

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

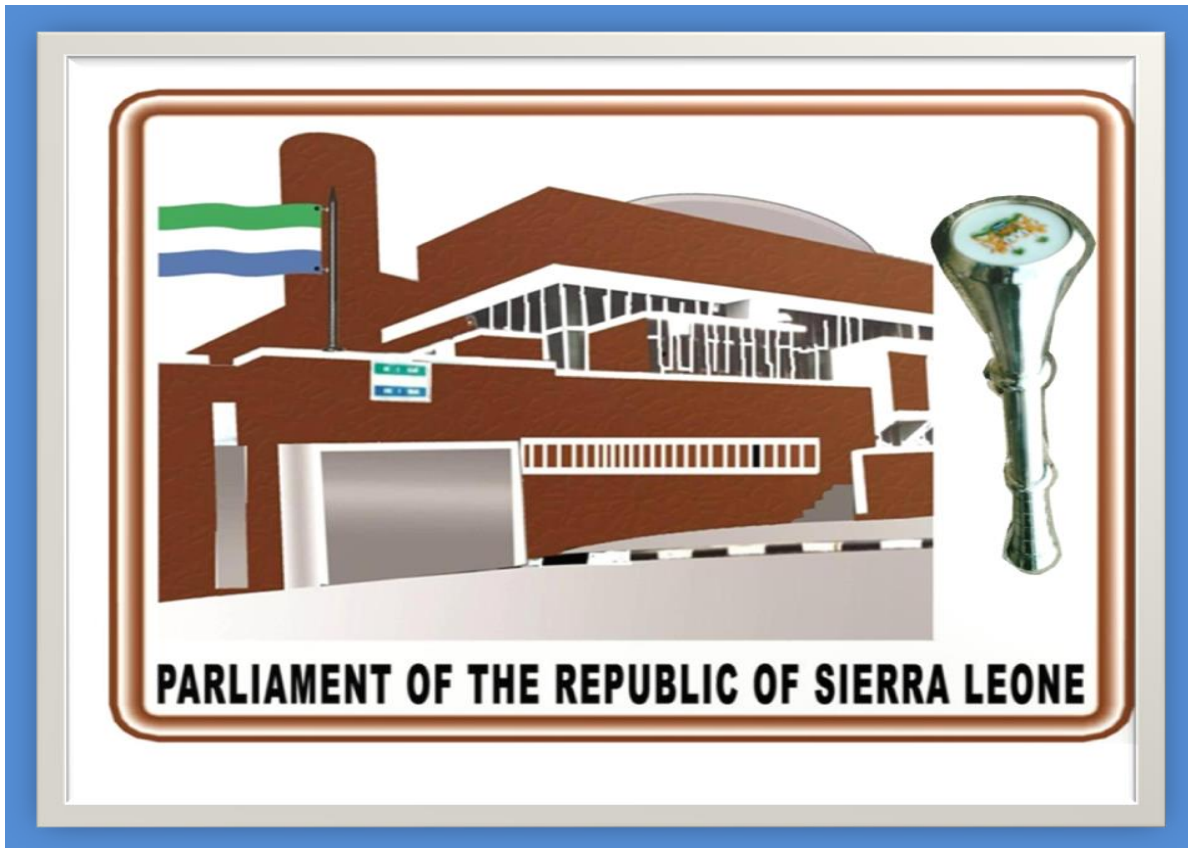
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION –FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 24TH MARCH, 2022

SESSION – 2021/2022



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMETARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Thursday, 24th March, 2022.

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- (i) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- (ii) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe.
- (iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Sierra Leone.
- (iv) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Thursday, 24th March, 2022.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 10:40a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

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

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON TUESDAY 22ND MARCH, 2022.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we shall now go through the record of votes and proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday 22nd March, 2022. Pages 1 to 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7 and Page 8? Can a Member please move for the adoption of the record of votes and proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday 22nd March, 2022.

