

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

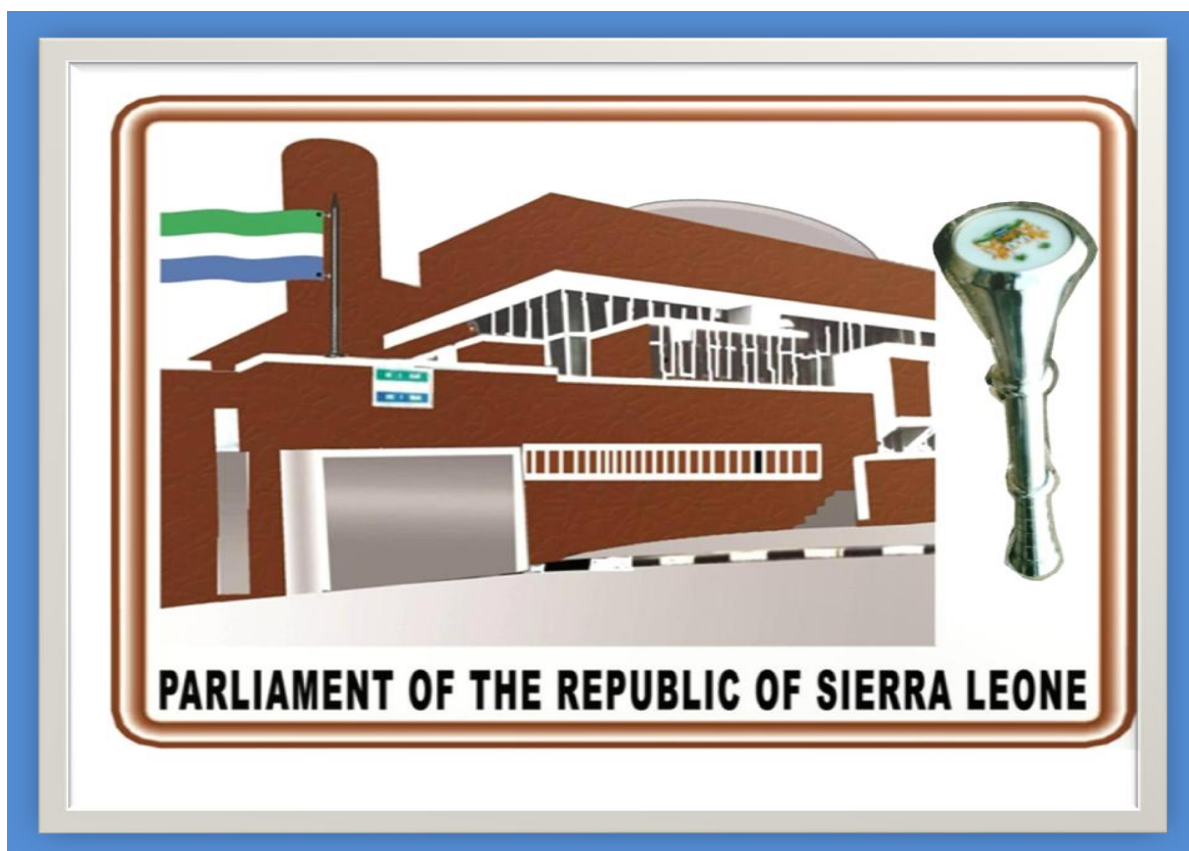
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SECOND SESSION –SECOND MEETING

THURSDAY 29TH MAY 2025

SESSION – 2024/2025



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: I

NUMBER: 50

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Thursday 29th May, 2025

CONTENTS

I. PRAYERS

II. RECORDS OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 22ND AND TUESDAY 27TH MAY, 2025 RESPECTIVELY

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER:

IV. LAYING OF PAPERS

[A] THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

[i] ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT OF THE ISLAMIC CORPORATION FOR THE INSURANCE OF INVESTMENTS AND EXPORT CREDIT

[ii] AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECT PREPARATION OF SIERRA LEONE RURAL ELECTRICITY ACCESS PROJECT [SLREAP] REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE DATED 15TH JANUARY 2025.

[iii] SUBSIDIARY GRANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE REPRESENTED BY MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND MINISTRY OF ENERGY [PREPARATION OF SIERRA LEONE RURAL ELECTRICITY ACCESS PROJECT SLREAP]

[B] THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE

THE COPYRIGHT REGULATIONS 2024

THE COPYRIGHT ACT 2011 [ACT NO. 8 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO. 12 OF 2024



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

THURSDAY 29TH MAY, 2025

I. PRAYER

[The Table Clerk, Miss Esther Boima, read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:25 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown.]

