplomacy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank His Excellency the President, today, in the shortest period, we will be having an Academy that will be training diplomats. When people go through that ranks, when people go through that institution and they are career diplomats and are given offices, we would begin to realise the benefit as a State.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to again thank Madam Minister for her good work in that Ministry. This is a very good idea and a good venture. We expect in the future, Government to make sure that people who go through this institution are people that are selected or nominated to serve in various diplomatic institutions. We do not want to have a situation wherein we could have politicians serving as diplomats; So, this is a laudable one, as a Parliament, I believe all of us will give the Ministry our support and we would support the Project. We expect the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be paying visits to the site, so that this institution would be constructed in record time.

Thank you Mr Speaker, thank you very much Madam Minister and thanks to His Excellency the President for this laudable venture.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member. Do you want to catch my eye or not? You keep rising.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Then recognise me Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I now call on Honourable Dickson Rogers, followed by Honourable Dr Roland Foday Kargbo, Honourable Lahai Marah and Honourable Alex M. Rogers in that order please.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when the Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee spoke, I said to myself there was no need to talk, because if the Opposition supports the Agreements, then we on the Government's side should not have much to say, but when the Honourable Bashiru Silikie spoke, I think I have one or two things to add.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, first of all, let me join the other speakers to say a very big thanks to His Excellency the President Julius Maada Bio for those good initiatives. Whenever the Minister of Foreign Affairs brings Bills or Agreements to this Parliament, they are always very fine and are non-controversial. So I want to say a very big thanks to her.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me just make a rejoinder to what Honourable Bashiru Silikie said. It is a kind of appeal the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wants to make in order to make Diplomacy a career. It is a very good idea that we are going to have an institution that would start training our diplomats. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Let us start training diplomats from University level, by the time they finish their Third Year in the University, they would have exactly know the type of job they want to do, instead of just training them as diplomats and have them in the Ministry. Let us catch them young and let us make sure the institution they are going to establish makes provision for people that have got good grades from the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination [WASSCE] in English and Literature to start training them from that level. I think if we catch them young, in the next five to ten years, this country will produce very good diplomats. We have always seen differences between our diplomats and other countries we visit. So, I believe there is need to catch them young Madam Minister. Let us see how we can make provision to start training them from University straight to the Institution. By doing that, our country will be on the map and I believe President Bio's aims and objectives would have been achieved.

On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I urge my colleagues to speedily ratify this Agreement. I thank you very much.

HON. DR. ROLAND F. KARGBO: Thank you Mr Speaker for the opportunity given to me to make a contribution on this very important issue. I think when the Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee spoke, he established the necessity for this training institution and I would not like to comment on that. We need not look at the technicalities of the Diplomatic Institution that is to be established. I read through the background information, I knew there is a piece of land given which this institution is going to be located; there are two additional structures that are going to be there as well. I also understand that, they are going to operate on constituent college bases, which means, three [3] institutions will be on this piece of land with its own administration. I am worried about the proliferation of institutions, even the ones that needed to operate under a single roof, each wants to claim autonomy and this is a big burden on Government, especially on the issue of administration. When we talk about constituent colleges, we think of the days when the Milton Margai College of Education, Science and Technology [MMEST], Fourah Bay [FBC] College and the Institute of Public Administration and Management Studies [IPAM] operates as constituent colleges under the University of Sierra Leone. Therein you see a general administration and the constituent colleges have their respective administrations. We have not heard how this Academy is going to operate, but I want to draw the attention of this noble House, that where there is a necessity to integrate administration to save cost, it is important that these issues are given consideration, otherwise the burden of payment on Government is going to increase. I just want to draw the attention of the Minister to this particular issue, because it is important.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there was a time when Njala University used to have the Institute of Agricultural Research as an Institute under Njala University. I think it was a very good arrangement with synergy, effectively being used not only because they are sharing know-how and expertise, but because lecturers of the Njala University College were going to be experts working because they have very strong Agricultural division. But over the years, the Institute was made a separate body. So, in the process, it was meant that the Institute of Agricultural Research have to train its own

Staff experts with very limited scope of work and the University also had its experts in Agriculture who could have worked together and complimented each other. I think these are areas where we can save and also increase efficiency. Mr Speaker, when we talk about this, there are many examples across the World which we can borrow. I want to draw the attention of the Minister to this particular point. I thank you Mr Speaker.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute this important document that is before us this morning. Mr Speaker, I do believe the document has to do with Education and Education is a priority of this New Direction Government. This is what we want to see as a country, wherein we bring in different areas of learning skills that is geared towards empowering the middle level. Therefore, we have to support such an Agreement. And just like what we have before us, like the issue of the Limkowing, as it has to do with Education and Education is the primary focus of this New Direction Government, Mr Speaker, I am using this opportunity to call on His Excellency the President to immediately intervene in solving the issues relating to Limkowing. No matter how you look at it Mr Speaker, it has to do with empowering our youths, empowering the middle level and giving them the opportunity to represent us in different areas.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to support this document, it is a good document, and I am also calling on His Excellency the President and yourself to take a quick look at issues that have to do with the Limkowing University. As I said earlier that it has to do with Education and Education is the primary focus of this Government, it is very important. On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you so much for your attention.

HON. ALEX M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I may now rise to add my voice to this important Debate. You will agree with me as a student of International Relations that the establishment of Sierra Leone's Foreign Academy is indeed a very ambitious and laudable project in the context of International Relations and the establishment of this Institution will enhance Sierra Leone's foreign posture.

Suspension of S.O 5[2]

THE SPEAKER: You may proceed.

HON. ALEX M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the establishment of Sierra Leone's Foreign Service Academy is indeed a very ambitious and laudable Project in the context of International Relations. It is not denying that with the establishment of such Institution, it will go a long way to enhance Sierra Leone's foreign postures alongside making very much diplomatic representation and that will portray our true culture as Sierra Leoneans and our foreign missions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the only advice I would like to give to Madam Minister is that I would like to see such Academy as a first class training Institute that will indeed train and acquire the diplomatic skills that will go a long way for our Foreign Service Officials [FSO] to negotiate and of course report and organise diplomatic protocols accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to also urge Madam Minister to collaborate with Fourah Bay College, particularly the Department of International Relations/Political Science. Yes, she will make a very good use of them, because we are talking about training foreign personnel to represent us. In fact, I may also use this opportunity to recommend that, the next Permanent Secretary of that Ministry must be a Career Diplomat for very obvious reasons that will go a long way.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with those few remarks, I want to commend the Presidency of Retired Brigadier Maada Bio and the able Minister for such wise decision for us to have such a novelty Institution when compared with other countries like Nigeria and Ghana including Liberia. I remembered few years ago, I attended the Liberia institute on Foreign Services. So, I say much thanks to you for bringing up such a beautiful idea Madam Minister. I thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Dr Kandeh, after you, I would like to conclude the Debate.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as the former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and International

Cooperation Committee, I want to commend Madam Minister for continuing this work which started probably two years ago. I have addressed many diplomatic academies, given lectures overtime. I want to reiterate what Honourable Dr Kargbo said that the interface of this Academy with existing institutions is important. He also stressed about sustainability overtime, how will it be funded as we go forward once it is created? We have seen institutions that have been established and after a while they collapsed because the funding was not thought of at the very beginning of the establishment.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there are two other issues which I have raised with Madam Minister, but we had discussed that in the Foreign Affairs Committee. If we do not have a clear path for diplomats, going forward the Academy will not be successful. So, what we have proposed in our Committee and it is in our Report, which we gave to my successor. First, we must have a fixed quota for career diplomats for appointment as ambassadors that is what other countries do. We have proposed that between 40 to 50% of all diplomatic positions must be career diplomats. We have given examples in other countries; I know that for Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and other Diplomats who are posted to key stations like New York, Washington, London, France are people who probably have done two or three rotations so that by the time they arrived in New York they are really solid.

Mr Speaker, secondly, if you are going to appoint a political appointee as ambassador, it is important that the Deputy and the Head of Chancery are career diplomats. Diplomacy is about relationships and Diplomacy is about knowing institutional arrangements overtime. We have seen cases where suddenly an Ambassador, the Deputy Ambassador are all new, they are all politicians, they have never been diplomats. So, having that quota, assures people that, if I go through the Diplomatic Academy, I will have a career. Otherwise, they will just go there, get a degree and go somewhere else.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other point we have made which will help the Foreign Ministry is enforcing the protocols about removing diplomats. If we continue this habit that every new Government comes in they clear the whole slate, it will disrupt our Diplomatic work, it will discourage people from going to that Diplomatic Academy,

because they would say there is no job security. But apart from that it is an abuse of human rights. When people are posted as diplomats, they pay rents for three or four months in advance as security deposit. We have had that discussion when you did the retreat with the Vice President and it was an issue we both picked up. I do pray that you have these other arrangements in place to incentivise people who want to be career diplomats. Otherwise, they would see it as a risky career path. So, it is just continued suggestions, we left a report to the new Committee Members and I do hope that these instruments will be put in place to make the Academy useful.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, going back to Honourable Dr Kargbo's point, sustainability and its interface with other academic institutions is important *[Applause]*. So on that note, I hope we will pay great attention to it. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Kandeh Yumkella for his very astute observations. He has just reminded me of the days I served as Foreign Minister in that Ministry and started this whole idea of developing a Career Diplomatic Service and the points you have made are very pertinent. The idea of making a clean sweep when there is a change of Government that should never touch that quota of career diplomats that you have mentioned once it is agreed. They are not political appointees, they rise to that level by virtue of their Career Development and it is extremely important. We shall now conclude the Debate. Honourable Hassan Prince, you have the Floor.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: I am Honourable Hassan A. Sesay Sir. Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for us to have an idea like this in the Well of Parliament, of course, I would say it is long overdue considering what our Foreign Affairs have been over the years. My colleague from the other side from Constituency 100 was talking about how do we intertwine this institution with existing academic institutions, a point reiterated by the Honourable from Kychum and the Honourable from Kafobulum. Now, somebody who has gone through a study at Fourah Bay College where you read Political Science from intermediate year, qualifying year to final year, you must have had the opportunity to read International Relations, Comparative Politics, International Economic Resource and Foreign Policy which are key

components of Diplomacy. So, I think that, having established such an institution, there is a relevance to intertwine that institution with FBC and IPAM that study these subject so that the people know the calibre of people they are graduating. If you go through Political Science at FBC, I am sure you are well grounded to be a Diplomat that should be trained in that institution. I can still remember that when we went through FBC, we started with Comparative Politics in the intermediate year, International Relations in qualifying year and Political Systems in final year and then International Communication and Foreign Policy which are all key components of Diplomacy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think my colleague was talking about sustainability. Why am I emphasising that again? We have seen institutions that have not been sustained after high standard being inherited from institutions like the United Nations [UN]. Take the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation [SLBC] for example; they are now struggling to pay salaries, because of the level that was set by the UN before they handed over the Radio Station. Now, they are struggling to sustain that Station. Time in and time out, they have to ask for a bail out from Government to make sure that the institution continues to operate. I think we must try to make sure that all of those issues are addressed at the very start, so that tomorrow people will not encounter difficulties how to sustain such institution, because they are relevant to our overall governance process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think this is something that is not in dispute, we all accept it and kudos to you Madam Minister for bringing such a novel idea to the House for approval. Notwithstanding the fact that you are not the First Lady of the House, we will ratify it because the idea is good for this country. Like my colleague from Falaba was saying, the attention that is being paid to Education by this New Direction and if there is something going to purport that idea, we will all be for it. We have said it several times here that whatever is good for Sierra Leone, we will support from our side. But if it is not good, we will say it. We are not saying do it, but we would say it and say it with firm conviction, but this one is a good one and I want to assure you Madam Minister that anytime you have something that is for the development and

progress of this country, just bring it, we will take it for you and support it as long as it helps the country as a whole.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you very much and I call on my colleagues for us to ratify this Agreement, so that it will be established as soon as possible. Let us start working on it and make sure that it becomes what we want it to be. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. If I may just take an advantage of the exalted Office I occupy to say a word. I do hope Madam Minister, because this is an area that I personally have a great deal of interest in, the Academy would operate as a Post Graduate Institution not as an Under Graduate Institution *[Applause]*. In many parts of the world, such academies operate at that level. You must have attained your first Degree, and at First Class or Second Class upper level before you qualify for entry into the Foreign Service Academy; because you are the alter ego, so to speak, of the country you represent when you are posted abroad. Therefore, you should be given all the necessary capacity to perform and deliver on behalf of your country.