HON DICKSON M ROGERS: I so move Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON JOSEPHINE MAKIEU: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Record of votes and proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday 22nd March, 2022 has been adopted as presented]

IV GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION*[Mr Rex Bhonapha]:* Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved: That this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following agreements which were laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday 1st March and Thursday 10th March 2022 respectively:

- (i) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- (ii) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

- (iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Sierra Leone.
- (iv) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
- (v) Memorandum of Understanding Agreement between Government of the Republic Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
- (vi) Air Services Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in 1944 the closing stages of World War II, 54 countries came together in Chicago, United States of America to discuss the future of International Aviation. The conference resulted in the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation commonly known as the Chicago Convention. The Chicago Convention established the rules under which international aviation operates. It also established the International Civil Aviation Organisation ICAO, the United Nations responsible for fostering the planning and development of international transport. The treaty determined that no scheduled international air service may be operated over or into the territory of contracting state without their expressed permission. Over the following years ICAO developed a series of traffic rights known as freedoms of the air. These freedoms continue to form the basis of rights exchanged in air services negotiations today. National governments must continually negotiate new treaties to allow International Aviation to grow and to expand their carriers access to new and emerging markets. These type of trade agreements does not exist in any other sector. The bilateral system has allowed international aviation to grow into a vibrant industry today. It is a sure path to liberalising the air transport sector. Thus, bilateral air services agreement or arrangements contain provisions of:

- Traffic rights
- Capacity designation
- Ownership and control
- Operational flexibility

- Cooperative agreement
- Competition rules

The result is that through the ICAO air services negotiation conference where such agreements are usually signed, international aviation is regulated by a complex web of over 3000 interlocking bilateral services agreement otherwise known as [BASA]. In the circumstance it should be noted that these agreements are at no financial cost to the government and people of Sierra Leone whatsoever but rather mean to facilitate air transport and its intended economic benefits. As such over the years, the state of Sierra Leone has initiated the following bilateral services agreements which I now submit for your due consideration and action.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following agreements which were laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday 1st March and Thursday 10th March 2022 respectively:

- (i) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- (ii) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe.
- (iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Sierra Leone.
- (iv) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
- (v) Memorandum of Understanding Agreement between Government of the Republic Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
- (vi) Air Services Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, except if the leaders want to debate or our elders the paramount chiefs want to say something, I am allowing three from either of the aisle if Members are interested to debate.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Yes chairman.

HON AMBROSE M LEBBY: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the agreement before us this morning is amongst the on-going series of the many agreements before this House. We have recently ratified a good number of these agreements in compliance of sub-section 2 of Section 118 of the 1991 Constitution that states: *an agreement entered into pursuant to sub-section [1] shall be laid before Parliament and shall not come into operations unless the same agreement has been approved by a resolution of Parliament.*

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like I said the other day these agreements are non-controversial and they are of no financial cost to this nation but rather we signed these conventions years ago but the Ministry of Transport failed to bring these agreements to Parliament for ratification and such the ICAO or the international organisation responsible for aviation will not acknowledge Sierra Leone to be part of these conventions even though they have signed it years ago but in as much as we reneged as a nation to ratify same we would not be recognised to be part of it. Like the Deputy Minister said 78 years ago 54 countries came together to form the International Civil Organisation for Aviation that is the ICAO. In as much as they signed that convention and ICAO is there as the UN body to manage and supervise all aviation process globally Sierra Leone as a nation is part of that organisation and if these agreements before us are ratified, there are a lot of goodies that it will come with for the nation such as International Trade, Tourism, Investment and Labour, it will as well expand the supply chain. Labour for instance will bring lots of jobs especially for youths, year in year out our universities will confer degrees and certificates to Sierra Leoneans, the job market is tight but if these agreements are ratified those are some of the goodies the agreements will come with. The free trade here, will encourage Sierra Leoneans to go into entrepreneurship and Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we all know that government cannot provide jobs for everybody and as such we are encouraging the private sector, we are opening the investment windows, we are encouraging the private

sector to come and invest. If we have investors coming to this nation, the Honourable Member from Kambia there who is just coming in would have his constituents employed and he would be proud.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am calling on this House to speedily ratify these agreements for us to enjoy the goodies. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Hassan do you want to debate now.