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

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S.O. 5[2]

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE RECORDS OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THURSDAY, 22ND AND TUESDAY, 27TH MAY 2025.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we now go through the records of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings held on Thursday, 22nd and Tuesday, 27th May, 2025. As usual, we shall skip Pages 1 to 4 and start with Page 5 of both records. Do you have any comments or observations on Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? If there is no comment or observation, can someone move for the adoption of both records of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings held on Thursday, 22nd and Tuesday, 27th May, 2025 as presented?

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

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. BILOR SHAW: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Records of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings held on Thursday, 22nd and Tuesday, 27th May, 2025 have been adopted as presented]

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

Honourable Members, I would like to recognise Members of Parliament who were in the Well before Mr Speaker entered. I wish to inform the general public that these Members of Parliament have been so diligent in their service to this nation. They have done so well and they are always in Parliament on time to work for the people of this nation. In fact, I will personally recommend them for symbols *[Laughter]*. In spite of what is happening in their districts or their constituencies, I recommend them for symbols *[Laughter]*. They are:

Honourable Members, when your name is called, please stand for recognition, so that when the people see you in the streets, you will be deemed as one of those diligent Members of Parliament. Again, even when journalists are writing about lateness or about MPs who do not come to work, they know that you are not part of them. That is why you should stand for physical recognition. This is because you are supposed to be proud of yourselves. You have been very diligent in your service to the state and of course to this House. Please, do not forget that journalists are all over the place to write about Members of Parliament who are not coming to Parliament or those who do not attend sittings on time. I have endorsed the Honourable Joseph Williams-Lamin long since. He should be given his chairmanship again and I have given instructions in that regard. Do you know what I am going to do at the close of the life of this Parliament, I am going to write a personal letter to the political parties, indicating the

names of Members of Parliament during this Sixth Parliament who were diligent in their service. I will do it and it is no joke. This is because when they are awarding party symbols, they will take my recommendation into account. That is what I am going to do. Honourable Members, let me start by reading out the names.

1. Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin
2. Hon. Umu Pyne;
3. Hon. Adama Bangura
4. Hon. Ali Bayoh
5. Honourable Umu Pyne
6. Honourable Adama Bangura
7. Honourable Ali Bayoh
8. Honourable Hawa Conteh
9. Honourable Marie Kamara
10. Honourable Amie Nyava Moriba
11. Honourable Mariama Ella Goba
1. Honourable Musa Fofanah
2. Honourable Daniel A. Bangura
3. Honourable Idriss Sahid Kamara
4. Honourable Abu Kamokai
5. Honourable Edward George
6. Honourable Lucinda F. Kellie
7. Honourable Alex M. Rogers
8. Honourable Fallah K. Tengbeh
9. Honourable Rugiatu Kamara
10. Honourable Nenneh Lebbie.
11. Honourable Memunatu Jalloh
12. Honourable Rugiatu Rosy Kanu
13. Honourable Ibrahim Kabba
14. Honourable P.C. Alhaji Sheku Toto Tongos III
15. Honourable Margaret Feimata Johnson
16. Honourable Mohamed Conteh
17. Honourable Dickson M. Rogers.
18. Honourable Paul Samba Conteh
19. Honourable Mustapha Sellu
20. Honourable Beatrice Maya Kanbgai
21. Honourable P.C. Paul Saquee V
22. Honourable Alusine Bash Kamara
23. Honourable Massay Ngahiteh Aruna.

24. Honourable Mohamed Bangura
25. Honourable Tamba Kellie.
26. Honourable P.C. Bio Prince Lansana
27. Honourable Abdul Karim Bangura
28. Honourable Moses A. Edwin
29. Honourable Alice Jebbeh Kumabeh
30. Honourable Momoh Bockarie
31. Honourable Rosaline H. Siafa
32. Honourable Tom Isaac Tucker
33. Honourable Abdul Suleiman Marry-Conteh
34. Honourable Daniel B. Koroma.
35. Honourable Bernadette Wuyatta Songa.
36. Honourable Abraham Tawa Conteh.
37. Honourable Haja Miatta Amara
38. Honourable Mohamed Bilor Shaw.
39. Honourable Sylvester Boima.
40. Honourable Osman Charles Abdulai.
41. Honourable Foyoh Tholley
42. Honourable Sarty Banya
43. Honourable Konkofa F. Marrah.
44. Honourable Ernest Dura Koroma.
45. Honourable Yusuf Mackery.
46. Honourable Mohamed Kanneh.
47. Honourable Ibrahim Barrie.
48. Honourable Aruna Papay Larkoh