Finally, let me now call on the Leader of Government Business to have the last say before Madam Minister will have the opportunity to respond to some of the points and concerns expressed by Members.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I really do not have much to say, but only to thank my colleagues for the support they have given to this Motion and to thank the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs. I believe she has done a great job for the people of this country under the leadership of her boss to rebrand our country. The Foreign Service Academy is just part of the overall programme of His Excellency the President in promoting Human Capital Development. But like the Honourable Speaker said, I think it should be at the higher level. We must ensure that the products of that particular institution be people who would be apolitical. My colleague from Kychum drew your attention to the issue of diplomats being withdrawn sometimes in an unconventional way. I think it is an issue that we all share, it is an

issue that has spanned over the years, but I believe with the introduction of this Academy where we are going to have a set of people that will actually be serving the country as diplomats, who are going to rise through the ranks to go as diplomats, we would definitely be able to solve that particular problem, because it is very important that there are particular missions where we would need career Diplomats. Yes, we are all politicians, Honourable Nyuma would want to be appointed Ambassador to the United Kingdom [UK], maybe to Brussels, but he is a politician. He can go as an Ambassador, but his Deputy must be a career Diplomat, somebody that would be there to guide him, somebody who understands the protocols and everything. So, I believe this particular Academy will go a long way to help us as a nation and I strongly believe Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that once we are able to put this together and once we are able to get real career diplomats in the names of people like Ambassador Dauda Kamara, Honourable Ibriham Sorie, the likes of Honourable Kandeh Yumkella and others, trust me we would never have a situation where we will just keep recalling. We would definitely have a situation wherein we have these career diplomats helping our country and I can assure you no Government will ever come to power and choose to remove people who are there to promote the country, it will never happen. But we all know very well that most of the people that are recalled, most of the people that are appointed to these positions are just politicians. They are not diplomats and most of them learn on the job and that is by itself creating a lot of problem for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So, I really want to thank the Honourable Minister and also to thank our Chinese friends for providing the resources to have this kind of Academy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with that, I want to call on Honourable Members to please vote in order to ratify this Motion. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Before I call on the Honourable Minister to respond, I do hope that with the establishment of the Academy, we will also see the development of a Foreign Service divorced from the pedestrian Civil Service. Otherwise, it will not make any meaning. The Foreign Service is a unique Service and it should be divorced from the pedestrian Public Service/Civil Service as we understand it, because it requires

specialized training to do a specialized work and to be able to deliver on behalf of the country, so the two have to go hand in gloves. They should go *pari passu*. The academy should be set up alongside the development of a Career Foreign Service within the Ministry. That is absolutely key, otherwise no useful purpose would be served. Madam Minister over to you!

MRS NABEELA TUNIS [*Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation*]: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, permit me at the outset to thank Honourable Members for their suggestions which has not only reinforced the importance of establishing a Foreign Service Academy, but has also given us a deeper insight into what parameters we need to look at for the sustainability of this outfit.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, speaker after speaker have emphasised on the importance of us creating a structure that provides a career path for our diplomats. As Mr Speaker himself pointed out, we are in the process of establishing the elements for a Foreign Service Bill that would seek to insulate the Foreign Ministry. We have realised that over the years, several civil servants have actually passed through the Ministry and it is important for us to safe guard the expertise that we have within the Ministry. Though we are setting up a Foreign Service Academy, it is equally important for us to come to this House and present a Foreign Service Bill which would seek to divorce the Ministry or separate the Ministry from the general Civil Service System.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it would give us the latitude as a country to train our career diplomats to ensure that most of what you have stated today regarding the summary dismissal and removal of our ambassadors would be prevented. It would also ensure that we build our Foreign Service System to one that is enviable in the International arena. So, I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their various suggestions which is also giving us an indication that as a Ministry, we need to continue to engage with you a lot more further and we need to continue to engage with the Parliamentary Oversight Committee which I must state here that the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs has been very supportive, and has provided

a lot of guidance to the Foreign Ministry. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Committee Members, as well as his predecessor for all the valuable information and the valuable suggestions that he has presented to the Ministry which has contributed to where we are today.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also took note of the suggestions that have been made regarding sustainability; I would like to assure the House that it is definitely going to be considered as we move towards establishing the Institution. The institution would seek to be independent, which would produce the career diplomats that we deserve as a country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would also like to confirm to the House and inform the you that all of the head of chanceries are career diplomats. So I would like to thank all of you for your submissions. We attach a lot of importance to those Ambassadors serving in our P5 Stations and our multilateral stations and all of these issues will be incorporated into the element that we will be bringing before this House so that you could debate and help us in strengthening the Foreign Service. With that we would be able to avoid most of the problems and the challenges we are encountering.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the construction of the Sierra Leone Foreign Service Academy which has been laid on the Table of the House on 20th February, 2020.

[Question proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Motion moved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has been ratified]

THE SPEAKER: Madam Minister, thank you very much for introducing this important Agreement and for the assurances given to us. We wish you the best of luck with this project, it is very key and important to the future development of our Country.

IV. MOTION

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT THE MEMBERS OF THIS HONOURABLE PARLIAMENT WISH TO EXPRESS THEIR FELICITATIONS TO THE NEW SPEAKER OF THE FIFTH ECOWAS PARLIAMENT

THE SPEAKER: Who is the Mover? And who is the Seconder.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, We are happy to be here giving felicitations to the Speaker of the Fifth ECOWAS Parliament. Us in the Sierra Leone Parliament, under the Leadership of Mr Speaker who was able to put a team together to start a long journey for this process to come to a very fruitful end, for the first time in the history of ECOWAS Parliament, since 1975 to attain the Speakership position. Am I right Mr Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: 1975 is a long way to go. I think it actually derives its birth from the revised Treaty of 1993 and it was finally established in 2002.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Alright, because we heard it from the ECOWAS Parliament where they were talking about 1975.

THE SPEAKER: No, 1975 is the Seminal Treaty; the original Treaty which I spearheaded in getting revised in 1993. So do not confuse the two.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker that was why I asked you the question. I want to say thank you to Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah and the ECOWAS team. When we went to Liberia, we were able to meet Honourable Edwin Snow. We had a reception and Mr Speaker made a very resounding speech. With his ideas from ECOWAS brings a lot of players on board. But we were also happy because His Excellency the President was able to send out the message in support of our candidate, the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis who is now the present Speaker of the Fifth ECOWAS Parliament to bid for the ECOWAS Speakership. For us, we believe Sierra Leone, irrespective of the different sides of the isle, our similarities are far greater than our differences. So, good Policies, good governance, oneness and Sierra Leone comes

first in our business. So, we had support from all sides of the isle; be it APC, NGC, C4C, Independent, Paramount Chiefs and of course the SLPP. We were all together in this business. So I thank you very much Mr Speaker for your Leadership; may the Lord continue to bless you. And I want to say thank you to the Clerk of Sierra Leone Parliament, Honourable Paran Umar Tarawally. He was able to put the logistics together to ensure that Members of Sierra Leone Parliament and other members who were in other institutions come on board to support us to achieve this particular position. So I want to say again thank you to the delegation that the Clerk put together. They did a very good job to ensure that we succeeded in this business and have our man to be the Speakership of ECOWAS Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to single out the ECOWAS team, mama of the House, Honourable Shiaka Sama, Honourable Ajibola Manley-Spain and of course the Leader of the Opposition Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. They were very supportive because the President called them and said "look, let us support one of our own, so I am giving you this candidate, please support him." And they were together; they put all their energies, all what they could to ensure that we succeeded. And we succeeded because they were able to talk to their colleagues. We can do it together and we can move on together because we are together in this business. Forget about the aspersions and innuendos, we had a lot of bashing from the public, from our colleagues and from the Opposition. You must expect it but the wish of the President was carried in honesty and with respect. So I say again, thank you to Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah for yielding to the pressure and respecting the fountain of honour. I believe President did not look at partisan issues but he looked at the interest of Sierra Leone. I am happy you gave us your support. I thank you very much for that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Sidie M. Tuinis started his political journey way back in 1996 from the first Multi-Party Democracy. Because we had a lot of Political Parties at that time, he served as the Secretary General for the National Unity Party [NUP] as a very young man at that time. He served very well in that capacity and was able to have that Government of National Unity that late President Kabbah putted

together. He was very instrumental in doing it and from that transition, he came to Parliament in 2002 and he served as Member of Parliament for Pujehun District under the Proportional Representation. He left Parliament, from 2007-2012; he served as one of the Board of Directors for GUMA VALLEY Water Company and Sierra Leone Roads Authority under the former President Ernest Bai Koroma. So he is a man who can cut across; he is a man who can knife between things, he can sail very easily and he is a Sierra Leonean with a difference. In 2018 general elections, he came to Parliament and today he is the Leader of Government Business and he was taken to ECOWAS Parliament and now he is the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Honourable Sidie M. Tunis has a very good political profile. I think serving in the Opposition, then being called upon by your opponent to serve, is a laudable success, so I think you have done well. It is because of the way you do things and the way you carry out yourself. Even when he went to the ECOWAS Parliament, he got the support from his colleagues. Today, we are here not by any means of mistake to have him as Speaker of the Fifth Parliament of ECOWAS Parliament, but because he has the potential, he has the pedigree to carry the job and we believe he will put Sierra Leone on the Map and Sierra Leone will always come first with the support from his colleagues from the other side, from the All Peoples Congress [APC], National GRAND Coalition [NGC], Coalition For Change [C4C] and the Independent Members. We believe, with your support and advice and experience from the Diplomatic World, you can continue to advice because you being a senior Speaker and had served in ECOWAS, you would advise the newly elected Speaker of the Fifth ECOWAS Parliament to put his job first and put Sierra Leone on the Map. We take you as our adviser for this particular job we have got. We believe Honourable Tunis with his experience in the political scene in Sierra Leone, and with his business skills, he can be able to moderate and facilitate the Business of ECOWAS Parliament. We have challenges talking about the West Africa Monetary Agency [WAMA] currency. We have challenges talking about the political temperature coming up, he has that challenge to carry and he has the challenge with the platform given to ECOWAS in terms of security,

but we believe with all those challenges, he will take on board and ensure that he succeeds. But your success lies really in the hands of Mr Speaker, because Mr Speaker has started this entire journey. So, that is why I said Mr Speaker will give you the support and act as the adviser. When you are in difficulties, please do not hesitate to call on Mr Speaker, do not hesitate to call on authorities that can advise you so that we do not miss the point, we only have to hit at the goal and succeed. Do not forget, we have got predecessors, they have done their own job and they have done their bit and Nigeria is just next door to you. So, we believe with the support given to you and with your political profile, you can put Sierra Leone on the Map and Sierra Leone Parliament would come first.

