



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

# **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

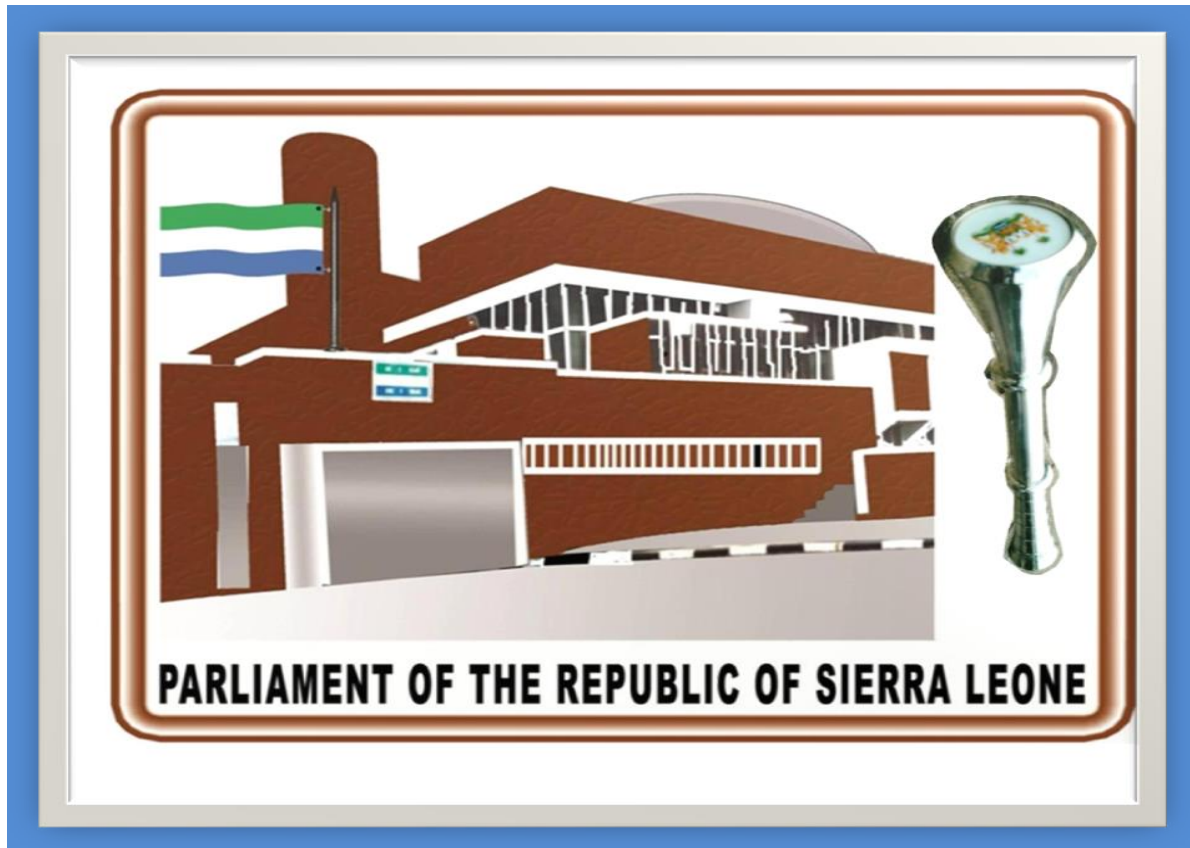
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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**FIRST SESSION –FIRST MEETING**

**FRIDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> January, 2024**

*SESSION – 2023/2024*



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House  
Held Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

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[F] AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO AND THE REPUBLIC SIERRA LEONE FOR THE RECIPROCAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF INVESTMENTS



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

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

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

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**Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.**

#### **I. PRAYERS**

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

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

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

The House was called to Order

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

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, with your leave, I want to amend the Order Paper by expunging items C and D from same. I therefore move that item C, which has to do with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and item D be expunged from the Order Paper.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any seconder to that Motion?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** I so second, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you.