HON HASSAN A SESAY: No I want to raise a point of order Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON HASSAN A SESAY: Mr Speaker, I remember back here the substantive Speaker questioned a colleague here for coming with short sleeves. But today unfortunately for us we cannot afford to let the chairman not debate because these agreements are his agreements but Mr Speaker, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. If and only if it happened before there was a precedent set, Mr Speaker, I want you to do the needful.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Hassan the chairman has advised himself, I think he pre-empted me, he knew definitely I was going to say excuse us. Yes let me hear the voices of ladies today. Yes Honourable Catherine. Honourable Lolloh Tongi are you interested today, do you want to say something, okay not today. Yes proceed Honourable Catherine.

HON CATHERINE Z. TARAWALLY: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are again ratifying another bilateral air service agreement that we have ratified a week ago which sends a signal that we are a serious nation. We are a serious nation because in ratifying such agreement sends a signal that we are ready to enjoy what other countries are enjoying. Other West African and African countries are enjoying the ICAO benefits because they had ratified such agreements years ago and as the Chairman and the Minister said earlier on 78 years ago countries came together and signed this convention and they have agreed on the ICAO agreements I don't know what was the problem with Sierra Leone in ratifying such an

important and very good agreement that would bring us to the open labour market, that would bring Sierra Leone to the open tourism market, that would bring Sierra Leone to whatever situation that would bring what we call create employment for our young people that are just coming from the universities. So we are not here to critique but we are here to assure the minister and to assure the government that if it is an agreement that is benefiting our people. We are ready to ratify it and we are ready to help government to see to it that we bring things that are benefitting this country and things that would help Sierra Leone to move to join other countries. We are ready to ratify especially such bilateral agreements that will twin Sierra Leone with other countries like Germany, Zimbabwe, the Sultan of Oman and the kingdom of Morocco and these are countries that are far advanced in terms of tourism, in terms of labour market, in terms of other things. Some of us are fortunate to have visited most of these countries and in their touristic atmosphere you will see what we call development into their hotels, beaches and all of these.

So we are here to join the government to ratify and we are ready to ratify as a nation by sending this message to the Minister that let us try to hastily ratify things that would bring development to Sierra Leone and I want to urge other Members to ratify these agreements. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable C4C, after Honourable C4C Honourable Lamin then Honourable Dr Kalokoh and we round up.

HON SAHR CHARLES: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I first of all want to thank the minister for his relentless effort in ensuring that these agreements see the light of day. I have few concerns of course in the area of aviation safety, it is very important that the ministry took note of that because these agreements that we are going into with these nations is a legal document that will bind Sierra Leone to comply with some of the provisions of the agreements. Under aviation safety we would want to see that those areas that need to be improved in our aviation services are improved so that we can be able to match up. If you see here they said from time to time there is provision in these agreements for consultation services. As a

nation if we have areas that we think we are lagging behind I believe the ministry and the aviation authority should take actions to ensure that consultation services are sought to ensure that we improve on these areas.

In the area of the implementation of these agreements there is also provision for consultation where both parties have rights to consult each other to see how certain aspects of the agreement could be reviewed because we believe nothing is static because life itself is dynamic and things keep changing. So we would want to see the ministry taking advantage of the situations to ensure that there is improvement in our capacity. The last time the Honourable Paramount Chief from Tonkolili made mention of the huge revenue Sierra Leone as a nation would be losing because we do not have air services. So it is important that the ministry work towards that and ensure that at least Sierra Leone has an air service that can fly our flag, it is very important.

Having said that Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like all other agreements of this nature that has been ratified before, I believe these ones are no exceptions, they are not much controversy, I implore the House for us to speedily ratify them. Thank you.