On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you very much for your support and I believe in this Parliament of ours; we can continue to give our support to our man as the Speaker of the Fifth ECOWAS Parliament, so that we Members of Parliament can be proud of his leadership in that particular Parliament. Thank you very much for your attention.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Kandeh Yumkella, you have the Floor, followed by the Honourable Marah.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA [Leader of the Coalition For Change]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on behalf of the NGC and within the context of our mantra of “put Salone first,” we want to commend the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis for his elevation as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, the first Sierra Leonean to hold such position. We congratulate you; we believe you are following the steps of many others or a few others who have also been trailblazers in other institutions. Sometimes they say when we were campaigning for our positions, we said small is beautiful, meaning, a small country can still lead and be innovative. So within that context, we congratulate you, we wish you well in the new position you are holding, Mr Speaker, if we can be of any support or any help to the Honourable Tunis, we will be willing to do that. As the scripture says; “to whom more is given more is

expected.” Sierra Leone looks up to you to give inspiration to other young people that have the right skills to lead institutions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I take this opportunity to also commend the APC and the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah in particular [*Appluase*] for their support to this course. It is important that many of us have preached about inclusive governance and we have preached about coherence and political tolerance for the country. Why do I say this? Context matters, history matters and it should be recorded that the Honourable Chernor R.M Bah served in the ECOWAS Parliament for 10 Years, he has been Deputy Speaker here but he was willing to put his weight behind Honourable Sidie Tunis [*Applause*], and the APC supported that. I think it is important for history for people to know that sometimes when it comes to the nation’s interest; yes, some people can put their own ambitions aside. So, I want to commend the APC and Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah and I believe it should be recorded for the sake of history. We would all support this move; it is about Sierra Leone, your success will reflect on us, so history matters here. The Honourable Abass Bundu had to rescue the image of Sierra Leone at one point in history. We were given an opportunity to lead the ECOWAS, we did not perform well and then Honourable Abass Bundu had to be called to rescue the image of Sierra Leone. Some of you do not know history; we state that for you to know [*Applause*]. This is what we call inclusive governance and this is the Sierra Leone we want to see that for the sake of the Nation, we come together as one.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, finally, even though, NGC was discriminated, we were not taking to both Liberia and Niamey to support you, we had no problem with that. We have initiatives, our paths would cross again because I am involved with the ECOWAS on harmonizing Energy Policy within the ECOWAS and we are designing a number of initiatives now with International Organizations. So, we will put that in front of you. So we will support your Leadership because it is for Sierra Leone. When you succeed, Sierra Leone succeeds. May God help you and guide you in your position. I thank you very much.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to use this opportunity to say thanks to one man, a man that made me whom I am today after God, a man that actually created this platform for me and if I am contributing very well today in and out of Parliament, I must appreciate the Honourable Chernor R. M. Bah [*Applause*].

Mr Speaker, when we came in after the elections, the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah was the running mate and the result was announced otherwise. After putting a lot of resources, the only thing now left for us was for our Leader of the Opposition to be the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament that was the only hope we had. Mr Speaker, I am a senior Member of Parliament and I know what happened when the Honourable Bernadette Lahai was in the Pan African Parliament. She was in the Opposition, but she was given the support by the Former President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma [*Applause*] and she became the fourth Vice President. Mr Speaker, she was given that support and she became the Fourth Vice President of the Pan-African Parliament and then His Excellency Dr Maada Bio called on the delegation of the ECOWAS Parliament here and throws His support behind the Leader of Government Business. At that point, the Leader of Opposition Chernor R.M Bah said; "the President has said so and because this is what the President had said that definitely, we are going to support Honourable Sidie M. Tunis." So we supported the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis. He gave his best and today, he is the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. Congratulations Honourable Sidie M. Tunis on your new position.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis is a good man. He has been given me his support. When I call on him at any time, the Honourable Tunis will respond to my calls. Among those front seats, he is the only person that interacts with the Opposition more than any other person [*Applause*].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we came in as Members of Parliament, we had a lot of disturbances here and there, at that very moment, we were referred to as Opposition instead of the Majority and for Parliament to actually take its rightful direction as of today, we went through a lot, as recent was the selection of committees.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis did put the entire process to his chest and he did the selection on more of our side than the others. He selected the Members on our side to various committees without even the knowledge of our Leader. At that time, I was removed as the Deputy Chairman of Public Accounts Committee [PAC], removed from the Finance Committee, Appointments Committee and thrown to other committees which I have no knowledge of. I want to say, the Honourable Leader of Government Business, you are going to represent Sierra Leone, you are going to serve in a position which bulldozing will not be tolerated *[Laughter]*. I do believe, you are going to be in charge and you do not have to bulldoze. At the ECOWAS Parliament, you do not have to say this is what we want, S.O 2 "Paopa e fo apin." You have to follow strict procedures; you have to follow the law and the rules of engagement that are guiding that position. You would not do otherwise, even when the Standing Orders says so. You are representing Sierra Leone, so I have no singular of doubt, definitely that you would succeed. We know what happened and what went through all those periods for this position. Some of us know behind the scene of operation what happened to you. You have been charged and when you wanted to do it the other way, they said you have worked with the APC and that is why we gave you positions during the former government. We know, but we want you to be yourself.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis that we know, we believe would be highly tolerance and would be highly accommodative. Also, I want to admonish the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis not to forget our Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. Let him be by your side, we do believe he is the man that would always tap you on your back and say, Leader, this is how we should go because you are in it together. You are representing all of us and you are not representing that front bench for the SLPP, your family alone, but you are representing Sierra Leone. So please act like a Sierra Leonean.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Lahai Marah for his contribution. I actually thought he was going to haggle hoping one day to become Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. The only thing I would say to that... Order! If the Honourable Lahai Marah has any ambition in that direction, you will have to wait for the next 60 years *[Laughter]*. 60 years when the 17th ECOWAS Parliament would have come into existence. If they maintain the formula of rotation amongst the countries, then, you are eligible. If they follow that, it would take another 60 years before Sierra Leone can become eligible again to occupy that Office. The Leader of C4C, you have the Floor.

HON. SAA. EMERSON LAMINA [Leader of Coalition for Change]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, standing on the mantra of the C4C which is "Nation First," I wish to convey the felicitation of the C4C to the newly elected Speaker of the Fifth ECOWAS Parliament, the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I refer to Honourable Sidie M. Tunis as a socialite and a mixer. The moment we flew out of Sierra Leone, all of us in that delegation started raising the Green, White and Blue flag. Having the privilege to speak to Niamey Television, we sold this candidate and he was graciously bought by Anglophone, francophone and protégées speaking countries. And we presented him as a man than is calm in crisis. Having known the erratic nature of Francophone, we did sold him, we did in any case made him as a fine sales man for our country that he is calm in crisis not only that he is also diligent in business and also resolute in proceedings.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, going to the history lane of ECOWAS since 1975 when the first Treaty was signed, coming to the revised Treaty of 1993 to 2002, shows that Sierra Leoneans have been doing well. With a thorough reference to you Mr Speaker, serving as an Executive Secretary in that family of ECOWAS, your history is still indelible on that sand. Many of us today, if we can learn about the wording called ECOMOG, it is your hand work and we used that also as a barometer to show that the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis will do well in rebranding the ECOWAS Parliament *[Applause]*. We realised that some of the good values we share here in the Sierra Leone Parliament will be replicated. One of such is the Public Account Committee. If I am not

mistaking, I am too sure that the ECOWAS Parliament is deficit of the PAC and I hold a very strong belief that the Public Account Committee will be injected into the ECOWAS Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my wish for Honourable Sidie M. Tunis is to strengthen the Regional Integration more and to also encourage Direct Foreign Investment at the same time, work towards synergising our laws. When we have laws that have synergy in character, it will help us to even use the proposed eco-currency smooth for better International Trade. Mr Speaker, we are sure that having sandwiched with two legal luminaries from Sierra Leone Parliament, the barrage of knowledge the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah has in Law and Proceedings, the Honourable Manly-Spain also possesses. How would I believe that they will sandwich the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis Speakership without smooth Proceedings in the ECOWAS Parliament?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Speaker of the Fifth ECOWAS Parliament will be having the responsibility to oversee about 350Mln citizens within ECOWAS, deciding their fates and destinies. Our own Parliament population is so small which is about 7Mln. With 350Mln citizens deciding their fates, he needs our best wishes and our prayers for him to do well and to raise the banner high we call Green, White and Blue. So on behalf of the C4C, whose mantra is "Nation First," I say congratulations once more and congratulations to all of us. Thank you [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: Followed by Honourable Dickson Rogers, Honourable Bashiru Silikie, Honourable DR. Kalakoh and the Honourable Rev. Abdul Kargbo. Honourable Tawa, you follow Honourable Abdul Kargbo. After all, you are two sides of the same coin.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me the opportunity to say a word or two about the man we just inaugurated in Niamey.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, speaker after speaker including yourself, appraised the magnanimity of our Opposition Leader, the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah for supporting a colleague who was nominated and supported by President Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio to be the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. Aspects of this

issue that have not been brought out clearly Mr Speaker, is to talk about the element of continuum. What you started at ECOWAS is now going to be instituted by somebody again from Sierra Leone. What a coincidence of an eco-currency that is now about to be implemented, you know very well more than I do that the WAMA is an idea that you are well aware of, you were part of the process that started the whole exercise. So, it is again an implication that, if it is to be implemented by somebody who is acting as Speaker from Sierra Leone, then we can give it a Sierra Leonean flavour all around that we started it and we are going to continue with that process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Election of the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament shows exactly what is inclusive politics, what a more integrative approach to our Governance process can achieve, because had it not been for the collaboration received from this side, it would have been much more difficult for our colleague on the other side to attain the level that he has now attained. But we on this side always believe that the Country is larger than us as a Party or as individuals. So, whatever is good for this Country is what we will do and what we will support at every point in time. I congratulate my colleague Honourable Sidie M. Tunis who is also Leader of Government Business to take the Mantle. But one fact was emphasised in Niamey, his predecessor, I think the Deputy Speaker emphasised that because of this transformational period of ECOWAS, there is a need for the Speaker to be more hands on in Abuja and we all recognised that because he emphasised that fact which means that so much will be required of the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. So I do not know what arrangement will be here, but I hope we will cross that bridge when we get there. I want to say, we as a Party will always give our support when necessary and hope that the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis will go and represent Sierra Leone very well, represent us as expected and ensure that you are representing Sierra Leone and we want to see the best to be delivered there. Of course, with the knowledge of the Honourable Chernor R. M. Bah having served at ECOWAS for over 10 years will do him very good and you have people like the Honourable Manly-Spain, the Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay, all of them providing that cushion to make you

succeed. Above all of that, he must be prepared to listen to colleagues for what is good and what is not good, because when you fail to listen to them, then you are betraying what all of us agreed on. They must be the people that you must lean on in terms of support, because they originally made you before marketing you to the outside community. So, we expect that that synergy continues to operate. We expect that you continue to refer to them from time to time when decisions are being taken even though you are the man sitting at the helm.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, I want to congratulate my colleague again and hope we realise the best out of this exercise from the perspective of a Sierra Leonean Parliament. I thank you very much.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I came this morning from Pujehun and the people gave me a lot of messages to deliver to this House on behalf of Pujehun District.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me start by thanking His Excellency the President and I also say a very big thank you to the House for all the support that you gave to the newly elected Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament. Like my colleague from the other side said, I want to say that Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, the newly elected Speaker of ECOWAS is so lucky, blessed for having somebody as a Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament who laid the foundation or some of the foundations of where you are today. When I listened to various Speakers showering praises on Honourable Chornor R.M. Bah, I said to myself, if we can just stop calling him Leader of Opposition and start calling him Leader of APC in Parliament, because as far as I am concerned, he has all the attributes of not being an Opposition Member.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there are certain things Honourable Chornor R.M. Bah does that some of us cannot do in that position. I could remember when we had an accident in Rwanda, the role he played as Leader including the Speaker motivated us to get well soon.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I had no doubt that when the President called Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah to support His vision and to support his candidate for the ECOWAS Parliament, I knew he was not going to refuse. He is a true Leader and when a Leader respect other leaders of higher positions, I believe that person would one day become a Leader, because he has all the attributes.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis is lucky to have in the person of Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah to work with in the ECOWAS Parliament. He is a brother and he has a very clean heart for colleagues. For Honourable Manly-Spain, it is no gainsaying that he has been a big brother to us since we met him in this Parliament. He is a man I have never seen annoyed, he always smiles even when he is under pressure.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we in Pujehun District want to say a very big thank you to the ECOWAS Delegation for given support to our brother, he is a true brother from Pujehun District and has contributed a lot to the development and in bringing up young people of that District.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we from Pujehun District want to use this opportunity to say a very big thank you to the Speaker of this Parliament for the fatherly support he has been given Honourable Sidie M. Tunis and by extension the people of Pujehun District. The people of that District have no doubt that Honourable Sidie M. Tunis will perform and as long as he has somebody like Honourable Chernor R.M Bah, yourself Mr Speaker, who has a lot of experiences of operating the ECOWAS system, I believe he will succeed. Honourable Sidie M. Tunis is a man that can listen to advice and is a team player.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me also use this opportunity to debunk what Honourable Lahai Marah said, because sometimes those things go a long way. We do not know who is recording it to send on international forums, but the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis did not single handedly prepare the selection to committees. He did it in consultation with us, the Leadership of the SLPP. So, I want to set that record straight.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having said that, I believe my colleague Members of Parliament from Pujehun District would want to say something. I am not seeing our Paramount chief around, but all the Paramount Chiefs of Pujehun District are so happy and grateful to this House and grateful to his Excellency the President for giving us a person from Pujehun District the opportunity to serve as ECOWAS Parliament Speaker. Like the Speaker said, I am not sure after 60 years how some of us in this House will look like. So, I can say for us in this House, 60 years from now is a very long time to produce any one of us as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament again. So, Mr Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, you are lucky for representing us as a nation. All of us in Parliament that have such ambition; I am not sure if we will live after 60 years to assume such office again in our lifetime.