Honourable Members, I want to take this opportunity to thank you profusely, from the bottom of my heart, for your diligence towards this House and the Republic of Sierra Leone. I am extremely proud of you; and with this kind of conduct, we can achieve, as a Parliament, the impossible. We can achieve the impossible with this kind of cooperation and diligence. I wish to inform you at this stage that we have two sets of very important visitors who will be coming in any minute from now. We have the Speaker of the Liberian Parliament and his delegation. He is here to talk to us about the establishment of the Mano River Union Parliament *[Applause]*. We are going to recommend MPs who are extremely diligent in their work. We are going to nominate the five most diligent MPs. If we agreed on ten or fifteen Members, we are going to recommend the most diligent Members of Parliament. When Speaker Koon comes, we are going to give him the opportunity to address us, so that we know what the position

is. We had a fruitful meeting yesterday and the Deputy Speaker will tell you that they came in very heavy.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: In fact, they came to embarrass us.

THE SPEAKER: What happened yesterday revealed that we need to do more and I am sure we will certainly get there. However, do not forget that our GDP is far better than theirs.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, that is exactly what I wanted to say and I have said it here that Sierra Leone is not the poorest country. Economically, Sierra Leone is better than Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia, but the kind treatments and facilities given to Members of Parliament in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia are incomparable to Sierra Leone. We have seen what Liberia has done and the Speaker's escort we saw yesterday is sufficient enough to embarrass the entire country, not even Parliament. It is sufficient enough to embarrass the entire country, talk less of his vehicle. The Speaker's vehicle is the latest vehicle and it is an embarrassment that we have people in the Executive Arm who are heading agencies or organisations that have bulletproof vehicles. The Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament is driving a 15-year-old vehicle.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have to face it and it is an embarrassment to us. I am happy that the Ministry of Finance is here. We know we are struggling, but quite recently they have just bought vehicles for some ministers. We have put our request for vehicles and we have been following up on that request. The Ministry of Finance promised to pay **30%**, so that we can buy vehicles. This is the only Parliament in the world where the Leaders do not have vehicles. When I say Leaders, I meant both sides. This is the only Parliament where Members of Parliament do not have offices; this is the only Parliament where Members of Parliament sit in the canteen with ordinary visitors *[Applause]*. This has to stop, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Of course, Honourable Member.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: I want the Ministry of Finance to take this message seriously; otherwise this Parliament will not sit on their Supplementary Budget *[Applause]*.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, added to what the Deputy Speaker has said, sometimes when we travel out, we are embarrassed. I was with you in China and almost every Speaker in China had a photographer and Press Officer attached to him/her. Again, the vehicle the Speaker is using is his own personal vehicle. It is one of the vehicles that we bought before the end of Fifth Parliament. All of us are using our personal vehicles and it is a shame, Mr Speaker. I have not seen any Minister in this

country using his or her own vehicle. I am sure all of them are using government vehicles. Inasmuch as our economy is bad, I however think that we are not treated fairly. Mr Speaker, somebody booked an appointment on my behalf to see the Chief Whip of the American Parliament. In fact, I do not even want to talk about it anymore. Let them know that we have been in several meetings where they have promised to procure vehicles for us. They always referred us to the Ministry of Transport, but the Ministry of Transport would tell you that the Ministry of Finance has not given the concurrence. What is wrong with us, Mr Speaker? When they bring Bills to this House, they will be running after us to enact them into law. This is not a shame on us, but a shame on the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, this is not a shame on me *[Laughter]*.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: It is shame on the Speaker because I told him yesterday that we were in this Parliament, when the Honourable S.B.B Dumbuya was Speaker of this House, we know exactly what was happening and what he was capable of doing. This is the only Speaker who gives the orders to MDAs, but the MDAs do not honour such orders. They do not even respect this House *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, you have to work for us. You would agree with me that when the Honourable S.B.B. Dumbuya was Speaker of this House, there has not been a time he summoned a Minister and he/she refused to come here.

THE SPEAKER: No, Honourable Member. I am sure you know my problem.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: We do not know your problem sir because you have not told us your problem.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please sit down.

HON. JOSEPH LAMIN-WILLIAMS: Mr Speaker, I would like to suggest that we discuss this issue in camera.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: On that note, Mr Speaker, I stand on S.O 26 to suspend all other business of the House. Let us go to Committee Room 1 and discuss.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: We have been on this welfare issue for almost seven years.