HON JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want especially to implore the mind of Mr Minister that he works with the Tertiary institution in Sierra Leone that we have young people, Sierra Leoneans that can dare fly in the air, they can move aircraft from one place to the other. We looked at several areas in the world like South Africa, Zimbabwe and other countries like Germany, the Kingdom of Morocco, those places their aircrafts are being flown by the citizens of those countries and therefore, Sierra Leone should deem it fit if we have those faculties in our academic institutions that we could train Sierra Leoneans that could do similarly. Because we are making a platform that other nations will enjoy in this agreement and therefore if we too could have that venue that Sierra Leoneans can fly aircrafts, I know of Sierra Leoneans in the past when we had West Coast, there was one Sierra Leonean fellow who was flying the plane and we were in company and we were very proud of him and such encouragement must be given to some other Sierra Leoneans.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to call upon the Minister that we are talking about collective responsibility when we talk about agreements like this, we have Sierra Leoneans at the airport who are representing us and that they should do the needful when they are representing this nation and when it comes to this agreement I was in an environment where somebody entrusted billions of investment into my care and I asked him why, he said by looking into your eye and your heart I can entrust these activities to you and equally also our airport workers, our people who are representing us in that institution should be trusted, they should be looked at as people they could work with. It is not only when they are there they could seek their personal interest but there should be an effective induction for them to know that they are representing Sierra Leone, they are not representing themselves but I know definitely they come from families, institutions and communities but they should be mindful of that, that they are representing people of this nation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we talk about the freedom of air. Yes indeed one of the fastest way to close proximity between one place to another is the freedom of the air but then we should also be mindful of our territorial integrity which is very important. People who are in this agreement are doing this similarly because in the event of any circumstance they have to come and land into our territory they already have an agreement. We are in agreement with them that they should do so but we should make sure that our territories are protected and that for security reasons and for safety they are protected. Because for some of us who have been to other parts of the world like you go to the Hague where they have had air disaster is a very pathetic one and therefore the air service transportation should make sure that they are well looked after. Like my colleague said the other day about the air worthiness, is this aircraft worthy to fly or are we going to say manage, it is not like a vehicle when ones it is not moving it is wrecked on the road side but that one there is no road side. One of the things that I am very grateful is the reason why I went to school is when I avoided climbing the palm tree to harvest the palm fruit. I could never manage that, I tried severally the only time I feel safe is in the aircraft because when once you are there,

there is no way out when once the door is locked, the door is locked and every now and again they will demonstrate that safety mechanism in the aircraft, they would remind you of what would happen. So therefore we make sure that those aircrafts coming to our territory through our boundaries are well maintained, they are well serviced and they are not only flying because there are some that comes in late at night and they leave very early in the morning. Mr Minister let us make sure that we know what is coming into Sierra Leone. We want to make sure that our reputation, our integrity, there is no billions of Leones can worth more than our integrity, we have no other place, the only place we are entitled to is Sierra Leone. So therefore, we want to make sure what is coming into Sierra Leone is of the country's interest and also is of quality and they are meeting our regulations and always for commodities that are allowed to be brought into Sierra Leone.

On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to join other speakers that these agreements that we are about to approve between these nations; Germany, Zimbabwe, Oman and the Kingdom of Morocco be speedily approved in this House. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Dr Kalokoh.

HON DR MARK M KALOKOH: Thank you Mr Speaker, I would not delay the House again. I just want to join colleagues who has just made their points to thank the deputy Minister of transport and Aviation for being bold in facing us in Parliament rather than his boss, even though we have asked several times that we want to see the Minister himself in this Well but it has proved difficult.

Joining my colleagues Mr Speaker, the air services we are about to approve here connotes liberalisation and that is key. If you look at the Zimbabwe agreements it is so detailed, very clear in its area of certificate of worthiness and competence. Going further you see the clear picture of the safety road map highlighted in Article 11 and in as much as all of these agreements are not controversial, I urge this House to speedily ratify these agreements so that we join our colleagues to practice international standards. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Yes Leader of the Opposition.