Mr Speaker, Honourable members, Pujehun District is grateful to all of you and I believe when we are ready to receive our Speaker of ECOWAS in Pujehun District, I personally will make sure that all of you in this House are invited to that ceremony and I hope and pray that I will be in charge of the agenda and I will make sure that the Leader of APC in Parliament chair that occasion. I thank you very much.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much Mr speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand to give a tribute to Honourable Sidie M. Tunis. My colleague, the Honourable Paran Umar Tarawally is not with me, I met with Honourable Tunis in 2012 together with the Honourable Paran Umar Tarawally and ever since in 2012, we have stood by him in difficult moments. In 2012, when we met Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, we had a vision and believed in him. Mr Speaker, we noticed there was a light at the end of the tunnel. We supported him for the Minority Leadership of this Parliament; it was a difficult fight to the extent we had to go against major players in our Political Party. It was a difficult fight, so we had to go against senior colleagues of this Parliament. We thought at the end of the day, we could have got the position of the Chief Whip of the Minority. At the end of the day, there was another fight again which myself and the Honourable Paran Tarawally challenged some colleague Members, but it was again a difficult battle and we did not succeed. We went into elections with the

Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, unfortunately, I came back but my colleague did not come as Member of Parliament, but as Clerk of Parliament. We started again the fight for the Speakership of this Parliament, but God knows better, we lost that one again. But today, he is the Speaker of an International Parliament. For the Speakership of this Parliament, he was the favourite. But at the eleventh hour, we lost that fight. We settled for the position of the Majority Leader, my name was up for Chief Whip position, I have to step-down and I was pleased to do so, I did it with no malice because I believed in the man who wanted it also. Mr Speaker, some of us believed in Honourable Sidie M. Tunis long before now. We do not only come to believe in him when we came to this Parliament, but before our arrival as Members of Parliament. My name came up for the Membership of ECOWAS Parliament, on the eleventh hour when my name was to be announced in this Parliament, he came to me and said leave this position for me. I graciously did that and never challenged him, because I believe he was eyeing the Speakership position of the ECOWAS Parliament as we were confident that he was going to win that position and I was also confident that he was going to deliver.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, you have actualised your dream, you are now representing not only the SLPP, you are representing not only this Parliament, you are representing not only His Excellency the President, but you are representing Sierra Leone in its entirety. Please do not disappoint some of us we stood by you and we believed in your vision. So, please, do not disappoint us. You are going to head the ECOWAS Parliament during a very difficult situation, at a very challenging moment. Of course, it is no secret that the former Speaker who you are succeeding had very difficult times with Heads of States and Governance. You are now going to take a situation where you are going to make ECOWAS Parliament enviable again and to take its place in the International politics. You are taking over the ECOWAS Parliament at a time when the entire ECOWAS is moving towards having a single currency. You are taking over the ECOWAS Parliament at a time when we have political instability in the sub region. You are taking over the ECOWAS Speakership at a situation when the whole sub region is challenged with the

Coronavirus Disease. It is a huge challenge and it is very huge. We are praying for you not to disappoint us, His Excellency the President, this Parliament and the Speaker. If you disappoint this Parliament, you will not be disappointing yourself, but you will be disappointing Sierra Leone and we do not want to see a situation where we have complaints that our Speaker is not performing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, for some of us who believe in him will continue to believe in him to perform. But if you fail to perform, we will say it here, if he does not perform, he has embarrassed the country, if he does not perform he would be embarrassing this Parliament. Please perform, please concentrate and take the work seriously. Of course, everybody is happy with you, but it is a period of reflection, it is a period of sitting down and asking yourself what to achieve where to take the Parliament and how Sierra Leone is going to benefit from the ECOWAS Parliament! Sierra Leoneans are looking at you, job opportunities for Sierra Leoneans at the ECOWAS Parliament is expected, opportunities for this country is expected from the ECOWAS Parliament. What will you be bringing to this country? And what are the benefits we are going to get as a country? Mr Speaker, these are the things he should be meditating on.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for some of us in the Pan African Parliament, the current President of the Parliament is a Cameroonian and we are seeing the goodies the Cameroonians are enjoying; we are seeing the opportunities the Cameroonians are getting in the Pan African Parliament. Even when we have Committee Meetings, we see journalists; media officials support Staff coming from Cameroon. These are the same things we expect from you. We want our country to benefit, it is not just about you, it is not just about saying I am the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, it is about what you can bring to the Table for Sierra Leone. It is about the benefit we can get at the end of the day, so that we can be proud. Mr Speaker, we are expecting a lot from the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. So I was just drawing some scenarios from other Parliaments *[Undertone]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah, of course, it is no secret that he was going to assume that position, because of the duration he has spent as Member of the ECOWAS Parliament. But he is a God fearing man, maybe there are better things ahead for him. He cannot fight for himself, but only God that can give you power. Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah has displayed a statesmanship. Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah, please give him your support; he is not there as Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, but he is there for Sierra Leone. Please support him; please be with him because it is going to be a very difficult challenging moment for him. Sierra Leone is one of the smallest countries amongst other countries in Africa. So, please stand by him. The Honourable Manly-Spain, the Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay and the Independent candidate, you should be a team and you should run the ECOWAS Parliament as a Sierra Leonean business. You should hang heads, you should make sure that the best is reserved for us as a country. The fact that you are representing the entire region, do not forget you are coming from this Parliament, you had an endorsement by His Excellency the president, you had an endorsement from this Parliament and you had an endorsement by the Speaker of this Parliament. And please, do not forget the Speaker! He has a wealth of experience in the formation of the ECOWAS Parliament, he has huge experience! Please tap on his experience.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before concluding, I want to advice Honourable Sidie M. Tunis to please concentrate. I know it is very natural that you want to occupy the position of the Leader of Government Business of this Parliament, but because of the volume of job, the challenges, because of Sierra Leone, because of the current situation you are facing, please graciously *[Interrupted]*.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS: Do you want my Deputy to take over?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: I am saying, graciously Sir *[Interrupted]*.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS: Do you want my Deputy to take over?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I can always and forever stand with Honourable Sidie M. Tunis. I am saying, for the good of ECOWAS

Parliament, for the good of Sierra Leone and for the good of his people, he should graciously recommend somebody that would step in his shoes. Because the huge job that would have to be done by both Parliaments, it cannot be done by him occupying both seats. Thank you very much Honourable Members and Honourable Sidie M. Tunis and I want to congratulate you once more. Mr Speaker, I saw the vision in him, I saw the prospect in him and I believed in him, before now. And I will continue to believe him. I thank you very much and God bless you.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to lend my voice on the felicitation of the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis. For us in the APC, from time immemorial, we have been doing well for this country and we will continue to do well for this country. Mr Speaker, if I am to catalogue some of the good things the APC has done for this country, we will be here for the rest of the day. But I would only be tempted to refer to recent one done by Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. I will start my presentation from the regime of the late former President Siaka Stevens of blessed memory.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this morning, we saw and we heard the Minister of Foreign Affairs talking about the relationship between the people of the Republic of China and Sierra Leone. That relationship was built by the APC and during the time of late Siaka P. Stevens. Mr Speaker, let me come to another late former President of the APC Joseph Saidu Momoh of blessed memory. When Dr Yumkellah was making his submission few minutes ago, he talked something about withdrawing somebody from the ECOWAS and sending Dr. Abass Bundu who made the Sierra Leone Flag flew high and even higher and that one was done by the APC during the Presidency of late Dr. Joseph Saidu Momoh. Mr Speaker, to tell this nation that the APC will continue to do good things as we have started, Joseph Saidu Momoh of Blessed memory was the pioneer of the 1991 Constitution that we are using today in this country. He brought Multi-Party Democracy in this country that is the legacy of the APC and we will continue to do good things.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, coming to the recent past, during the tenure of former President Dr. Earnest Bai Korma, we all know that during the African Union [AU] Committee of ten, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma was the Chairman of that Committee, coordinating the messages for Africa to be Member of the Security Council and to have a seat in the Security Council.

Mr Speaker, the recent deal done by the APC is a clear manifestation done by our Leader, Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. If he would not have given his total support to our brother, Honourable Sidie M. Tunis, we would not have been here at this moment giving felicitations to Honourable Sidie M. Tunis. Believe in me Mr Speaker, knowing Honourable Sidie M. Tunis being a socialite and somebody that is a good mixer, I believe he is going to be an exemplary performer whilst occupying the seat as a Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, because he has the full support of the man who has rich knowledge and a man who has served in the capacity of Deputy Speaker in the Sierra Leone Parliament. If both of them galvanise their support, believe in me, Honourable Sidie M. Tunis will make a difference and would place the Green, White and Blue higher than ever. That is all we needed as a country to do, so that the name of Sierra Leone and the Green, White and Blue will continue to go high as we move along. This is to ensure that [be you a Christian or a Muslim], we pray for his success, because when once he succeeds, the country is going to have the praise and not Honourable Sidie M.Tunis. So we wish him good luck and may God grant him the wisdom and understanding to drive that seat correctly, gently, professionally and with moral values.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the APC will continue its spirit of doing good things for this country; it will continue its spirit of leaving legacies that Sierra Leone will point at, even generations yet unborn will see the tangible evidences of the work of the APC. I thank you.