HON. DAINEL B. KOROMA: There is a Motion on the Floor.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: No, there is no Motion. I am sure the leaders of this House are the problem *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me tell you the problem and I want you to pay attention. I do not have the slightest problem with issuing out stringent orders, but you will find out that whenever these orders are issued, your very colleagues were the

ones undermining such orders. That has been the problem. I will reserve this for Committee Room 1. In fact, I have told some of the leaders that I am going to call a meeting where Members of Parliament will bring out all the issues that are affecting the House. If you issue out stringent orders, somebody else will say I was not the one; it was the Speaker. This has been the problem, but we will reserve that for another day.

HON. MUSA FOFANAH: Point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, let us wait for our visitors to go.

THE SPEAKER: I agree with you, Honorable Member.

HON. CATHRINE Z. TARAWALLY: Mr Speaker, I would also want you to discuss the issue of our ID cards. We are about to move to the Third Session of the Sixth Parliament. We do not have ID cards to identify ourselves. It is a shame, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me inform you that the memorial mass for our late brother, Honourable Peter Moigua, will take place today at the Elizabeth Daniel Kwashi Parish at 5:00 p.m. In other words, there will be a memorial mass in honour of our late colleague, Honourable Peter Moigua at the Elizabeth Daniel Kwashi Parish at Aberdeen. Please endeavour to attend. Like I said the other day that we are bound to treat a colleague as you would want to be treated when it is your time. So, please endeavour to be present at the memorial mass. I thank you very much.

Also, apart from the Liberia delegation, we also have the India delegation that may be here at almost the same time. When they come, I will also recognise them. The India delegation would want to meet with Honourable Members of Parliament in Committee Room 1, where they will have to tell us exactly why they are here. After the meeting with Members of Parliament, I think they will also want to meet with the Committee on Foreign Affairs. I think it will be a closed door meeting and I hope Members of that Committee are here. I can see the Chairman of the Committee. I hope the other Members are here. How many Members do you have right now? If you did not have the full complement of Members of the Committee, you can coopt other Members. If we have a quorum, it is okay, otherwise you would have to coopt. Please, if you know you are a Member, endeavour to attend. Immediately this sitting is adjourned, let us go to Committee Room 1 to meet with the Indian delegation. There is already a move also to establish a Sierra Leone-India Friendship Committee, likely to an International Parliament. We will establish these Committees and appoint Members to serve on those Committees and appointment to these Committees will be based on merit.

Honourable Members, the ICT officers have just informed me that the work on the ID cards is almost complete and very soon you would get your ID Cards. All of us know that the process is slow and sometimes I get pissed off with the processes involved.

The process is extremely slow, all in the name of audit purposes. If it were for me, we would have proceeded with the procurement and later do the paper work. They said they have to follow the processes and that is what has been wasting our time. The ICT will fix these desktops. These desktops were brought by our brothers, the Chinese and there are issues with them. I have brought the Chinese Ambassador here twice and he has promised to ensure that we get our staff members from our ICT Department to go for training because they too are having problems with fixing these particular gadgets. Before this time, everybody has to use the mobile microphones. I have been on their neck to ensure that these problems are fixed. I want to implore the ICT Director to ensure that all these desktops are operational.

IV. PAPERS LAID

A. THE MINISTER FINANCE

THE SPEAKER: Madam Deputy Minister of Finance, I hope you have heard the MPs. The problem is that the Ministry of Finance has not been treating Parliament fairly. I do not have problem with the Leadership not having vehicles if other MDAs do not have official vehicles. If they have not procured vehicles for other MDAs, we could not have had problem with the Ministry because we know that it is a national issue, but when you cherry-picked MDAs and bought vehicles for them, leaving out Parliament, then it became serious and that is the problem we have with the Ministry of Finance. I am going to stand my grounds. Members of Parliament are saying that I am not firm enough to ensure that the Ministry of Finance complies with Parliament. I have told them that before the supplementary budget is ratified, some of these issues must have been resolved or else we would have to go to the President. I have told them before this time and we will not tolerate a situation wherein you fail to buy vehicles for us; we will not tolerate a situation wherein you continue giving us pittance as allocations. Without adequate funds, we cannot operate effectively as a Parliament because we have several services we should offer to the public.