HON HASSAN A SESAY: *[Opposition Whip]* Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my colleagues in the House have already made mention of the worthiness of these agreements. In deed liberalising our air space by opening it up to more agreements whereby we would be having more countries to have their flights coming in and out of Sierra Leone is a welcome situation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one thing I must first of all say here is, let the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other institutions stop letting these agreements gather dust in their shelves. Because as have been mentioned earlier we have been a member of ICAO for quite a long time and all of these agreements ought to have been brought to this House for ratification long before now. Why are my saying that, Air Moroc have been operating in Sierra Leone for the longest time but today we are ratifying an agreement between Sierra Leone and the Kingdom of Morocco. So what have we been doing and when you talk about other airlines like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe etc., we are opening up our airspace to all of these countries that have very matured and improved air services which we would stand to benefit from had we already started operating long before now.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw the attention of this Parliament to the fact that employment by government alone will not be enough, private sector investment will definitely boost employment in our country. Now Mr Speaker, the airline industry I want to say that when they are coming in the negotiations Mr Minister, we would be looking forward to a situation wherein Sierra Leoneans will be trained and be employed by these airlines that do come to operate in our country because that is the only way we can benefit as a people.

HON. MATHEW S NYUMA: *[Leader of Government Business]* Mr Speaker, sorry to interrupt you. For that specific because these are ratifications, we want the Minister to make an undertaking because some of these statements in these agreements we want to see how best they are effective and implemented. It is not just to say oh they are in the agreement so what he is saying is from the opposition we need to take it very

seriously. He has laid his explanation by even citing that it is very good for us to have airlines in connection with standards but the employment is very key for our people so we want to hear from the minister.

THE SPEAKER: Very, very key.

HON. MATHEW S NYUMA: As I said the last time we don't want to have any wishy washy business in these agreements and they are yet to be implemented. We need commitment at this time let us try to interact with him.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister take note of that.

HON. MATHEW S NYUMA: Thank you very much Honourable Member.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister take note of that or else we will bring you here together with your boss.

HON. HASSAN A SESAY: Yes and Mr Speaker, Honourable Members when we talk about employment here we want them also to have injected into this agreements training facilities for our locals. Mr Speaker, let me say something for example, the people who live around the airport in that lungi axis value no other job than the airport job and those people must be given the opportunity to train and become professionals in their respective areas. Mr Speaker, you go to Marampa, those people at Marampa believe no other industry than the iron ore industry because that is what they grew up knowing. So as a matter of fact these people must be given the opportunity to train and feel comfortable because you develop somebody in his own comfort zone and if they are comfortable in that sector let us give them wherewithal to let them operate within that sector and grow. How does it impact our local economy? When those people get employment they pay taxes, when they pay taxes the government benefits. When they get employment they can take care of their own people because we know the extended family system in Sierra Leone, we know how people live on others. So Mr Speaker, we want that to be part of every agreement that we sign or agree with these institutions so that they understand that we take the interest of our people as our primary concern when negotiating for them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have spoken about the training for locals who are interested in the airline industry and also let these airlines understand that because you are coming to Sierra Leone you must not just bring any kind of flight, there must be quality assurance. Because we have seen that any time there is a problem with the airline we know how much that will impact the overall economic performance of our country not to talk about airline accident, God forbids. We have not had those much and we pray not to be having them. But also that will start from the fact that we must be able to put them under control and ensure that the flights that do come here are of the highest quality, we must make sure that we try to be proactive rather than be reactive. We have seen what that has done to other countries but we don't want that to happen in our country so we must take pre-emptive measures to ensure that we don't get these kind of disasters coming our way. In as much as we are opening up our air space, we are trying to improve relations with all of these countries let that be part of the agreement that flights that are coming here must be of the highest quality and must not be substandard because we have seen Brussels, they fly airbuses in Sierra Leone, Kenya have Boeing Plane 737, 747 etc., so each of them that are coming here must make sure that the plane that do fly to and from Sierra Leone must be of the highest quality. I think that like my colleagues have said these agreements are not controversial because like I said earlier in the previous debate the more the merrier and let us also emphasise the fact that, if these airlines are coming to our country we must also ensure that they become affordable.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we would all agree that tickets from Sierra Leone are the most expensive in the sub-region. Now, the airline industry are laying the blame on excessive taxation from government that is making the price of tickets higher in Sierra Leone. Go to Conakry, Guinea it will interest you to know that a ticket that you buy at \$900 in Freetown when you go to Conakry you pay \$600. Now, Mr Speaker, what does that do, an individual will get a visa in Sierra Leone, travel to Conakry, buy a ticket from Conakry save \$300 or \$400 that doesn't make sense to me because what would happen when you go to Conakry Guinea, the taxes for that ticket would be paid