HON. ABDUL KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me hastily express my profound congratulatory messages to the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Honourable Sidie M. Tunis. I want to wish him well in his new Office and I want to pray that God directs him, so that he can lift the name of not only himself, but the name of

Sierra Leone as a whole. When I heard the news that Sierra Leone has got the Speakership of the ECOWAS Parliament, I felt elated, I felt ecstatic and I felt euphoric because that is an ambitious position every national would want to go out for.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is said that: "it is considered a criminal offence for somebody to discover water in the desert and be quiet about it." Indeed, I similarly want to thank all those who supported Honourable Sidie M. Tunis to achieve his aspiration, especially Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah who led the delegation for the very ceremony and returned successful. May God bless all of you and that is how it should always look like. When we move out of Sierra Leone, they should see the unanimity in us as a nation. When we are here, we know the issues that emerged. But Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the battle which seems to have ended in Niamey has resulted to several responsibilities. Meaning, as the Speaker of the sub regional Parliament, there are a lot that is expected of you and of the nation as a whole. I know the ECOWAS Parliament is faced with several challenges, amongst which are; firstly, the consolidation of Democracy in the sub region. So meaning, a Sierra Leonean would be superintending over the consolidation of Democracy in the sub region. Charity begins at home; we cannot consolidate Democracy in the sub region when we do not practice a very good Democracy here in Sierra Leone. So, we need to put our house in order as a nation! I could remember, it is very fresh in our minds that Members of the ECOWAS Parliament had to come to our Parliament to settle the skirmishes in our Parliament. And now, we have the person that is superintending over the ECOWAS Parliament as a whole who also doubles as the Leader of Government Business. Do we expect to see them here again to come and settle our skirmishes? For the sake of the reputation of our nation and for the sake of the fact that we have the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, our Parliament should be a very good example of Democracy. We should ensure that the practices we do here as a Parliament are in congruous with the expectation of the Constitution and that of our Standing Orders.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, another issue that is eating up the sub region that the ECOWAS Parliament also pays attention to is the Regional Economy. If we have

somebody who is superintending over the affairs of the economy in the sub region in the ECOWAS Parliament, I am of the firmest conviction that our Parliament should not be seen making Laws that would make or create very difficult economic challenges for our people. I could remember very recently, a good number of Sierra Leoneans were not pleased over the fact that the National Telecommunication Communication [NATCOM] issued a Press Release about the flat rate of Telecommunication calls in our nation. All free calls have been aborted, Saturday Kola has been aborted and Sunday Kola has been aborted. Honourable Tawa, I know you know it is on Sundays because you normally wait for that day *[Laughter]*. So these are the issues we have to be looking at as a Parliament and as a nation, not to make life difficult for our citizens, but to make laws that would cushion the economic effects on them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, another challenging issue that the ECOWAS Parliament is faced with, is the conduct of peaceful elections and ensuring peace in the sub region. Now we have the person in our Parliament whose responsibility is to ensure that there is peace in Liberia, Ghana and in some other nations in the sub region. How dear there is no peace in Sierra Leone? Peace is not only the absence of war. I could remember when the Limkowing Students took to the streets in expressing what is affecting them, the police came out and they were very heavy on them they arrested them, humiliated, infuriated them and molested them. To me, if we are talking about peace in the sub region, Sierra Leone should be an example and all of these will form part of the peace index assessment. Let us also make sure that Sierra Leone comport itself as a nation with grace, dignity and respect. Respect not out of the sense of sycophancy or blindness, but out of the sense of commitment to the fact that we have the person that is superintending over the Parliament of the sub region.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the last challenge that the ECOWAS Parliament has and I want to make known to this House is monitoring the security threat in the sub region. In Nigeria, we all know about the famous Boko Haram which has created a lot of catastrophe in that nation. In Sierra Leone, we should also look at possible security threat in this nation because as a nation and as a Parliament, we want other nations to

be looking forward to us for solution because we have the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. It was Edward Gibbon who said in 1772 that; “when duty comes knocking at your door, welcome it, for if you bid it wait, it will go only to return with several other responsibilities.”

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament to note that no man is an Island and no man is a monopoly of idea. As a Member of Parliament from my Constituency, I have very astute young men, very educated who are helping me out with the job in my Constituency. They advise me, they bring solutions to problems and I work with them very closely. So, when I am succeeding, people are of the opinion that it is Honourable Abdul Kargbo, but I have a very strong team behind me. I want him to replicate the same in the ECOWAS Parliament that he should have a strong team behind him, a team that will be ready to support you at all times and a team that will not look at you, but look at the nation Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, once more, I want to seize this opportunity to congratulate the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament who is a Sierra Leonean and to let Ghana, Nigeria and other nations know that when a Sierra Leonean leads, he does it with alacrity, precision, confidence, professionalism, experience and with maximum capacity and that is the name we have to create with this opportunity. If the Sierra Leonean fails, even us the young Members of Parliament [MPs] that normally form caucuses with other nations, they will begin to doubt our capacity to lead those caucuses. As I pray for God’s blessings over your life and all over those who are in the Parliament, I want to stop here and assure the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament that he has the full support of the Opposition in making sure that he succeeds. It is not you, it is Sierra Leone, so may God bless us all.

THE SPEAKER: I think we now arrived at a convenient point to conclude the debate.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, I am still here.

THE SPEAKER: Oh yes! You were last on my list.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today is the first time Mr Speaker for a long time that the Parliament of Sierra Leone under the guidance of the right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chernor Abass Bundu that we have two Speakers in one House. We have the Speaker of the Sierra Leone Parliament and we have the Honourable Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, the most senior Member of Parliament in the Sub-region.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on 9th March, 2020, I was part of the group of Sierra Leoneans that witnessed history. It will take another 64 years for Sierra Leone to be opportuned to have someone to serve in the capacity of ECOWAS Speaker. For that singular opportunity, I want to say it is a moment to reflect and I want to state that it is a moment that I will write in my history that I was there when the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis was elected and installed as the Speaker of 5th ECOWAS Parliament under the delegation Leadership of the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. Mr Speaker, for the first time Sierra Leone demonstrated unity at the highest level. We were united, the ECOWAS Member of Parliament that was given the opportunity to chair the occasion leading to the installation of the Speaker made the announcement that any Member of the Sierra Leone delegation is so qualified to occupy the Chair. On that moment, the Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay with the blessings of the Leader of the delegation confirmed that the Sierra Leone delegation has unanimously agreed that they are going to present one candidate that was unity at the highest level.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today's moment is to give felicitation to the newly elected ECOWAS Speaker, a typifying example of Leadership, an embodiment of the right aesthetic characteristics of what Leader should be. He is a fine gentle man who fulfils what the former Chairman and Leader of the great SLPP Party, Chief Sumanor Kapen once referred that Leadership should be: "as Calm, Courage Leadership." The Leadership of the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis is a demonstration of that particular dictate "Calm, Courage Leadership." He is always calm in difficult moments and always has the courage to face people.

Mr Speaker, the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, as every Member of Parliament is either insinuating or calling quietly that you pay attention on the mammoth task of fighting Islamic insurgency in West Africa namely: in countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria etc. You have the mammoth task of ending the era of Sierra Leoneans living the shores of Sierra Leone with no hope and to find an abode in the desert of Libya and the Borders of Niger to bring them back and to ensure that Africans stop to look at Europe for greener pastures and to make Africa a better place, especially West Africa.

Mr Speaker, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, trade between an amongst Africa countries, particular West Africa countries is at the lowest ebb and it will be the greatest achievement if our Sierra Leonean brother, our Sierra Leonean colleague who has recently been elected as the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament can be able to achieve and increase the volume of transaction of trade between and among West Africa countries.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the right Honourable Sidie M. Tunis in his Policy Speech to the ECOWAS Members of Parliament and all and sundry that were present on that day, made a firm commitment to ensure that he gives more support and empowerment to women in West Africa that alone is a huge task.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if there is anybody that stands to lose if the newly elected Speaker moves away from the Chair of Leader of Government Business, I think I am number one, but considering the level of task, considering the fact that country is before person and the general supersedes the personal, I would want to ask him to focus on the task before him, because I want him to succeed and I want Sierra Leone to succeed [*Applause*]. He is a fine gentle man and a kind hearted man. What he would not want is distraction to success as the first Sierra Leonean that has assumed the position of Speakership of the Sub-region. He would not want to disappoint President Bio who has gone around West Africa and who has canvass even to the Opposition to believe that the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis is the best to occupy the Chair. What he would not want is to disappoint young Sierra Leoneans that see him as the new symbol

of unity for Sierra Leone. So, I would ask that he occupies the Chair of the ECOWAS Parliament Speakership and pays attention to the level of task before him. Like I have said, I would reiterate it, when he steps out of that Office, I would be the biggest loser, because he has given me the opportunity to serve and to be a Leader. He has given me the opportunity to have courage and to face challenges squarely. But even if he is not there, I would want to assure him that I will not disappoint him. I also want him to assure us that he will not disappoint us, not in the performance of his duties as ECOWAS Speaker, which I believe he would do with all confidence, but to avoid duplications of duties and responsibilities, to avoid his name being waged in the tongue of gossipers that he wants to occupy, he wants to eat twice. You cannot eat with both hands; you have to eat one at a time. Mr Speaker, as the ECOWAS Speaker pays attention on ECOWAS duties, I would want to tell you that the greatest thing that you would not want is to continue to occupy the Chair as Leader of Government Business and that of ECOWAS Parliament. And being faced with grand standards, is for him to occupy two chairs and you have a traitor under you. It is better you stand on firm grounds, it is better you stand and on solid grounds. When it was difficult, when it was trying times, when it was tempting, when the people of Israel were murmuring, when the people of Israel called for Leadership at the mount Sinai, Moses went to God to pray, the assurance that God gave him was to stand firm. Mr Speaker, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament would give that resonation, stand firm and he shall receive the salvation of the Lord. Nothing has gone past him, he has to occupy that Chair until 2024. but it would be worst if he occupies that Chair and people fighting behind his back. it would be worst that he occupies that Chair and still providing Leadership and a Leadership that we so disparately need but they are stabbing him behind his back. So it is better to face a man and tell him your opinion than to pretend as if everything is okay. I love him and I am not stabbing him behind his back. It will be bad for the ECOWAS Speaker for calumnies to be levied on him, because people will see you as greedy. I would want to ask, I would want to crave your good sense, I would want to crave your good conscience that what you have is bigger than what you would currently relinquish. What he has is honour I have seen people bestow on him in Niger, what he

has received in Ghana is way twice higher than what he will receive as Leader of Government Business here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would end by saying or by calling on the Government of Sierra Leone to accord the same respect, the same value that is being given to the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament by other countries, because it would be a shame for other countries to honour him, it would be a shame for other countries to provide him services and we cannot provide. It means we have not even appreciated what we have. Let us appreciate him, let him have what they have given him outside, good car, proper security, proper means as the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. So, when he sits in this Parliament, people will know that the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament is amongst us *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would not sit if I fail to acknowledge the devotion of the Director of the Committees Mr Kulagbanda and the Deputy Clerk of the Sierra Leone Parliament and other Members of Staff of the Sierra Leone Parliament who mobilized quickly in a short time to give the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament a very rousing welcome on his return to Sierra Leone. It would have been an embracement for us had we not received him in the way we did. He was convened to this Parliament and he made a statement and I want to say congratulations to him. I want to say congratulations to all of us for having witnessed this moment as it is a moment that none of us here will witness again. It will not come until after 64 years. Thank you very much Mr Speaker and congratulations on your achievement as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I think quite frankly, we have exhausted this particular item on the Order Paper. It is now my privilege to invite the Honourable Sidie M. Tunis in his capacity *[Applause]* as the new Speaker of the Fifth Parliament of ECOWAS to respond to the many sentiments and felicitations that he has heard in the Well this afternoon.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start by thanking His Excellency the President, the Honourable Speaker, Members of Parliament and Staff of Parliament for their confidence bestowed

in me to serve as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. I want to also extend a special thanks to the Sierra Leonean delegation to ECOWAS Parliament, especially the Leader of delegation, Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. A lot of you or most people may not know, but the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah has been like a guardian to me in ECOWAS Parliament. He has opened several doors for me in the ECOWAS Parliament and he has been by me and I have always consulted him and I intend to do so moving forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the first place, I want to just address the issue of duality of serving as Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament and that of Leader of Government Business. The Speakership I have assumed, by its statute and Act, called for a non-resident Speaker. In other words, I have to stay here to work in Abuja. In that regard, I am going to remain as Leader of Government Business.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank my Honourable colleagues for the kind and wonderful words I heard this afternoon from them, I honestly appreciate them. You know some times, you move around with your colleagues, but most times you do not even know how they feel about you. Today, this afternoon, I feel so elated to hear my colleagues speak. I want to assure this House, the Honourable Speaker, His Excellency the President and the people of this country that I will never ever betray them. I will never ever let them down. So I will ensure that I perform my duties diligently. I will ensure that I perform my duties based on values I have learned over the years in this Parliament. My Job as Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament requires me to look into Democracy, Peace, Security and Unity in the ECOWAS region as part of our integration process. This morning, I was formally presented to the Speaker of Parliament by our Leader of delegation Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. Later maybe today or tomorrow, the Speaker of this Parliament will present me to His Excellency the President as the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament. Thereafter, after the presentation to His Excellency the President, I will lay out my plans with the President. As Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament and Leader of Government Business and considering the fact that ECOWAS Parliament is a champion for Democracy, I will inform His Excellency the President about my plans in the coming