*[Question Purposed, Put and Agree To]*

*[The Order Paper has been amended accordingly]*

**II. ADOPTION OF THE RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 18<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2024.**

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we shall now consider the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024. As usual, we shall start with Page 5. Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? If there is no correction or amendment, can someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 as presented?

**HON. ALICE K. SANDY:** I so move, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any seconder?

**HON. MOHAMED T. FOFANAH:** Mr Speaker, I so second.

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]*

*[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 has been adopted as presented]*

**III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER**

**THE SPEAKER:** First, when I was in my Chambers, I had a traditional sound which beckons all of us to this Well. It has been absent for quite a while, so it is most

gratifying that, that sound has returned. I want to say thanks to the Administration as well.

Honourable Members, please allow me to start by acknowledging the fact that today's sitting is the very first day in 2024 that I am presiding over this august assembly of Parliament. I therefore consider it an opportunity to start by extending to each and every one of you a blessed new year and sincere best wishes for your good health and a fruitful and prosperous 2024. Sadly though, Parliament has started the New Year by capturing the news headlines for all the wrong reasons in both the main streams on social media and also in general discussions in the public domain. It has become so palpable that we are all under heavy attack and denigration from the general public. For this reason alone, quite apart from these lapses in the dignity and decorum of Parliament, as the Arm of Government entrusted with the sacred responsibility to make laws of the land for the present there is absolutely nothing for us to celebrate about. On the contrary, we should all apologise to the public or the people of this country whose trust and confidence we bear and on whose behalf we act in this Well as their representatives.

Honourable Members, by the same token, we want to take this opportunity to express your collective regret and to ask for their forgiveness. We promise that we shall never again commit the grievous mistakes of the recent past. Without exaggeration, a lot has been said and written about Parliament in the past weeks and they have continue unabated, but more particularly about the Speaker and the Clerk of Parliament. For the Clerk, we understand from the Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission that his matter is still under investigation; therefore, the less said about it here the better we shall await the final outcome of the investigation. As for the Speaker, please allow me to make bold and say that a great deal of what has been said and written has been either misconceived or misunderstood. So, I want to seize this opportunity to set the records straight.

First and foremost, like the beautiful game of soccer, for example, the Africa Cup of Nations, currently being played in Côte d'Ivoire, politics by definition means a game

between two or more opposing teams and the Speaker's role as Presiding Officer can be likened to that of the referee. He cannot afford, but be a friend to both teams more importantly you cannot afford to antagonise or become an enemy of either team. Occasionally, when things are perceived to be going not too well, he invites the two captains to the Speaker's dais for consultation; and in those consultations, we must all be guided by the dictate of facts and reasons not conjuncture or gossip; but above all by the rules of the game as prescribed in the Constitution and the Standing Orders which must all resume supreme.

Secondly, the Speaker must be accessible to all MPs. They are at liberty to come to him at any time for guidance and consultations and he in turn is obliged to accommodate them as much as possible.

Thirdly, the Speaker must not be a predator and he has never been, contrary to the accusations spooled extensively by some despicable section of the social media, and for these, I have already filed a complaint to the Police and the Independent Media Commission. However, let it be noted that there are two doors to the Chambers of the Speaker; one door is reserved exclusively for his entry and exit, and is also used occasionally by His Excellency the President whenever he visits Parliament. The second door is for the MPs and the general public and it is always kept opened and accessible. Whereas the key to the first door is in the custody of State security, the key to the second door is kept in the secretary's office. The critical point at issue here is that no keys are ever kept by the Speaker. This might surprise you that the Speaker does not even know what the keys look like. So, I exhort you all, especially the honourable ladies of this House not to be afraid to come to the Speaker's Chambers; not only is this Speaker now a frail and faint shadow of his once youthful masculinity, you can easily push him over should he ever attempt any act of bravado. Besides, you can easily shout for help from outside and the doors will be opened in no time. Let me perhaps go over that again. Let us hear from the Leader of Government Business.