in Conakry, why not let us have it here. So let us try to look at the tax bracket and make sure that we make them affordable. Even for my Leader there if you want to travel on a private flight you have to pay more when compared to when you go to Conakry or Liberia, we must try to address all of those because those are issues which bother on our own wellbeing. Mr Minister I want you to actually pay attention to those areas because those are things that affect us personally. Some of us have family members living out of Sierra Leone, when they want to come home the tickets are cheaper in the US coming to Freetown or England but when you want to buy a ticket to go to visit them you pay more, we must try to discourage that. Let us try to encourage people so that they would not think that flying away to visit family members is more expensive than them coming here. I think we must try to put them all at par Mr Speaker, Honourable Members in as much as they are not controversial I think those are areas that we need to address Mr Minister and we hope that in future negotiations and even these ones that we ratifying now Mr Minister, we want you to go back to the drawing board and let them understand that these are issues that have been raised in the house of Parliament and we need them to be addressed ASAP. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of Government Business.

HON MATHEW S NYUMA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker, for giving me the floor but I think this is the time for the Whips to hear them wrap up this debate. So I give my chance to the Chief Whip.

HON DICKSON M ROGERS: Thank you Mr Leader. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think a lot of things have been said this morning about those agreements. And one important thing among all of those things that were said, is the fact that we have all agreed that those agreements are noncontroversial and we are not only looking at the physical economic aspect of it, we have spoken about the goodies that it would bring to this country. The other important thing I want to emphasise that has been said by other speakers is the safety. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, all of us in this

House I think we have travelled a lot sometimes when you board the plane to go to those European countries and when you are taking internal flights you see the differences between those flights. You really see that the flight they use in Europe is far better than the ones they send in Africa and I think those agreements are speaking to some of those odds.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my colleague has just spoken about the cost of our tickets. In my debate Tuesday I said it and I want to repeat it Mr Speaker. Mr Minister let's make sure that you are not going to fill our cupboards with empty papers. I have read almost all of those agreements, they are good if the literature in them is followed I think Sierra Leone would be among the one of the best countries in Africa as far as airline industry is concerned. For the other parties, they have stated what they should do but believe you me they are running after profit, if we as a country and you as a ministry do not run after them to make sure that they go by what they have said, they would only come here to make money and go. So please like the other speakers have said let us make sure they adhere to every details of the agreement mind you this is an agreement, it is us and them meaning it is their words and ours so let us make sure that they are followed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable from Koribondo spoke about the fact that we have people in this country that are qualified for some of those jobs. I did not see anywhere in the agreement where they said we should also provide airhostess. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have colleges in this country that deals with tourism and we have beautiful ladies in some of those industries that can be airhostess. When you look at KLM, Brussels and Emirates when you are going through their SWOT analysis one of their strengths Mr Speaker lies in the beauty of their airhostess and I think we have our sisters here who are qualified, we need to expose them Mr Speaker, I want this in the agreements we are ratifying today Mr Minister, let us see how we would start training our young graduates in airhostess, let's see how we can have some of them in most of those African airlines. Let us make sure that we give them those opportunities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my colleague on the other side made mention of few things that I want to reiterate. Some of those agreements will only benefit us as a nation if we have free visa agreements with them. Like we have ratified China, Turkey, Brazil as long as you have diplomatic and service passports you don't need visa to go to these countries. If as a nation we have ratified all of those agreements, I think if we can liaise with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we have some of those priviledges, as long as you are a service or diplomatic passport holder let them waive the visa. So we now know that some of the benefits this country will get is the fact that you go to those countries without visa I think Mr Speaker that will help us immensely in this country. When we talk about tickets cost my colleague is right. If you want to go to Dubai today you have to go to Ghana before you can get a flight to Dubai meaning you have to pay extra \$500. If you want to go to Qatar today, you have to go to Guinea or Ghana to get your ticket. He was talking about the taxes that we pay to those countries but it is not only the taxes Mr Speaker, Honourable Members because for every time you are going to stay over you have to book a hotel, that involves cost and when you do the cost analysis Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you find out that we are paying more for tickets that we are not supposed to if we have those flights coming to this country. That is the reason why some of us are so happy with these agreements. Those are the few times in this House that the opposition and us have totally agreed on agreements meaning the ministry of Transport has done very well in bringing those agreements for our approval. I hope like Honourable Catherine said the other day some other ministries will follow this footstep. But Mr Speaker, Honourable Members for us as a nation to benefit from those agreements we are ratifying there are some benefits that we need to get that is: [1] visa free to some of those countries [2] making sure that our sisters and our daughters get priviledge to work on board those flights.