weeks and months considering that I will be working in Sierra Leone and not traveling around the region.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, immediately after my election as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, I ensured that a Committee that has never existed in the ECOWAS Parliament was created and Membership was appointed to that Committee that is the Public Accounts Committee [PAC]. As a Parliament, I believe that we have had several issues regarding transparency and accountability in the Sub-region, especially with the ECOWAS institutions. So we have decided as a Bureau, with my recommendation that a PAC be formed in the ECOWAS Parliament and that Committee has now been established. I have also created a Committee with Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah as a Member of that Committee and most probably we have to chair that Committee to look into the possibility of direct elections into the EOCWAS Parliament. I believe and the President of Niger who is also Chairman of the authority of heads of states, both of us believe that because Members are spending more time in their national Parliaments like myself, the regional Parliament is losing a lot. As such, I have putted the team together that will look at the possibility of direct elections stating 2024. I know it is a very long process, so I was discussing with the guru of ECOWAS, Honourable Speaker Abass Bundu this morning and we believe, it actually worth starting the process. My plan is to achieve it by the time I leave office in 2024. Even if we are not able to conclude it, I strongly believe that, it will be a process that will be very close to conclusion in order to get Members to be voted for.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament and as a Sierra Leonean, it is my responsibility to engage players in this country. In the coming months, I want to assure you that operating from Sierra Leone, I am going to engage all Political Parties' Leaders, Civil Society Organizations, the Leadership of this Country and also the former President Dr Ernest Bai Koroma to put heads together. The reason is that it is now my responsibility to promote Peace and Unity in the Sub-region. As my Honourable colleague on the other side was saying, after our elections in 2018, we had a delegation from the ECOWAS Parliament who came over here to talk to us, to

mediate between the government and the main Opposition Party [APC]. Mediation is a key component of ECOWAS Parliament; it is what we call Parliamentary Diplomacy. If I am leading that process from Headquarters, I have to ensure that my country benefits from it and I will lead the process in my country. In the next few weeks like I said, I will begin the process of meeting with Political Leaders to ensure that we have a very peaceful and united country. What I saw in Niger with all the political parties in attendance clearly shows that with unity we can archive anything. I have a lot that I can talk to you about today, but like I said, I want to ensure that a formal presentation is made first to His Excellency the President before I have my Press Conference to lay out my plans for the next few weeks in Sierra Leone and the region.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, two days ago, I was asked to send a delegation to Conakry, Guinea for the referendum that will be taking place. In fact, this morning, I was online with the Secretary General of the ECOWAS Parliament with regards to the possibility of sending the list of people that I will be nominating. A lot of people are asking me what Sierra Leone is going to benefit from all of these or from my Speakership. I can tell everybody and the Sierra Leoneans that Sierra Leone will be in the forefront of Democracy, Sierra Leone will be in the forefront of fighting Terrorism and Sierra Leone will be in the forefront of fighting for Regional Integration. And visibility is what Sierra Leone will be having.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, economically, Sierra Leone will also benefit because ECOWAS Parliament the way it is structured, we have two Sessions per year in Abuja. But we also have two other Sessions of several Missions and Oversight that will be determined by myself as Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament. I determine where we go and Sierra Leone will definitely be our destination for our next Extra Ordinary Session. What would that Session bring economically? It will be bringing 115 MPs, at least 20 support Staff and other 30 Staff that will be ad hoc Staff from Sierra Leone. So, Sierra Leone will benefit a lot just from that one Session and in addition to that, somebody was also saying as it is today in the ECOWAS Parliament, there is only one Sierra Leonean staff who is an old man. In fact, he was introduced to me by Honourable

Veronica Kadie Sesay, I did not even know him, an old man whose job is being done by some other people because he had been completely marginalised. I want to assure you Mr Speaker and Honourable Members that it will never be the same from today.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the next few months, we would have openings for research officers and few other opportunities that I believe Sierra Leoneans will be notified about for them to apply for those positions and we will ensure that Sierra Leoneans are employed in ECOWAS Parliament. By the time I leave, it would no longer be the same situation as it is right now, where we only have one Sierra Leonean working in an institution like that. So, I want to assure everyone as Sierra Leoneans that the Speakership is not about me as Honourable Sidie M. Tunis or the SLPP as a Party, it is for Sierra Leone. And I am very happy that the Honourable Members on the other side have given me all the support I must say, from my endorsement in Monrovia when the Honourable Speaker led the delegation and to Niamey where I was actually elected.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the day after my election, I was invited to the State House by the President of Niger and I had one on one discussions with him in the interest of the sub region. In the next few weeks, once I know the condition of the Coronavirus, I will start a tour in the sub region and some of the Honourable Members of Parliament will join me on that including Honourable Bashiru Silikie. The reason why I said Honourable Bashiru Silikie, he made a statement just now, not too long ago, Honourable Bashiru Silikie's name was on the list to go to ECOWAS and just few hours before the announcement was to be made, I prevailed on him for his name to be replaced by my name and I sent him to the Pan-African Parliament. My brother, I thank you again, for given up that seat for me. Today, I am the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, because you gave up your seat to me. I want to assure you that both here in Parliament and abroad, you are going to rip the benefit.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe I have spoken everything that I have to say, after my meeting, like I said with His Excellency the President, I would layout my

plans for the people of Sierra Leone for them to see for themselves what I will be doing as Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, finally, I want to again thank my colleagues in the Sierra Leone delegation to ECOWAS, especially Honourable Chernor R.M Bah who has been with me throughout the process, who has given me all the support and I can assure the people of Sierra Leone that, yes, I am the Leader and I am the Speaker, but Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah will be the man running the show. Let me tell you what has happened just less than 24 hours I took over, for the first time in the ECOWAS Parliament, for the first time ever, we merged two Committees. I insisted that we merge the Committee on Legal Affairs and Judicial Affairs along with the Committee on Human Rights for Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah to head. So, today, Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah is Chairman of the Legal, Judicial and Human Rights Committee in the ECOWAS Parliament. Every day we hear people saying we are going to the ECOWAS Court, Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah is now in charge of that. There are a lot of people who said we have Human Rights issues. Honourable Gevao, your boss is now Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah. We fought for it and I was also very determined that it will happen under my Leadership that for the first time, we merged those two Committees to have a Sierra Leonean to Chair. The Malians wanted it and they fought very hard for it, but I was very determined that that should not happen and that it should come to Sierra Leone for the Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah to be the Chairman of it.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with that, I want to thank all of you for the kind words and felicitations, and I want to assure you again that I will never betray the people of this country. On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member who doubles as the ECOWAS Speaker of Parliament. I now want to recognise the Chairperson of the Committee on Local Government.

HON. ABU BAKARR FOFANAH: Mr Speaker Honourable Members, I stand on *S.O 31[1]*. But before going further, I want to thank the youngest Speaker we have in this Well and the Parliamentary Leadership for the support they have given to this Committee on Local Government and Rural Development. During the Appropriation Debate, we decided to sanction the budget line of the Local Government and Rural Development. It was not done out of malice, it was done because the Ministry has misappropriated any fund, it was done because for us, we find out that this Ministry did not respect Parliament and during the inception of Parliament, the ECOWAS Speaker have told us that he wants to see this Parliament as one of the best Parliaments. He told us that this Parliament should not be Parliament as usual, he told us that he wants us to make ourselves very effective and efficient.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, when we summoned this Ministry for three times, they never respected our summon and we consulted the Leadership and the Leadership told us that we have the powers, Section 105 of the 1991 Constitution gave the powers to Parliament and we decided to use our powers. Therefore, today, I stand on S.O 31[1] to withdraw the Motion and to state that we have decided as a Committee after all negotiations with this Ministry to release their budget. And I also want to thank colleague Honourable Members that with their support we have finally today realise that MDAs should respect Parliament. I also want to personally thank the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Chernor R.M. Bah, because when the Ministry was here he went there and he lends his voice to emphasise that Parliamentary Leadership is in support of this Committee and the Ministry should respect this Committee. On that note, I would again want to thank the Speaker and Leadership for the support and thank the Committee for their support. I thank you very much Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member. There is a Motion on the Floor, any Seconder?

HON. SAHR CHARLES: I second the Motion.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, you have heard the Motion, it is related to the Budget of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. If you recalled, we passed a Motion instructing the Ministry of Finance after the adoption of the Budget to ensure that not a single cent was disbursed to that Ministry until further notice. It is that Motion that is now being withdrawn and it has been seconded.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[The Motion to suspend the budget of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has been withdrawn]

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was approached by students of LIMKOWING University about their situation. Mr Speaker, I want to appeal to this Parliament, the Education Committee, to see how they can get involve in resolving the impasse between LIMKOWING University and the government. I just wanted to state it that I said to them that I will bring it to the attention of Parliament. Our view in the NGC is that the students are cut in the middle of a questionable Agreement, but it is not their fault, if there is any way Parliament can help in smoothing that so that they can graduate and smoothly being integrated into other institutions over time whilst the Agreement is being negotiated that is my first point.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second point is that, I want to inform colleagues that for efficiency of C4C and NGC, we can have proper consultations with our limited number of Members of Parliament, I am willing to give up my front seat, so that I can move back and my colleagues can be around me and Honourable Emerson also has the opportunity to have his Deputy closer to him. So, I want to state it public, I have informed you twice in your Office that I am willing to do that. I am willing to give up the seat, so that I can be together with my colleagues, so that we can confine easily. If there are other arrangements to do, it is very obstructive to make consultations with our team it is proper.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the third point is that I would not have said it here, but because Honourable Marah raised it earlier, we do not want to set bad precedence that others could copy in the future. Some of us have been rotated and move from our

Committee and our Membership from International Parliament that we believe was not done properly. So, I want to state it for the record again, this is the third time I am raising it in Parliament, we have not made noise about it. But for the record, it is not proper and we said it in Bo. Some of us see that we are not keeping to the Bo Declaration and it was just for show. We just state it and as they say in the book of Macbeth "we but teach bloody instructions which upon being taught return to hunt the inventor." We just state it for the record, the way in which we were moved around was improper. I thank you for your attention.

THE SPEAKER: I take note of the desire of the Honourable Member; I will invite him to see me in my Chamber to see how best we can arrive at a satisfactory arrangement as far as the seating arrangement is concern. Honourable Abdul Karim Kamara [AKK] you are next.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for the last couple of months now, if you tune to radio and television, there is a new trend that has never happened in Sierra Leone in which electricity metres are sold by private people, brought into the country by private people and the advertisement is all over the place. The interesting thing is that you have people who have paid through the Electricity Distribution Authority [EDSA] and have done everything but are yet to receive their metres wherein there are meters all around. They will tell you go to Calaba Town and buy one and after buying the metre, you come to EDSA to do the other process. Mr speaker, I want to use this platform, you know most times when we have opportunities to bring up these issues, you are quick to call the Ministers responsible to explain to the people of Sierra Leone. Because you cannot have over 1000 people who have applied for metres and they have not been supplied at the cost of Eight Hundred Thousand Leones and now they are selling meters in the street for LE1.5Mln. Who is going to pay the difference?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me also say that I want to buttress the point raised by Honourable Dr Kandeh Yumkella. Being Member of Parliament who has attended most of the meetings of the Tertiary Education Committee, the LIMKOWING

University situation is one which has appeared before us for the third time and we spent our time in all of those occasions to bring the Minister and the Permanent Secretary to this Parliament and one thing they have never lacked is to give us confidence that these young vibrant Sierra Leoneans, over 1000 of them who have been trained, which you cannot find in our Universities in Sierra Leone are now being caught not just in the web but their future being on the blink. Mr Speaker, You enjoyed the opportunity as a young person to have a professional Education in Sierra Leone, the LIMKOWING University situation now is depriving over 1000 Sierra Leoneans, young people who have the requirements, who were not part of the Agreement and when we came to this Well, the Chairman is here, we called the Education Minister and he came and told us there is nothing wrong with the Agreement. The only problem was, the LIMKOWING University had higher fees compared to other Tertiary institutions and of which they were going to negotiate. Mr Speaker, the Minister came again for the second and told us that negotiations had been done long ago. But what is the problem and the young people who are just beneficiaries of what would have been a very smooth academic sail are now caught in the web and their future is in the line. As a young person, it would have been me. They are not my children, they are my brothers, I have constituents who are there. Sometimes, when we talk and people move it towards Political Party line, this is becoming sadden for this country. No, I am obliged to respond because she has said it not only in the Well but even in Committee Meetings *[Undertone]*. Mr Speaker, we are concern because these are Sierra Leoneans, these are young professionals who are trained in different areas that would benefit this nation. In fact, interestingly, the Permanent Secretary told us in our first Meeting that Government is going to pay for those who have been enrolled up to Second Year, but whosoever that will be coming in the First Year will have to pay his/her fees that was the Agreement. So, when the Leader of NGC was saying Parliament should look into this matter, we had done so three times and yet still no answer. It seems that this Parliament, under your Leadership, Mr Speaker, when we hold meetings and agree on things with MDAs, we go again to see them do the same thing that they were doing that brought them to Parliament. Mr Speaker, it is as if we are not efficient enough in

our actions with these MDAs. Mr Speaker, I see you are very busy. I want to use this opportunity to crave the indulgence of the House to look beyond its lenses and make sure this problem is solved. They are more than capable to be Members of Parliament tomorrow to serve their communities, but for this moment, they are being deprived. Mr Speaker, if you look up in the Gallery, they are there watching us and they have been here three times and we have got no answer from the Ministry. So, we are here again today to appeal on their behalf. They are only victims of circumstance, they never made the Agreement and interestingly, the Anti-Corruption Commission [ACC] boss now, was then the legal man for LIMKOWING University. So, everything was done within the ambit of the law, why should they be victims? On that note Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for your attention.