Honourable Members, we are supposed to perform our oversight function effectively and several other functions. We could not because the amount of allocation they give to Parliament is very minute. You made us to be heavily in- debited because of the pittance you have been giving to us. The moment the pittance is paid into our account, it is used to settle those debts. It goes into the payment of debts and we do not have any future plans. This Parliament exists only to pay debts *[Applause]*. We accumulate so many debts that when these moneys are paid as allocations, they are used to pay debts. That is not how a Parliament should operate at all. The public is bashing at Parliament, saying all sorts of things about Parliament. They usually say that Members of Parliament are not doing their work. The question is how can we operate effectively

as a Branch of Government when our allocations are pittance. How can we hold the government accountable? This is the problem we are facing. In fact, there is an idiot who goes around, writing that the Speaker is the one eating all the money that comes to Parliament. The Ministry knows that we have not been paid and we have debts to pay to contractors and other service providers. Our cleaners have worked for two quarters now without being paid. The Ministry of Finance is waiting for the service providers to withdraw their services before they rush to pay. You cannot embarrass Parliament like this. Please, go and tell the Minister and the Financial Secretary to do the needful, otherwise do not even bother to bring any supplementary budget here. In fact, I am not going to limit it to supplementary budget; we are going to throw out what is before us now. We are not going to ratify it. I will allow you to lay it, but it is not going to be discussed if you do not take the necessary actions *[Applause]*.

Honourable Members, maybe I will try as best as possible to expose some of your colleagues who are creating the problem *[Applause]*. This is because when these documents are brought here, sometimes I rejected them, but they would come and say all sorts of things. I want you to know where the problems are because when they come to my office, they will say this one is very important. The Ministry of Finance is always in a hurry to get money, but Parliament is not adequately catered for. It is this Parliament that ratifies all these Agreements and laws. This is unwarranted and it is extremely unfair to Parliament. We want you to go and inform your colleagues at the Ministry that Members of Parliament are pissed off.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE: Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, with your leave I beg to lay on the Table of this House the following Papers:

[i] Articles of Agreement of the Islamic Corporation for Insurance of Investments and Export Credit.

[ii] African Government Fund Project Preparation of Sierra Leone Road Electricity Access Project, Republic of Sierra Leone, dated 15th January 2025.

[iii] Subsidiary Grant Agreement between the Republic of Sierra Leone represented by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Energy, Preparation of Sierra Leone Road Electricity Access Project.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Mr Speaker, I brought an issue up and this is the fifth week regarding two mining companies. The way they are operating in my constituency is not good and there are adverse effects in the community.

THE SPEAKER: I can recall that you brought that issue up.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Mr Speaker, this is the fifth week and nothing has happened. I have not received any report. The Community people have decided to visit the mining sites.

THE SPEAKER: To visit them?

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Please tell them not to visit the mining sites. I said on that day that if the Committee cannot handle it, then I would personally intervene. I think that was what I said on that day.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: I cannot recall you made that statement.

THE SPEAKER: Well understood, but that was what I said. It is now time for me to personally intervene. I want you to give all relevant details to the Chief of Staff, so that he can summon the two mining companies and the strategic stakeholders of that community. I hope I am clear on this matter. Mr David Saffa, please go over to Honourable Mustapha Sellu and get all the necessary details prepare your summons in conjunction with the Deputy Clerk.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: These are two companies, but unfortunately we do not know their offices in Freetown and those on ground do not speak English. They do not speak English, Mr Speaker and this is serious. Most time when you visit them, the interpreters are not around. We have to engage the National Minerals Agency [NMA] because they issued these licenses to them.

THE SPEAKER: In that case you have to summon NMA. Where are they operating exactly?

HON. MUSTAPHA SELLU: They are operating in Bagruwa Chiefdom in two Sections, Palema and Mosenu Sections.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please summon NMA and the Ministry of Mines to be here. Honourable Member, please ensure that you are also present, including the key stakeholders. Please work with the Clerk and Mr David Saffa to know exactly the date they should be here. I will invite Members of the Public Interest Committee and the leaders to be present, so that we look into this particular issue. It is high time we put a halt to this issue. This is why I sometimes intervene for things to work. It is not that I like to intervene in some of these matters, but when you assign these matters to Committees, nothing much is being done. We are the peoples' representatives and we are supposed to address their concerns. If we cannot address their concerns, then why are we here? Please work in conjunction with the Deputy Clerk and Mr David Saffa. I will inform the leaders when the date is fixed, so that this issue is laid to rest.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, we sometimes have our personal interests in certain issues and that is why we need to examine ourselves properly. Sometimes it is only when these companies are summoned they run to this House and say, S.O 2, 'ah den don summon we oh.' That is the reason some of these companies are not adhering to our summons. We need to reexamine ourselves as leaders and put the personal interests away and take state matters serious *[Applause]*. In fact, apart from the mining companies, sometimes when you summon these MDAs, they run straight to the leaders and that is the time they would call to tell you, S.O 2, 'na we man dem.

THE SPEAKER: I agree with you, Honourable Member.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Chief Whip. Deputy Speaker, I want you to be present at the meeting, maybe we need to look at their documents, licenses, their tax compliance in terms of payment of royalties and what they are supposed to pay to the Government. The mere fact that they do not have an office here sounds suspicious. We need to investigate them. Mr Deputy Speaker, please be present on that day when the NMA and the Ministry of Mines will come. There must be something fishy about that particular company that is faceless.