With that Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank all those that have spoken to those agreements that have made credence to this government by saying we are bringing beautiful agreements to this House and we would promise you that even after

2023 we would continue bringing good agreements to this House. Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes Mr Minister.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me use this platform to thank Members of Parliament profoundly for their concerns and inputs into these agreements. Let me start with the comments made by the Honourable Chief Whip of the House when he made mention of visa agreements with these countries as well. I can't agree with him more, that is the way to go but then in ratifying these agreements is a precursor to those negotiations, you want to ensure you negotiate from a position of strength and you can only do that if you have a bilateral agreement with such a country that is why we spare no effort in bringing these agreements to this Honourable House so that you can ratify them. Once that is done I can assure you we would negotiate from a position of strength but for now we are almost on a very thin and humble footing you can hardly negotiate because you don't have agreement with them at all. Thank you for that.

You spoke about affordability, I agree Honourable Member but then that is because we have limited aircrafts coming to Sierra Leone and therefore the competition is at that low ebb. In fact that is the more reason why some of us are being so nationalistic and Pan-Africanist. We want to ensure we bring these agreements so that once they are ratified you can now bring these guys to the table and negotiate for the cost of tickets but for now we can only make do with what we have because we have limited space to bring in new aircrafts. But something is in the offering, I cannot disclose that here now I am not at liberty to do so because like the President would say he is talk and do we want to ensure once we grab it then we can come back to you on that. You spoke about the quality assurance yes, in fact that is the more reason why we have established the accident bureau of the civil aviation. We have got experts there, they would look at these aircrafts and determine which aircraft is fit and is air worthy before they come to this country I can assure you.

I equally agree that employment is limited and government cannot employ all citizens and therefore the people living within the locality of the airport must benefit from the employment that comes with the coming of these aircrafts. But we want to bring more aircrafts once we open up our air space to more aircrafts they would definitely come and we can be able to negotiate for employment. I can't agree with you more on this again especially when you said we must stop keeping these agreements on the shelves to gather dust, that is why we have got the feeling that we have been lagging behind in bringing these agreements for ratification and we are going to ensure that we would always bring them the sooner they arrive in this country because we are representatives of the people.

I want to end up especially now that we have all agreed that these agreements are noncontroversial save the few comments and concerns that you have raised on the note by Honourable Catherine when she said we are a serious nation, we are. In fact the other day a Honourable Member mentioned that we would not be benefiting from their air space so it is more or less a one sided agreement but I can assure you we have to be bold as a nation, we have to look into the future, we want to ensure that we can compete and give our nation the necessary visibility it deserves. That is why I would want to agree with Honourable Catherine on this that we are a serious nation and that we should ratify these agreements so that we can be at par with other countries that signed these agreements years back.

On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved: That this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following agreements which were laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday 1st March and Thursday 10th March 2022 respectively:

- (i) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- (ii) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe.
- (iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Sierra Leone.

- (iv) Bilateral Air Services Agreement between Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
- (v) Memorandum of Understanding Agreement between Government of the Republic Sierra Leone and Government of the Sultanate of Oman.
- (vi) Air Services Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I must say that I am extremely impressed with your presentations in this House of Parliament and the way in which you presented your facts, keep it up. You might be sighted for promotion who knows. *[Laughter]*

[Question Proposed, Put And Agreed To]

[Government motion by the Minister of Transport and Aviation has been ratified]

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 11:40 a.m. and was adjourned to Tuesday, 29th March, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.]