**HON MATHEWS. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, I think you are on record.

**THE SPEAKER:** I take the queue from the Leader of Government Business. Finally, let it be stated here loud and clear that the Speaker and the Clerk of Parliament are not at loggerheads with each other as some unscrupulous and frivolous media might want you to believe. The Speaker is indeed the Chairman of the Parliamentary Service Commission, which is the highest decision making body of Parliament and the Clerk is the Secretary of the Commission. The two of them have to work in harmony at all times for the successful deliberation of the Commission and I have indeed been doing so since the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament. But ultimately, the Speaker bears the greatest responsibility for the Parliament as a whole and the Clerk is only the head of the Parliamentary Service and the controller of the Parliament purse. If there are differences between the Speaker and the Clerk, they are minuscule. I repeat, if there are differences between the Speaker and the Clerk, they are minuscule and by no means extraordinary and no one should attempt to build mountains out of a mole hill.

Honourable Members, allow me to end this announcement with the assurance that this 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament is moving forward inexorably because there are bigger and more formidable challenges ahead of all of us. I hope this small word for the wise is sufficient for today. I thank you for your kind attention. We may now proceed with what is before this Parliament today.

## **LAYING OF PAPERS**

### **A. THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of this House on behalf of the Ministry Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation the following Papers:

### **THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

[A] COMBINED 16<sup>TH</sup>, 17<sup>TH</sup>, 18<sup>TH</sup>, 19<sup>TH</sup>, 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> PERIODIC REPORT ON THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND THE INITIAL AND COMBINED 2<sup>ND</sup>, 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> PERIODIC REPORT ON THE PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICA CHARTER ON HUMAN AND THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.



[B] CONVENTION ON CIVIL ON JUDICIARY IN THE CIVIL, COMMERCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO AND THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE.

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[F] AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO AND THE REPUBLIC SIERRA LEONE FOR THE RECIPROCAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF INVESTMENTS

B. [THE MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY]

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I would like to stand the House down for at least fifteen minutes before we invite the Minister of Employment to take the Chair to introduce this particular item. I would like to invite him, the Leader of Government Business, Deputy Speaker, Deputy Women's Leader Caucus, Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Whips in my Chambers.

*[Mr Speaker adjourned the House at 10:45 a.m. and resumed at 11:35 a.m.]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we are going to have slight departure on the usual practices because of the crucial nature of this particular Statutory Instrument and the impact likely to have on the Economy and on the people of our country. I think it is but necessary that we allow the Minister to introduce the Statutory Instrument by way of brief statement to the House before the instrument is laid. This will enable us to

better comprehend the impact and the content of the instrument itself. I am advised that in accordance with S.O. 18 [7] which reads a Minister or a Member on tabling a Paper will make a short explanatory statement of its contents.

**MR RAHMAN RADO SWARAY** [*Minister of Employment Labor and Social Security*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave, I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following Papers:

Work Permit Fees for Regulation 2024;

Work Permit Act, 2023, Act No. 11 of 2023; and

Statutory Instrument number 1 of 2024.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Speaker, let me start by wishing the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament the very best in this 2024 and beyond. I look forward to continuing the strong relationship we started in the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament. You would agree with me that work permit all over the world, serves as a control instrument and contributes towards revenue generation for the governance of the country.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, when I took over the leadership of the Ministry some times last year on my 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday, I discovered that work permit fees charged in Sierra Leone were very ridiculous and low. From a very personal experience thirteen [13] years ago, I was an expert in Liberia and my employers paid a thousand US Dollars for my work permit fees. Today, the highest work permit paid in Sierra Leone is **Le6,250** which is equivalent to **\$240**. For other types of jobs, the fees are ridiculous as **Le500** old Leones. This is to ensure that Sierra Leone does not lag behind when it comes to what we are charging. The downside to this is that it will attract all manners of persons just like we were doing the Cyber Security and Crime Bill some years back. The argument was that cyber security is a global crisis; and therefore, it must have a global respond. We have done regional survey and it is on the basis of that regional survey we have presented these work permit fees reviews.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you could also recall that over the years, this country has continued to battle with serious youth unemployment on all fronts, and at the same time we have continued to see all manners of non-Sierra Leoneans picking up