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: Mr Speaker, I have raised an issue relating to the Matotoka/Kono Road that is in a very bad state. The last time I raised this issue and you referred the matter to the Chairman of the Works Committee. When I said that Committee is comatose, the Chairman went into tantrum, but the reality is that the rains have started and that road is relatively new. A lot of money has been spent on that road. If the Kono road is cut off, especially from the North, it is going to be a disaster. I want to appeal to your Office to speak to the Chairman of the Works Committee to engage SLRA, so that this matter is addressed. This is very important, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we have with us the Liberian delegation, led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia. I am proud to introduce to you the Rt Honourable Richard Nagbe Koon, Speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives. In the delegation of His Excellency the Speaker of the House of Representatives are the following Honourable Members of Parliament:

- i. Hon. Austin B. Taylor, co-chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs;
- ii. Hon. Augustine B. Chiewolo, he represents the Fifth Electoral District in Lofa County;
- iii. Hon. Nyan Flano, he represents the Nima County, district number two'
- iv. Hon. James M. Coley Cole, he represents District number two, Bong County;
- v. Hon. J. Obediah Varney, he represents Electoral District number one, Bong County;
- vi. Hon. Alfred H Flomo, he represents District number four, Grand Basa County;
- vii. Hon. Macdella Cooper, Political Adviser to the President; and

viii. Mr Isaac D Walker, Chief of Office Staff in the Chief Clerk's Office.

I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, to heartily welcome the Liberian delegation to the Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone, led by the Rt Honourable Speaker Koon of the House of Representatives of Liberia. Speaker Koon is here to talk to us about the Mano River Union Parliament. Of course, I started by explaining to you this morning, but I will give him the Floor very soon after I would have introduced the Indian delegation. I will give him the Floor after Standing Order 79 would have been suspended. I will give him the opportunity to engage Members of Parliament regarding the Mano River Union Parliament and the rationale behind it. Do not forget that we are all brothers and sisters in the sub-region, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast; we are just the same people.

Honourable Members, we are not even supposed to have borders, but due to some strange reasons, we are given borders. In fact, I often tell people that some people just sat somewhere in Europe, took the map of Africa and started drawing lines which they call borders. Our forefathers accepted these borders, but we are the same people. Those who are Members of the International Parliaments will tell you that most of the time we go for international conferences, we see ourselves supporting different sides. We, who are from the same neighborhood, we were from the same parentage, but we see ourselves supporting different ideas. Of course Speaker Koon and I had a brief interaction in Morocco. He said we are supposed to be together. I think we need a starting point and this is why he is here to talk to us. I am sure before we attend any of these meetings or before we engage any other organisation relating to this sub-region, we need to sit down and discuss as brothers and sisters, so that we arrive at reasonable conclusions. When we attend conferences, you do not find it strange that Liberia will be supporting one side while Sierra Leone will be supporting another side and sometimes we are vociferous.

Honourable Members, sometimes we are the leaders of these opposing sides. I will give him the opportunity to talk to us. Of course, I told him that most of our Members are in the provinces for their lower level elections, but we still have a reasonable number. Thank you very much for coming and this is your House; we are the same people. You are always free to come to Sierra Leone and to this House. I know you are enjoying Sierra Leone because somebody told me that you went to the Peninsular. When I went to see my brother yesterday, he was almost asleep, but I said they should not wake him up. I know you are already enjoying your country. I will inform the delegation where we will go and enjoy ourselves.

Honourable Members, we have another delegation with us. They are also our brothers. This delegation is led by Honourable Shrikant Eknath Shinde. He is the leader of the

delegation and he is here to talk to us. So, immediately this sitting is adjourned, we will move to Committee Room 1. They have something important to tell us. Members of this delegation are Hon. Bansuri Swaraj; Hon. Eranhikkal Thalappil Mohamed Basheer; Hon. Atul Garg; Hon. Sasmit Patra, Manan Kumar Mishra; Hon. Surendrajeet Singh Ahluwalia, Minister of State of India; Sujan Romeshchandra Chinoy, former Ambassador; Baisnab Charan Pradhan, High Commissioner of India to Sierra Leone; Nishant Ketu, Media; Mayank Pushkarana, Media; and Asokan Amaranth, Deputy Chief of Mission, Abu Dhabi. I have introduced the Indian Ambassador to Sierra Leone. He is a friend of this House; a friend of Sierra Leone and an outstanding personality. Your government did not make the wrong choice at all. He has been doing so much for this House and for Sierra Leone. Please express our gratitude to your Prime Minister and your government. You are heartily welcome to the Sierra Leone Parliament and to Sierra Leone as a whole. I know that very soon you will be in Liberia. Thank God you are beginning to see our brothers and it will be easy for you to be introduced out there. Thank you very much for coming.