THE SPEAKER: I think a point has been raised concerning the University, I do not know whether the Leader of Government Business want to respond.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of the LIMKOWING University is a concern to all of us as Members of Parliament. I met with representatives from the University just before I left for Niamey and after my meeting with them, I had discussions with the Minister of Higher Education and also the Minister of Finance and I was given assurances that the issue was going to be resolved in fact within a week, but then on my return from Niamey, I heard about the demonstration and arrest of some students. So, this is an issue Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of which I ask our brothers and sisters from the University to give me some time to look into this issue. Maybe, this week, I will again call on both the Minister of Finance and Education to a meeting and after that I will report to you Mr Speaker. Whilst the Committee on Education is doing its work, I am sure they are also having meetings in relation to the same issue; but one thing I want to assure them is that we as Members of Parliament are with them that even if there were issues with the Agreement, even if there are issues presently between Government and the Institution, we would do everything that we can to ensure that the problems are solved for them to go back to their classes. God willing, in the next few days, tomorrow definitely is out, because

there will be a Cabinet Meeting, so, I will not be able to get any of the Ministers here, but by Thursday Mr speaker, I would try to engage both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and I must ensure that I get the commitment from them in the interest of our brothers and sisters at the LIMKOWING University.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having said that, on the issue of Special Session on Coronavirus, the individual Ministers or institutions that the Honourable Speaker asked me to inform to come to Parliament on that day are: the Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, Minister of Internal Affairs, National Coordinator Office of National Security [ONS], Governor Bank of Sierra Leone and the Chief Medical Officer Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and maybe, we can add the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development and the Minister of Education. Thank you very much.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on *S.O 23*; Mr Speaker, I am extremely pleased to report to the House on the intervention of all of us, on the issue referred to an Ad Hoc Committee set up by the Speaker of Parliament to look into the Sierra Leone Law School admission issue. Myself and other colleague Members of Parliament summoned the Council of Legal Education and very senior members of the Judiciary appeared before us, which is an indicator as to how people respect the House of Parliament when issues happen. I am pleased to report to colleagues that the issue was reopened and 28 other students have been admitted into the Sierra Leone Law School as a result of our intervention. I do not have the time to write a report [*Undertone*].

THE SPEAKER: No! No! Honourable Gevao, considering the importance of the issue bordering on national interest, I would urge you to come with a written report on this matter [*Applause*]. A verbal report under *S.O 23* would not suffice.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will do just that.

THE SPEAKER: And whilst you have the Floor, would you like to give us just a little hint as to the progress you are making in the Legislative Committee regarding the matter remitted to you?

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The Disaster Management.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Mr Speaker, the Bill is still before the Legislative Committee, we have attempted to sit on it twice and we were to sit on it last Wednesday, but because of some corrections made, all of us consented to send it to tomorrow. But I am afraid again another notice is out that we would be sitting on Friday. So we shall sit on it on Friday and complete it as a Committee. But the delay Mr Speaker has really very little or nothing to do with my Committee Members, it really has to do with some other external work that was to be done on the Bill itself before we can sit on it.

THE SPEAKER: As you know, one cannot entirely divorce that Bill from the issue that has now merited the convening of a Special Parliamentary Session. It is a question of natural disaster, so the two are linked.

HON. HINDOLO. M. GEVAO: Mr Speaker, just as you nipped it out of the board, but because it is a Bill for which we want to use the requisite S.Os to get the ONS and the Government Draft Man to be present. Few minutes ago, ONS just made the representation to me and I summon the Director of the Legislative wing and I told them that because Parliament is dealing with this Coronavirus issue, the more we delay this Bill, the more it would create problem for this nation. Myself and my Committee, we are able, ready and willing to sit on it tomorrow, but the ONS are making their availability to aid in the entire process so that we all get a holistic report to present to this House. But I will get back to them and tell them as to the urgency for us to have this Bill done and dusted as a Committee. If they cannot get themselves available, myself and my Deputy Chairman would carry on with our job and we will bring forth the report.

THE SPEAKER: You have the entire support of the House to underscore that particular point.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Grateful Mr Speaker and I would do just that.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, I would take the Leader of C4C, followed by Paramount Chief at the back, followed by the Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh.

HON. SAA E. LAMINA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the C4C Caucus is in receipt of a correspondence from the people of Gbenseh, specifically Moinecoh and Moinephen sections that they have got a willing Investor to Mine Boroma Pipe III. It cannot be gainsaid that over 17 years, they have not benefited absolutely nothing because the mining has been under exploration, because no surface rent and other royalties were given to those communities. Now that they have seen a willing Investor in the person of Boroma Pipe III, they are appealing that the Government of Sierra Leone give them room.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have also realised that the mining laws that we have inherited gives room for forceful acquisition, but I hold one strong belief that in as much as the present law is under review, I am talking about the 2009 Mines and Minerals Act, it will give room which will not be limited to the lessee and the lessor but rather also involving the stakeholders to have their say.

So, on behalf of the C4C Caucus, we want to convey the appeal of the people of Gbensen, Paramount Chief P.C Kamachedeh to be specific to this Parliament about this issue. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am sure you are aware of the fact that pending the completion of the review and introduction of the results to Parliament and any consequent enactment by Parliament, we have to go by the existing Law. So, I hope you can find a way to progress that particular issue within the parameters of the existing law. You cannot wait indefinitely for a review to be completed; you are the Chairperson of the Mines and Minerals Committee. May I now direct that you write to the Minister of Mines directing his attention to the urgency of that particular matter and saying that I as Speaker, have urged you to do so and if we fail to hear from them, then we would be compelled to do the needful under the existing law. Thank you.

HON. P.C ALHAJI KANDEH P. KAWALLEH II: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw the attention of this noble House to my own district. Mr Speaker, Karene District has a serious problem in connection to road network, especially in the area of the ferries. Mr Speaker, the temporary Ferry has been dismantled for the past years. That particular Ferry, the Government awarded the contract to a contractor, but since then, that contractor has not been working and we are suffering, especially when it rains.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, also, Imbellay Ferry, a Ferry between Batkanu and Gbinty area is not working and Karene District is the only District that has five ferries within ranges. So, I am appealing to you Mr Speaker to urge the contractor for him to start the work on the temporary Ferry from Batkanu to Matorboi. Mr Speaker that particular Ferry has a big problem. Since the past years that Ferry is giving a great problem in that area and Mr Speaker, the contract has been awarded and according to information, they have already paid part of the money for that particular job, but since then, nothing has happened. Mr Speaker, please I want you to intervene, especially in that area of Karene District. Karene District is a very deteriorating District in terms of road network and if you do not intervene Mr Speaker, I am afraid this Raining Season, there will be no road between Matomrato, Batkanu and Gbinty.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, also, I invite all the Karene District MPs for them to intervene in this area, because this problem is not only a problem for me, but a problem for the entire District. So, I want to draw the attention of all the Parliamentarians for them to please interfere and make sure that this problem is solved.

Mr Speaker, on that note, I am appealing to you again as you are a Member of that particular District for you to use your kind Office, so that this contractor would continue the job before the Raining Season. Thank you very much Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Paramount Chief. I will certainly adhere to the advice you have given, but I think I owe it to myself and to the entire District of Karene to do a bit more than you have suggested. Let us do it this way, you together with all the Members of Parliament from that District, please address a

question to the Minister of Works and I will ensure that that question is expedited and the Minister is brought here to answer to the various questions. I would rather take that approach than deal with the contractor directly. I prefer that approach. It is Ministers who are answerable to the House. You see, let us be clear about one thing, sometimes we get things mixed up in terms of accountability. It is the Executive that is accountable to Parliament; if you want to question private entities, it is better you do so *intra muros* with the responsible Ministry concern. So, always focus on the Executive Authority that is answerable, that is accountable to the Legislature, if they need to come to the Chamber with any contractor it is up to them to do that but let us resist the temptation of summoning Businessmen etc. to come before us. Let us do so through the responsible Ministry. This is why I keep emphasizing time without number that Members of Parliament should make it a duty to be formulating questions for Question Time addressed to the responsible Ministers. I had approved some of them; I do not know why they are yet to find their way to the Order Paper, but thank you for reminding me. Some questions have already been through to my desk and I have given them approval.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am just from my Constituency and there is something very important that I was told to bring to Parliament for our deliberations and for the attention of the public. It is the fact that, I want to believe, if not all of us, but over 90% of us are subscribers to the "Mobile Money" transactions that we have in Sierra Leone. Currently, the people of my Constituency believe that there is something undermining the security of the Citizens i.e. in the circumstance where you want to subscribe for the "Mobile Money," there is no provision for example next of Kin and in the circumstance where somebody is being touched by death for example and your family has to forfeit whatever money that you may have in your account. Mr Speaker that is very key and I want to bring to the attention of this House through the Committee on Information and Communication to see how they can invite the respective Companies for us to see how we can address this issue. There are people who subscribe above LE10Mln and LE15Mln respectively. I

do believe, if somebody is to be touched by death, for example, there should be a provision where family members or relatives of that person can access that money left by the decease. I deemed it very critical that I should bring it to the attention of this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, lastly, we have just agreed that Parliament is to summon the respective MDAs being called by the Leader of Government Business, I want to believe even us here as Members of Parliament are not 100% safe. A clear indication is that we used to have our microphones here on our respective desks, now we are using this one Microphone that is being transferred from one Member to the other, which I believe is also not safe for us. The microphones are not working, I want to bring this to your attention and to the attention of the House to see how we can amend this so that we can start it here from Parliament by observing the protocols in the fight against the Coronavirus disease. These are the issues I had wanted to bring to the attention of this House. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member. Now it is the turn of the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the last MP who just made his submission under *S.O 23* on the "Mobile Money" and the way we manage Parliament he made very brilliant and relevant submissions. We should look into them seriously.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, mine is very brief, I am happy that am also speaking before the Honourable Tawa as Chairman on the Committee on the Environment, I presume you are still there. Or have you been removed?