jobs that Sierra Leoneans could do. We believe that the work permit will help to address that problem. We could also recall that one of the things for the work permit is that expatriation should not be forever. The experts who come to work in Sierra Leone, like in all other countries, should have a rigorous programme of succession by which they should be able to transfer skills, knowledge and competencies to their prospective Sierra Leonean successors. So, the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security will work with CEOs of various companies to designate clear succession plans, so that we put on the Floor the localisation of some key roles. Let me make this clear that we are not against expatriation. We understand that Sierra Leone lacks skills in particular areas for which we require experts. We also note that Sierra Leone export labour to other countries.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this should not be mistaken as xenophobic; it should not be mistaken as a war against expatriation; all we seek to achieve is to ensure that skills and competencies available in the country are utilised. The argument to this is that even for the employers who are very good because experts are freely expensive. My boss used to tell me in Liberia that it will reduce business cost for them. So, this is something we seek to do together in the coming days. Mr Speaker, before we got to this point, we actually engaged the tripartite partners: the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, the Work Permit Committee and the Sierra Leone Employers Federation. We did extensive consultations, but that by itself is not enough. We will continue to educate the public on this. This is a Bill borne out of our shared desire to ensure that Sierra Leoneans are mainstreamed, particularly in view of His Excellency's commitment to create five hundred thousand jobs in the next five years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when I was here for parliamentary vetting, one of the Committee Members of the Appointments Committee asked about the issue of Sierra Leonean jobs being done by foreigners. I assured them that as long as I get the backing of Parliament, we would do the necessary reforms to ensure that those jobs remain for Sierra Leoneans. We have Sierra Leoneans who can perform exceptionally well in those roles. We are also working with the Local Content Agency and others in

the employment continuum to ensure that Sierra Leoneans are mainstreamed without disadvantaging the employers themselves. So, going forward, this Parliament will begin to see advertisement for all jobs that foreign companies are offering. This is now in the Employment Act of 2023. Companies will have to exhaust the local markets first and if there are no competent Sierra Leoneans, they are at liberty to look for expert[s]. My Ministry is prepared and willing to lead this on behalf of the good people of Sierra Leone.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me conclude on that note and look forward to deepen this conversation. I thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Minister for his statement to the House and for clarifying the important issues involved for the edification of not only the House, but also of the increase in work permit contained in the Statutory Instrument No.3 of 2024. For the new Members of Parliament, I want you to follow the procedures about Statutory Instrument. I will refer you to Section 170, Sub-section 7 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. It provides that the Statutory Instrument, when laid before the House, will mature into law after 21 days, provided there is no Motion for its annulment. We cannot amend it; we cannot add or subtract, but we can reject it or accept it. That is all we can do and that has to be predicated on a Motion by a Member of this House. So, for this Statutory Instrument, I do not know whether there is any Motion.

**HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as agreed by the entire leadership when you stood down the House few minutes, I want to move a Motion. However, before I do that, I am a little bit skeptical because I was asked to move the Motion, which I am ready to do and a seconder was proposed as well. The Secunder is not around and I do not know what is going on. If the Secunder is not around, can we know what is going on before I move a Motion?

**THE SPEAKER:** We have the Deputy Speaker here and the Chief Whip.

**HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on Section 170, Sub-section 7, in tandem with S.O 25[1] to move that this Statutory Instrument be

debated by this Honourable House. The guideline given in S.O 25[2] and S.O 28[3] will be strictly followed for the needful to be done. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you. Any Secunder to that Motion?

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, I second the Motion.