This is the people's House and this is where everything takes place. I would like to inform you that over **30%** of Members of this House are women and every one of them can move mountains *[Applause]*. I would also like to inform you that over **60%** of Members of this House are young people and their Speaker is also a young man. This is enough to tell you that this is a very young House and there is one thing that is common among us; i.e., all the Members have agreed to move our nation forward *[Applause]*. There were mistakes in the past, but we have agreed to move this nation forward. Sierra Leone needs this House to make the relevant laws that are important for the growth of this nation. I can give you plethora of laws we have enacted here that are very progressive. You know, before this time, politicians used the death penalty law to hunt opponents, but the last and this Parliament have put a stop to it. We have removed the death penalty completely *[Applause]*. No politician should be cowed by the ruling government. Today, nobody will link me to a coup just to get rid of me. We have removed it completely.

As a government, we also thought that our journalists are being muzzled; they were not given the opportunity to say the truth about what is happening in the country. We have removed the law that penalises journalists for their journalism. There are a lot of other progressive laws we have enacted here. We are a proud House and I am sure the people of Sierra Leone are extremely proud of the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments. This is why anywhere we went, we raised our hands right up to say we are proud of what we are doing for our people. You would agree with me that all over the World, people do not like politicians. I want to thank you very much for coming and please feel at home.

Honourable Members, Sierra Leone, a Non-permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, has expressed concerns in the context of the Security Council press statement of 25th April 2025 regarding the attack that took place in Jammu, Nathashina on the 22nd April 2025, resulting in the loss of at least 26 lives and numerous injuries. We believe this should not be the case at all. I therefore urge all of you to rise and observe a moment of silence for the dead and the injured. May the souls of the deceased rest in perfect peace. I now ask the Chief Whip to move a Motion for the suspension of Standing Order 79 to allow the Speaker of Liberian Parliament to address this House.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, like you said, Sierra Leone and Liberia are sister countries and that is why we need to give him the privilege to address us. On that note, I move that we suspend S.O 79, so that we allow the Speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives to address us. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Chief Whip. Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. BERNADETTE W. SONGA: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Motion to suspend S.O. 79 to allow the Speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives to address the House has been carried]

HON. RICHARD NAGBE KOON *[Speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives]:* Mr Speaker, Members of the Sierra Leone Parliament, please allow me to reintroduce my colleagues who accompany me here. The Rt Honourable Austin B. Taylor is the Co-chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and also Chairman of Maritime; the Rt Honourable Samson Q. Weah is our pending Member to ECOWAS and Co-chair of Maritime; the Rt Honourable Vernella Kpapa is the Chairman on Utility; the Rt Honourable Samuel Brown is the Chairman on State Owned Enterprises [SOEs]; the Rt Honourable Augustine B. Chiewolo is a pending Member of ECOWAS; Honourable Coel Julia is the Co-chair of the Health Committee, and Honourable Samuel Brown is the Chairman on Commerce and Industry. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

His Excellency the Rt Honourable Segepoh Solomon Thomas, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Honourable Members of Parliament, visiting Members from the Parliament of India, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is with a great honour that I perform sense of gratitude that I stand before you today on a special occasion of my official visit to the beautiful Republic of Sierra Leone. Let me first express, on behalf of the government and people of Liberia and in my own place, our deepest gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation and me *[Applause]*. This gracious welcome is a reflection of the enduring spirit of friendship that unite our two nations, Sister Republics bound not only by geography, but by

history, culture and shared aspirations. Liberia and Sierra Leone are more than neighbors; our relationship is deeply rooted in shared history, culture and mutual aspirations for peace and developments. Both nations have historically served as homes for ex-slaves from the Americas and the people rescued from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, giving rise to the Americo-Liberian and the Krio communities that shape the early political and social landscape of our respective countries. We are co-founders of the Mano River Union, parents in the course of peace and champion the future that is shaped by cooperation. Our Parliaments, as the voices of our people, must now lead with greater urgency to translate the unity into bold legislative action that uplifts our sub-region.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Mano River Union [MRU] was founded in 1973 and has served as a framework for cooperation amongst Liberia, Sierra, Leone, Guinea and the Cote d'Ivoire. Over the years, we have seen joint efforts in trade, peace building, and regional development. However, the time has come to elevate our cooperation from executive dialogues to a legislative coordination. It is in this spirit that I affirm Liberia's unwavering support for the establishment of a Mano River Union Parliamentary Body, a platform through which we can deepen regional cohesion, harmonise policy responses and collectively tackle our common challenges, from youth empowerment and security to climate resilience and economic integrations, particularly our eyes are set on meeting the following objectives:

