



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION –FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2023

SESSION – 2022/2023



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PARLIAMEN TARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Thursday, 26th January, 2023.

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THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

BE IT RESOLVED: THAT THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE HEREBY RATIFIES THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENTS WHICH WERE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 18TH JANUARY, 2023:

(i) THE RECIPROCAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF INVESTMENTS AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF QATAR.

(ii) AGREEMENT ON ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF QATAR.

(iii) AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF QATAR FOR AIR SERVICES. (iv) TRADE COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

V. PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION

PROPOSER: HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH

SECONDER: HON. DR. MARK MAHMOUD KALOKOH

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

THAT IN ACORDANCE WITH SECTION 170 (7) OF THE CONSTITUTION OF SIERRA LEONE ACT NO. 6 OF 1991, IN TANDEM WITH S.O. 25 (2), I MOVE THAT THE

DOCUMENT ENTITLED: THE PUBLIC ELECTIONS (PETITIONS) RULES, 2022 THE PUBLIC ELECTIONS (PETITIONS RULES, 2022 (ACT NO. 17 OF 2022) STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO. 16 OF 2022 WHICH WAS LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 1ST DECEMBER, 2022, DUE TO THE FACT THAT;

[i] IT GOES AGAINST THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY; AND

[ii] DOES NOT CAPTURE AND CATER FOR ALL ELECTIONS BE DEBATED AND ANNULLED BY THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE.



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Thursday, 26th January, 2023.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 10:35 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

[The Speaker, Hon. Dr Chernor Abass Bundu, 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 24TH JANUARY, 2023.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the Parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 24th January, 2023. We will start with Page 5. Do you have any amendments to make on Page 5? I have one amendment to make and I want the clerks to take note. The statement attributed to me in my announcement should read, 'the development and advancement in medical care.' Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Again for the record, I have an amendment to make on Page 8 and this is very substantive. I want all of you to take note. I reminded the House of my ruling that a 2/3 votes was necessary for the Motion that was being moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I made it quite clear that 2/3 cannot be ascertained by collection of voices and that has to be recorded. You can never ascertain 2/3 votes by collection of voices. There has to be a vote and that was what happened. With those corrections, can someone move for the adoption of the record of votes and proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 24th January, 2023 as amended?

HON. ALICE J. KUMABEH: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

HON. SIMEON FEFEGULA: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 24th January, 2023 has been adopted as amended]

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, from the undertone I can assure Honourable Members that the tablets would be available very soon. I would consult with the Clerk to ascertain that information. I want to move for an amendment on the Order Paper. I

move that item IV on the Order Paper be read [b] and item II be read 'Independent Media Commission [Print and Electronic Media Regulations, 2023].

THE SPEAKER: Are they available?

HON BASHIRU SILIKIE: Yes, Mr Speaker, they are here. They have been distributed.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. ABDUL S MARRAY CONTEH: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Motion to amend the Order Paper has been carried]

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR. SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: I would make it a perpetual habit to be congratulating and commending those who are punctual in their attendance. As you know, this is the run-up to elections and the countdown I believe is three months and today is the 26th April, 2023. According to Section 25 of the 1991 Constitution, we shall stand dissolve on the 25th April, 2023. I extend a very hearty welcome back to the Well; to all the Honourable Members to my left who have been busy with lower level democratic elections. I am particularly heartened and gratified by the fact that for the first time you are learning what democracy means. It is always difficult to go through the first time, but you will not struggle the second time. I want you to know that democracy is a very beautiful game; it is like soccer. If you want to be perfect at soccer, what do you do? You practice every day and it becomes second nature, and you become perfect.

IV. PAPERS LAID

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

MR SOLOMON JAMIRU *[Deputy Minister of Information]:* Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following papers:

[i] The Rights to Access Information Regulations 2023; the Right to Access Information Act 2013 Act No. 2 of 2013, Statutory Instrument No. 9 of 2023.

[ii] The Independent Media Commission Elections Coverage and Reporting Regulations 2023, the Independent Media Commission Act 2020 Act No. 5 of 2020, Statutory Instrument No. 17 of 2023.

[iii] The Independent Media Commission, Prints and Electronic Media Regulations 2023, the Independent Media Commission Act 2020 Act No. 5 of 2020, Statutory Instrument No. 11 of 2023.

V. BILL

THE SIERRA LEONE PORTS FACILITY AND SHIP SECURITY ACT, 2022

[INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING]

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

MR REX BONAPHA [*Deputy Minister of Transport and Aviation*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Ports Facility and Ship Security Act 2022 be read the first time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill entitled, the Sierra Leone Ports Facility and Ship Security Act, 2022 has been read the first time]

[SECOND READING]

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, because of the sensitive nature of this Bill and to better understand the merits of same, I move that we suspend consideration of the Bill in question. We need to do consultations and at the same time try to understand the Bill.

HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH: I so second, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: May I refer you to S.O 37. Can you quote the dilatory Motion?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I move to evoke S.O. 37.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[Motion to suspend consideration of Bill entitled, the Sierra Leone Ports Facility and Ship Security Act, 2022 has been carried]

THE SPEAKER: Any Announcement?

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, I have a serious concern.

THE SPEAKER: Your concern is under S.O. 23 or what?

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, under S.O. 83.

THE SPEAKER: Please go ahead with your concern.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, my concern relates to those residing on the Hill Bypass Road. If you have been using that road, you would observed that police officers are now gathering at the Fourah Bay College Junction, also known as Model, and the main purpose of gathering there is to either observe or stop vehicular movements. Since the road was formally opened, they have moved from Fourah Bay College beyond Mountain Cut Junction. Even though their movement is good, but it is not to control traffic to protect the people. That road has not been in use for decades, but it has now been opened to vehicular movement. School going children used to cross that route without the fear of vehicles. The police officers focus their attention on the vehicles than the pedestrians. This is scary because the drivers in this country do not want to know about the zebra crossing. The police officers should stand by the zebra crossing for the safety of the pedestrians.

HON. EMILIA L. TONGI: Mr Speaker, I stand on S.O 23. Two weeks ago, I complained about two ladies who were sweeping the highway between 9:00 and 10:00. I am happy to inform you that they are no longer doing it and I believe they may have heard us through television or some other media. I am happy because they are no longer doing that.

MR SPEAKER: Are you not giving credit to the Deputy Leader?

HON. EMILIA L. TONGI: Probably he must have informed them and I want to thank him very much. We all know that our roads are not good in this country and the tippers that usually deliver stones keep scattering them on the streets and when it is sunny, the tar melt and the stones are subsumed into the tar, and in the process destroy the roads. The Ministry of Transport and Aviation should ensure that those vehicles are not overloaded. We do not have maintenance culture in this country. I thank you.

HON. SAHR CHARLES: Mr Speaker, about a week ago, we experienced an unprecedented rising of mobile tariff and it is a concern to the people of this country. We want to know why the increase on mobile tariff for over **150%**. I believe this is affecting not us, as Members of Parliament directly, but the masses out there we are representing. I am sure even if the implementation of the "Finance Act" of 2023 has commenced, we believe they must do it in phases. I therefore ask that the Ministry of Information and Communications, and NATCOM through the Honourable Chairman of the Committee on Information and Communications present to this House an explanation as to why the increase in mobile tariff. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I will give the Floor to the Chairman of the Committee on Information and Communications.

HON. BOSTON MUNDA: Mr Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member from Kono for bringing this issue to the House. I will duly investigate the matter and report back to this House in the next adjourned date.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue raised by the Honourable Member from Kono is tied to one thing. It is a public secret that the rate at which our exchange rate is going is affecting all of those products. If you interview them, the first thing they will tell you is the exchange rate of the dollar to the Leones. The exchange rate is increasing every day and there is no control mechanism in place. These prices are tied to the exchange rate. We have said this many times here that the Bank Governor should be invited here to give us a comprehensive explanation about the

exchange rate. Mr Speaker, **USD100** is now **1,950,000** in old Leones. Most of the products that are imported into this country are affected by the exchange rate. This is why the traders are finding it very difficult.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we should look into the problem properly, rather than downplaying it. We have to be honest with some of these issues. We have requested several times that the Bank Governor should come here and explain to this House. He is seen as someone that is untouchable. I am saying this because we have requested several times, but we have not heard a word from him. I am sure monetary policies affect transactions and he should come and explain those policies.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not want to be tracked one iota from the substance of your presentation, but do not give the impression that this House has never ever summoned the Bank Governor to give an explanation. As recently as few weeks ago in Committee Room 1, I was in attendance when we had the Bank Governor to give an explanation on the status of the foreign exchange in the country. All of us listened to him with greatest attention and I want to believe we came out of that meeting better informed about the situation.

I am not saying we accepted, but we were better informed than you were before we went for that meeting. I can see a lot of Members nodding in agreement with me. I do not know whether you were present, Honourable Member at that meeting and I cannot recall whether he was. We should not give the impression that despite the many exaltations I have received from Members that the Bank Governor has never come to offer an explanation. He may have come at a time you were not present.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, having said that I will not dispute what you are saying relating to his appearance in Committee Room 1, but the problem does not seem as if solutions have been proffered to address the issue as far as we know. This is because the problem is there unresolved. We are suffering and the people we represent are still suffering. This is a national concern and not a partisan issue. All of us, SLPP, APC, NGC and C4C, are suffering. Let us come together and find a common solution to this problem.