**THE SPEAKER:** It now up to you, the mover to do the needful.

### ***Announcement***

Members of Parliament are kindly informed that there will be a pre-legislative hearing on the Bill entitled: 'The Anti-money Laundering and Combating of Financing of Terrorism and Financing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Act, 2023 on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. Therefore, Members are encouraged to pick the Bill at the Dispatch Section after today's sitting.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** I stand on Section 93[3] of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, we saw the Anti- Corruption Commissioner recovering a huge sum of money for the State yesterday for which I must commend him for the good work. However, I am also concerned that during the process, one of the reasons he gave for such recovery is the lack of trust in the Judiciary. This is what captured my attention. I think it is necessary for those occupying state institutions to understand that some of the statements they make also infringe on the performance of state institutions like the Judiciary. That statement was unfortunate and it also has the tendency to undermine the integrity and uprightness of the Judiciary.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, the fact that we did not listen to this, can the Honourable Member tell us the statement, so that we know exactly what else to do. Some of us did not listen to the statement he is referring to.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, it was a public notice and the Commissioner said: "That is the reason I am enforcing the collection of stolen money because the Judiciary has not helped the ACC enough in recovering State looted funds." This statement is unfortunate, Mr Speaker.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, let me stand on a point of Order. For the records, the Honourable Member from that end just said that he made his statement categorically clear that the Judiciary is not trustworthy. He has just rephrased the statement. I listened to Commissioner yesterday and he said that people do not have trust in the Court. That was what the Commissioner said yesterday; he did not attack the Court and I do not want my colleague to seek for sympathy from the court or from the Judiciary. I thank you.

**HON.ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, based on what the Chief Whip of this House has stated, he has also in fact vilified and increased the volume of what I said; i.e., if you said that those who stole state funds were willing to pay and you have the evidence, why you failed to go to court? With the leave of the Speaker, I read what the Ministry of Information posted on their website. It says: "In many cases, we have resorted to recover stolen moneys, rather than wasting time to seek judgment that does not come in time because the Judiciary is... - *[Undertones]*. Mr Speaker, our colleagues on the other side think they are helping Government. They are not helping the Government and it is a shame on the Judiciary. If the Anti-crafts institutions cannot trust the Judiciary, who am I to trust the Judiciary? If you are running an international company in Sierra Leone, how can you trust the Judiciary?

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, let us have decorum. I am going to rule both sides out of Order. I refer you to S.O 32[11] and for your edification, I would like to read. It says: "The conduct of the President and Judges or the performance of judicial functions by other persons, and the personal conduct of Members of Parliament shall not be referred to except upon a substantive Motion moved for that purpose." I want you to know that this is the wrong arena for us to impede the integrity of the Judiciary. We should not be encouraging this kind of thing here at all. No doubt, the maker of the statement outside of this House will bear responsibility for that statement, but let us not bring it here and adopt it or make reference to it as if we give him credence to the validity of that. I hope you understand what I am saying.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, let me also draw your attention to the fact the purpose of this Parliament is to make laws. When we spend time to look at Bills or Agreements, we do so in good faith. I want to draw your attention to the Finance Act, which we recently passed and has just been signed by the President. Mr Speaker, when we were talking about imported beer and other related drinks... - *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you have already drawn my attention to the point you are about to make. Let me assure you that I have taken appropriate action.

**HON.ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Noted, Mr Speaker.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that whenever issues relating to corruption are mentioned, Parliament frowns same. As a Parliament, we have the responsibility to discuss any act of corruption.

**THE SPEAKER:** That is not correct, Honourable Member.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** It is, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** No! No! No! You said whenever matters of corruption arose, we frown at them.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Yes, Mr Speaker, a good number of Members frown at it.

**THE SPEAKER:** No, Honourable Member. We do not frown at issues relating to corruption. First of all it is the responsibility of this Parliament and every Member to ensure, in our conduct and behaviour, that we demonstrate to be the first respecter of the laws we make here.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, before we expect the rest of mankind to obey the laws, we should always be the first to do that because we are the law makers. How can we make a law and then turn around and disrespect it? So, it has to be extraordinary for this Parliament to do a thing like this.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Mr Speaker, your statement does not even deserve response. Somebody from the back should have responded to you and next time the person should not make those statements.

***Adjournment***

*The House rose at 12:05 p.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.*