- promote Harmonised Legislation - to align national laws on trade, security, education and infrastructure, to support regional integration;
- strengthen Democratic Oversight - to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Mano River projects;
- facilitate Dialogue - to serve as a forum for conflict prevention, peace building and dialogue between peoples of our sub region;
- Support Youth and Gender Inclusion - to champion cross border policies for youth empowerment and gender equity;
- environmental And Resource Governance - to collectively address climate change and sustainably manage shared natural resources; and
- presenting common legislative position on regional issues - the proposed Mano River Union Parliamentary body, is not mere an institutional formalities. It will be a body, it will be a strategic instrument designed to collectively strengthen our legislative policies of our legislatures and unify our voices on matters that transcend borders.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this vision is not born in isolation, it echoes the fruitful dialogue I had earlier this year with His Excellency, Adama Bictogo, Speaker of the National Assembly of Cote d'Ivoire, who equally shared our conviction for a united Mano River Union Parliamentary Body. As we navigate the evolving landscape of West

African policies or politics, peace and stability remained the bedrock of our development. Liberia remains firmly committed to preserving democratic governance and regional security. I call upon all my neighbour legislatures to champion conflict prevention mechanisms and to ensure robust parliamentary oversight in fostering peace across our borders. In advancing economic developments, we must move with equal resolve. Let us advocate for more seamless cross border trade, investing in infrastructure and leverage regional frameworks, such as the ECOWAS trade policy and the AfCFTA to unlock the prosperity of our people. Parliamentary diplomacy must also take its rightful place in a new era. Let our engagements be frequent, our voices unite in our effort, guided by the desire to bring hope, opportunity and dignity to every citizen of the Mano River basin.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will be remised if I did not convey Liberia's heartfelt appreciation for Sierra Leoneans continued diplomatic supports, particularly in backing our candidacy for the non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council *[Applause]*. This is the profound gesture of trust that we cherish deeply. We stand today at crossroad in regional history. Our people are interconnected by geographic history and aspirations. They deserve a shared vision reflected not only in policies, but in laws, debates, and institutions as well. Let us rise above our national boundaries and build a Parliament that reflects the voice of the Mano River people. As we look to the future, let us craft a sharp vision of the Mano River Union that is inclusive, peaceful and resilient of West Africa, where parliamentary leadership becomes a catalyst for transformation. Together, let us rise above borders, beyond barriers, and build the legacy of unity, our founding generation only dream of. May God bless the Mano River Union, and may He bless our nation *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the essence of putting together or proposing a parliamentary body, especially for Mano River Union, is for us to have a common voice. I can recall when the Rt Honourable Speaker and I met in Morocco, we were debating over a position that was solely responsible for our affairs; and only to our dismay, we ended electing somebody from Mali because of disagreements and that is why I think this Mano River parliamentary body must be established. We need to come together with one voice that tomorrow, if we are going to ECOWAS, AU or the United Nations, we are going there with one common voice from Mano River Union *[Applause]*.

The Rt Speaker and to my respective colleagues and our colleagues from India, I want to thank you for affording me the opportunity to put through my proposal. May God bless you and may God bless the Republic of Sierra Leone I thank you *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Rt Honourable Speaker Koon. You have said it all. Honorable Members, you have heard him. He and I are going to have further

discussions relating to this issue. When he leaves here, he will be heading to Ivory Coast to engage the Ivorian Speaker before all of us meet in Liberia for further discussions relating to this particular project. Thank you very much, Rt Honourable Speaker. We truly appreciate you and Members of the Sierra Leone Parliament have heard you. I had this discussion with them before you came and all of us are in agreement. I thank you very much.

We have our Indian brothers who are here to address us, before they address me and Members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Let us go to Committee Room 1, where you have a general meeting with all of us.

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: Mr Speaker, I was on my legs when the visitors entered the Chamber. I want to plead with you to prevail on the Chairman of the Works Committee to look at that road which is in a very bad state. The road was constructed in less than five years and a huge sum of money was spent on it. If we allowed it to deteriorate further, the entire district is going to be cut off from the North and if you want to travel to Freetown, probably you would have to go through Kenema. That road is also not good. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Chairman is not in the Chamber today and the Deputy Chairman is sick. Honourable Tamba Kellie, please do that in writing and submit it directly to the Chairman. Please, do not forget to copy me.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 11:45 a.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 5th June, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.]