THE SPEAKER: Let me again say this, and I want this to be absolutely clear. I hold no brief for the Bank Governor, but he provided an explanation to all of us. As a nation, if we want to regulate, control and stabilise our exchange rate, then we should produce more and export more. He made that abundantly clear. The Leone is on free-fall, but some of us believe that he hadn't the authority to control the exchange rate. He made it abundantly clear that he has no such authority because the authority is in the hands of the Ministry of Finance. I hope those who were present in that meeting will endorse that when he made that very clearly to us.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, I want to make reference to the former Minister of Finance, who is now the Chief Minister, Mr Jacob Jusu Saffa. During an interview, he was asked about the monetary policies and his response was that monetary policies come from the Bank of Sierra Leone.

THE SPEAKER: The then Minister referred us to the Bank of Sierra Leone Act. Let us go to the very laws that this Parliament has passed because the answer is there. The Bank of Sierra Leone Act will tell you who is responsible for the exchange rate.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member from Tonkolili is a very senior Member of Parliament. You cannot say the Bank Governor cannot be judged. I am sure if we summon the Bank Governor to this Parliament, he will be willing to come and explain. The Honourable Member is however refusing to understand the Bank Governor does not have the legal right to address us in this Well. It is only the Ministers and Deputy Ministers that have the right to do so in this Well. The Bank Governor was summoned and he addressed us in Committee Room 1. Members of Parliament were present in that meeting. It is wrong for the Honourable Member to make such statement. The exchange rate in other countries is falling. For instance, few months ago, the exchange rate in Ghana was 700 Ghana Cedi to a dollar, but today it is 1,400 Cedi. This is also happening in South Africa. This means it is a global issue and it is not unique to Sierra Leone. Since we took over governance in 2018, we have not done badly in terms of global economies. We should face the reality as politicians. We should not be seen pulling down others because we want to score

points. We all know what is happening around the World, with special reference to COVID-19 and the Russian/Ukraine war. If the Bank Governor fails to do what he is supposed to do, we will definitely call him to attention.

THE SPEAKER: I am not an Economist and I will never claim to be one, but my little form six Economics at St Edwards Secondary School that you should look at the currency as if it were the commodity that is subject to the rules of demand and supply.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, I was also in Committee Room 1 when the Bank Governor came and proffered explanation about the exchange rate. I am sure when the Bank Governor came, the Honourable Member from Tonkolili was not in attendance, probably he chose not to attend. The Leader of the Opposition was present and the Bank Governor explained to us clearly. He said he had engaged the oil marketing companies to ensure that there is no shortage in fuel supply. They said they are supporting entrepreneurs and importers of commodities and that was approved by this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, people should not come to this House and create an impression as if Guinea is doing very well. Well, if that is the case, I want to state here that the challenges in Guinea are not the same as ours. Guinea is subsidising fuel, but they are not paying. We are operating on a real economy and recently the IMF downgraded the economic growth of major economies, such as China **6.4%** was projected, but today China has dropped to **3.4%** projected growth. The United States has dropped to **3.2%** projected growth. We must understand the details of what is happening across the World. You would agree with me that every part of the globe is seriously affected. In fact, most of our importers or our major foreign currency deriviers are not functional. During the Ebola scourge, Sierra Leone received the highest amount of foreign currencies because at the time, Saving the Children brought millions of dollars; Plan International brought millions of dollars; CARE brought millions of dollars; and World Vision brought millions of dollars to support the country. In contrast, COVID-19 affected the entire World because it is a global pandemic. Every country was busy fighting the pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are one of the few countries that has food shortage. In Liberia, for instance, they were fighting for rice; in Ghana, they requested the IMF for **USD3bln** bailout; in Zambia, they requested another **USD3bln** bailout; but in Sierra Leone, we did not request for a bailout. We are not suffering from rice crisis; we are not suffering from oil crisis; and that shows that the economic policy of government is providing the needed amenities for the ordinary man. It is rather unfortunate that we fail to tell the people that steps have been taken to support the ordinary man. I thank you.

HON. MARIO F. KAMARA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to believe that we are just repeating the same statement. We neither produce nor export anything. The reality is that we are not producing and we are not exporting. Somebody said the other day that if we support gari producers, they would be able to export same to other countries. Again, much has not been done to fully develop rice production in Kambia and Portloko. I thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

*The House rose at 11:40 a.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 31st January, 2023 at
10:00 a.m.*