THE SPEAKER: Are you speaking to the turnover of Leadership of Committees?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I would keep quiet on that till further notice, because very soon, we will be having meetings as we have been promised. Mr Speaker, following the Social Media and also the Print and Electronic Media, officially, I had to go through Levuma Beach, three days ago, on Sunday to be precise. There is an issue

between the Ministers, the Ministry of Lands and that of the Ministry of the Environment. It entails the proposed construction of Fuel or Gas Station along that path and it is on the side of the Beach. I am sure most of us have been following that saga. I want through you Mr Speaker to encourage both Chairmen of Lands and Environment Committees to look into it as soon as possible, because fortunately, the Chairman of the Environment Committee is born and bred of that Community and he knows exactly what I am talking about. We cannot be saying we want to protect the Environment and on the other hand we are doing something totally opposite. We have to be honest with ourselves and make sure that whatever we do, we do it right. That is what I wanted to say and also to thank the Leader of Government Business for the promises he has assured this House regarding the students of LIMKOWING University.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I sincerely did not wish to interrupt you, but you have raised a very important and urgent matter. I have not noticed the presence in the House of the Chairperson of Lands Committee, but quite frankly, I have a file that is mountain by the day and it contains volumes upon volumes of complaints from the public against the Ministry of Lands and I do not think our Lands Committee is doing its work properly. Let me give notice now that I would like the Lands Committee to engage the Ministry of Lands without further delay to address the myriad of issues. There is a pile of complaints, my file is thick and it contains nothing but the complaints of the general public about the way they have been treated by that Ministry. So, let me first allow the Lands Committee to do its work and to give them a time line by which they should complete their work. But let me say this, I will not hesitate to allow this House if need be to consider a confidence motion. It is good the Chairman is working now. I do not mind Mr Leader of the Opposition, I would allow you to go over your concern again and then I will now take the opportunity to repeat what I have said in the absence of the Chairman of the Committee on Lands.

Suspension of S.O 5[2]

THE SPEAKER: You may proceed.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, unless you rule otherwise, but this morning I had the cause to ask two Members of Parliament from this side to leave the Chamber without your notice. I wonder whether I will address the Chairman of the Lands Committee the way he is attired. I wonder, he is my younger brother but I doubt it, except you say otherwise, because he is not properly attired for the Chamber.

THE SPEAKER: Move out of the Chamber, get yourself properly attired and move in again. You people have to respect Parliament; this is your work place and you know.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, with your permission, I would now proceed.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, you may.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I repeat, for the attention of both Chairmen of Lands and the Environment Committees, as I said earlier, that going through the Media both Print and Electronics, Social Media not exclusive, almost a week now, there has been a serious debate on an issue between Juba and Goderich along the Levuma Beach that there is a proposed Gas or Fuel Station to be constructed. The place had been fenced and the area that had been identified is where the Sea is, towards the mangroves, it has an environmental hazard and the area is a fishing area; it is an area where even the Chairman of the Environment Committee has benefited in the past, because he grew in that area and they used to be not the sand boys but the fish boys. They used to eat free fish in that area. So, through your kind office, I want to encourage them to take that issue very serious. They have to treat it with all the seriousness it deserves for us to know what the situation is. The Government through His Excellency the President in his wisdom has established a whole Ministry for Environment; it shows the premium he lays in protecting the Environment. So, we cannot be here and do anything when we had agreed with the President to set up the Ministry and to approve the Minister. So, we owe Him the duty to protect the environment. As I have been saying all the time,

when something is good for this country, we will support. There is no way we will oppose things that are good for this country. It is our duty to support those things that are good and this is one case where we have been overwhelmed by the Coronavirus. But we cannot shelve our responsibilities and this is one test. The exchanges have been between the Ministries of Lands and that of the Environment. I am sure for those of us who know part of the Bible still remember the story in ancient Rome about the crusade. The Minister of Lands is claiming control over Lands whilst the Minister of Environment is claiming territory of the Environment.

On that note Mr Speaker, I want to thank you very much for your proactiveness on issues brought to this House. But Mr Speaker, before I sit down, I was also going to thank the Leader of Government Business for his response to the Honourable Members who raised the issue on the LIMKOWING University. His promise has been noted and we want to assure him of our support to ensure that we actualise the best for the students. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I want to single out the matter relating to the Land issue and am sure, the Chairman of Lands Committee must have received the series of complaints that have reached me that I have also forwarded to his Committee for their attention! My file is getting bigger by the day, it is grown from being a beehive to a mountain of documents and I would not like to see it grow any further. I am yet to be convinced that the Lands Committee is working effectively. I am not pre-empting anything and am not drawing conclusions, but I would like to see the Committee play more effective role on this issue. And the Lands Committee is definitely under the microscope, the Public Microscope. The public is concerned, that is why I keep getting complaints almost on daily basis from the Public about developments, events taking place in the Ministry of Lands on this particular issue. I would again direct that the Committee of Lands holds a joint meeting with the Committee on Environment to address the issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the other issues that I have referred to the Committee and you have a week to report to me directly. Once that is done, we shall decide what to do with the report as a whole, but I want to see the Committee really

energised or reenergised with positive results coming from it. If you have any problems in giving life to the Committee please let me know. You know that you are at liberty to come to my Chambers any moment to ask for help and I hope, we will not reach a stage where I will ask this Parliament to take certain decisions that may not be too palatable. I do not want to be compelled to find myself in that situation, if I am, I will not hesitate.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to take the Floor again. Firstly, let me start with the issue of the sanitation of the doors leading to the entrance of this Parliament. I spoke of it this morning and the Speaker maybe jokingly asked me to give a donation and I have brought in a donation of chlorine, hand gloves, nose masks and Clorox for it to be used by the janitors to sanitise the doors leading to the entrance of this Parliament *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: On behalf of the House, I want to say thank you for that generous consideration.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, on another note, I have in the course of business today quietly engaged the Leader of Government Business as to the need, especially considering the Motion moved by the Honourable Kandeh Yumkella regarding the Coronavirus [COVID 19] and the effect it would have on the economy, that we look at the lowest hanging fruits to revive or resuscitate the economy during those difficult days. And I think the lowest hanging of all is for us to examine the Auditor General's Report and recover monies out of that Report, so as to resuscitate the gaps that the COVID 19 would create in terms of funding and budgetary support from other agencies.

THE SPEAKER: Before you go further, I heard you on the radio and I keep saying to you Honourable Members, the radio is the wrong platform for you to vent your grievances. You are Members of Parliament and you have procedures here. So try to exhaust them fully before going to the radio. I am aware of your Motion and it is certainly not dead. Your Motion is very much alive and at the appropriate time, it would be given the life that you are looking forward to. But let me advise you that the radio,

the Public media is the wrong place to go and vent out your grievances. As much as you like within the four corners of this Chamber that is where you fought so hard to come and you have not thoroughly exhausted the remedies available here as yet, I hope you understand what I am driving at!

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: I certainly do Mr Speaker. I thank you very much and the point is well noted. The issue raised by our Honourable Leader of the Opposition regarding the proposed construction of the Fuel Station at Levuma Beach, when the site was initially proposed or designated by the Minister and the antecedent leading to the handing over of that site, I brought the issue to this House and Mr Speaker, you directed at the time, the Committee of Lands Housing and the Environment, that the Committee on Lands, Housing and the Environment then, call the Minister and all related parties, including the Military, the Police that was assigned to protect the area to do something on that issue. They were duly summoned and we made presentation during the summon meeting to these stakeholders as the complainants were brought to the House. We submitted our complaints again in the presence and to the hearing of the Minister and the Committee handled the issue. What we did not get from the Committee is the feedback as to what had been done and the recent happening between the Ministry of Environment and that of the Ministry of Lands. I have engaged the Minister of Lands and I have also engaged the Minister of the Environment trying to get them together, so that we can sit and look at the issues and see what is the best way possible to resolve the impasses. Additionally, I am informed that the Chief Minister's Office has also summoned both the Ministers of Environment and Lands and they have set up a Committee to look into the issue and to look at the possibility and the threat on the establishment of a Fuel Station or Gas Station poses to the environment and the fact that that area where they want to construct the Fuel Station is not a natural ground. It was backfield by CSC. So, it means, the ground on which they want to construct the Fuel Station is not a soil that is naturally fixed to the mother earth, so clearing and constructing at the top is also a recipe for danger. I encourage the Chairman of the Committee of Lands, for the Committee, since they have met at

the time before the separation of the Ministry of Environment and that of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment to present that report, so that the House can look at that report and see what the recommendations could be.

THE SPEAKER: Let us progress on this matter, the two of you should now meet and deliberate further and report to this House.

HON. DR ROLAND F. KARGBO: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I just want to go back to the concern raised by the Honourable Paramount Chief from Karene District concerning the deplorable state of the road network in the Karene District including the five ferries that are there. I think it is important that this Parliament brings in the Committee on Works to see how we can work together and bring the Minister of Works here, because a few days ago, I was listening to the radio when somebody from the Ministry was trivialising the state of the roads in the Karene District.

THE SPEAKER: Let us not reopen the Karene issue. With respect Honourable Member, you were here when the Paramount Chief spoke about that Karene issue

HON. DR ROLAND F. KARGBO: Concerning the road network?

THE SPEAKER: No, were you in the Chamber when the Honourable Paramount Chief spoke?

HON. DR ROLAND F. KARGBO: I was, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I responded to him and gave a directive to him. I said, he should consult with all Members of Parliament from that district to prepare, to formulate the necessary questions to be addressed to the responsible Minister. You must understand I have a personal interest, because I am now a Member of Karene District by Legislation although not by birth.

HON. DR ROLAND F. KARGBO: I know Mr Speaker. I only wanted to have the Chairman of Works Committee to come into the whole thing, so that it would have some more weight.

THE SPEAKER: Please follow the directive I have given.

HON. ROLAND F. KARGBO: Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, you are the last speaker.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: Whilst thanking you Mr Speaker, for granting me this opportunity, I want to lament on my disadvantaged position here. It takes Mr Speaker long a time to even have a glance on this wing.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have no injury to my left eye sight.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a burning concern, whilst we have decided on Thursday to summon the relevant players with regards to the Coronavirus, a constituent of mine flew overnight and she continues to call and text me that they are quarantined in Lungi and the condition of the quarantine facility is so deplorable. They have aged, children and everybody is in that kind of demography. And they are really suffering and according to the last information she sent to me, they have not been provided for and yet they have been barricaded by the Police, which means, nobody is getting to them and they are not coming out. That is the kind of situation they are now having.

THE SPEAKER: Let me ask you, did you say a member of your Constituency?

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: Yes, a constituent of mine who flew in.

THE SPEAKER: Good! And what have you done about it?

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: I cannot go there now Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Did you engage the relevant Ministers?

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: I made some calls this morning in anticipation of their swift response, but up till now concerns are still coming and that is the Constituency of my Honourable Bishop.

THE SPEAKER: No, let me tell you Honourable Member.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: Yes Sir.

THE SPEAKER: You like using this soft option of S.O 23. The Honourable Ibrahim B. Kargbo is not here, let me tell you, when I was in your situation decades ago, I know, you do not know the powers you have, Keep reading the Constitution. Honestly, keep reading the Constitution. Let me make it abundantly clear to you, as a Member of Parliament, when your constituents bring certain report to you that require immediate attention, do not wait to come and utilise the soft option of S.O 23. S.O. 23 does not yield immediate result; take the phone and call the responsible Ministers immediately for solution.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: The problem we are having, maybe it was due to the idealness of the environment you had by then. Now, sometimes, we do call them and they do not even answer our calls. You will go to them and they will tell you they are busy and you will be seated there as if you are nobody.

THE SPEAKER: Alright! Honourable Member, I want you to hold your peace. The reason why I am asking you to hold your peace is because, I can give you an extra five or ten minutes to explain the plight of your constituent, but it will yield no satisfactory result. Even if I were to ask the Leader of Government Business to respond now, he too will not be able to give you a satisfactory response, because for all you know, he does not even know the issue that you are about to raise.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY:: Mr Speaker, my fear is.

THE SPEAKER: I am coming, hold your peace! We have already decided to have a very Special Session on Thursday, 19th, and there you would have the opportunity to bring or make your points. The main item on the Order Paper for the 19th Sitting, if not the only one, would be COVID 19 and our state of preparedness. So, hold your peace! Before COVID 19, go to your constituencies and gather the people to sensitise them about Coronavirus, please hold your peace.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: Mr Speaker, may I conclude Sir?

THE SPEAKER: No, there is no point! You would have another opportunity on Thursday.

HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY: Okay, but it is just to alert the attention of the House about their suffering over there.

THE SPEAKER: Hold your peace till Thursday.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 3:45 p.m. and Adjourned to Thursday, 19th March, 2020, at 11:00 a.m.]