



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

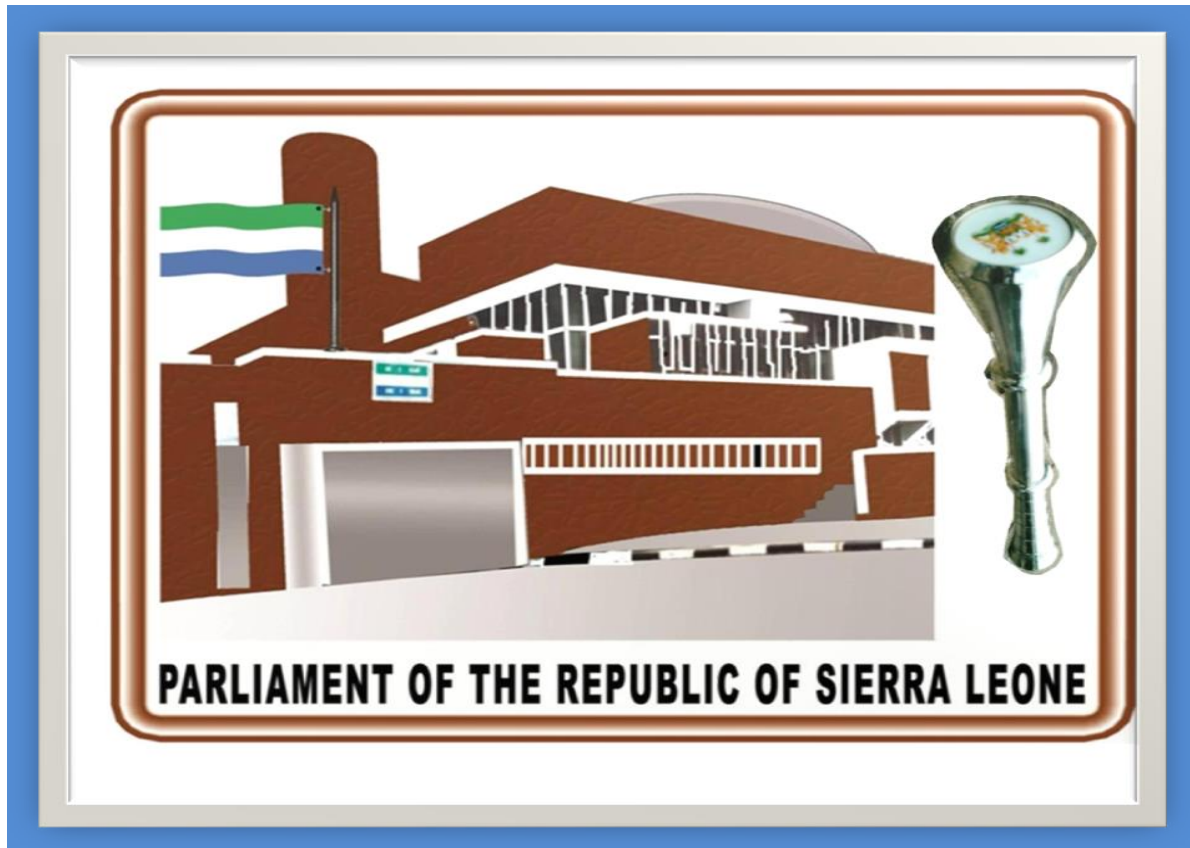
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION –FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 2024

SESSION – 2023/2024



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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 THursday, 30th January, 2024

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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Thursday, 30th January, 2024.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Mr Edward Sahr Lebbie, Read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:15 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

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

The House was called to Order

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 25TH JANUARY 2024.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 25th January, 2024. As usual, we shall skip Pages 1 through to 4. If a Member has any difficulty with his/her name kindly bring that to the attention of the Table Clerks for the necessary corrections to be made. We start with Page 5. Do you have any amendment on Page 5? Page 6, Page 7? Page 8?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, item 7, Page 8. It says, Standing Order 25[1] Honourable Daniel B. from Koinadugu District rose on and not rose of.

THE SPEAKER: With that, Honourable Members, can someone move for adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings as amended?

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

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. IDRIS SAHID KAMARA: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed Put & Agreed To]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Thursday, 25th January 2024 has been adopted as amended]

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER:

Honourable Members, this week we have two important meetings. One of them is in-House, which is the seminar that is going to look into the 2023 General and Presidential Elections in our country and we are going to be able to do so together with CPA International and representatives from the British Parliament who are here as our guests. This is not new. They were here in 2019 during the post 2018 elections and they have come again to do the same thing. So, it a regular feature of their programmes. As we all, CPA Programmes seek to foster cross fertilisation of ideas and

practices, since we all belong to the Commonwealth and guided by certain fundamental Commonwealth principles in the conduct of our democratic practices. So, you are all invited to attend that meeting that will take place immediately after we rise from the Well in Committee Room 1. This will last for the next couple of days and I will urge as many of you as can spare the time to attend, particularly the new Members of Parliament. There is a lot you can learn from this seminar.

Honourable Members, you will be meeting your colleagues who are also Members of Parliament from the British Parliament. They are being led by **Lord Fustor**, a Member of the House of Lords. I met with them yesterday in my Chambers, when they paid a courtesy call. They also have a lot to learn from us. As I said, the Commonwealth is noted for being a prospect like fertilizing arena of ideas. We will not only learn from them, but they too will learn from us.

Honourable Members, the second important meeting that I wish to bring to your attention is the ECOWAS Seminar and the ECOWAS Session, both of which are scheduled to take place in Freetown this week. ECOWAS Parliament has been holding these meetings in various ECOWAS member countries with the singular objective of taking ECOWAS to the people of ECOWAS, so that they will appreciate better their own regional organisation. Membership of ECOWAS Parliament is drawn from the various Parliaments of the Member States. However, as the person who can claim authorship of the ECOWAS revised treaty of 1993, which was a legacy I left behind, the aim is that Members of the ECOWAS Parliament could be directly elected by the populations in the member state that is yet to happen but is an aspiration which I think we should welcome. The EU has achieved that; they started exactly where we are today. The European Parliament was proposed of representatives drawn from the various member states Parliament, until they got to the stage when direct elections began to happen. We are also aspiring to reach to that sooner than later because there is no substitution, but direct representation, as your presence here in this Well is a testament. So, I think it will be rewarding for all of you to spare time to attend the ECOWAS meetings, particularly the formal opening ceremony by His Excellency the President.

Honourable Members, I was told that it is the desire of the President to be there on time and nothing will give greater pleasure than to see our own Members there to receive the President and to also demonstrate our continuous wellbeing in our own practice. I have commended all of you to be very punctilious before the Christmas break and I know we have not come back to that situation, but I know before too long we will. Therefore, we have to be very punctual and we will be there in good time to receive the President and also demonstrate to our visiting colleagues from other Parliaments that indeed we are a great respecter of time.

Honourable Members, my last announcement has something to do with my previous announcement. A certain journalist decided, for reasons best known to him, to describe me as a predator. I noticed yesterday that he has retracted and apologised to me, but at last the damage has been done. This is the trouble when people defame you even when they make the correction now and they make the retraction, the fact remains that the damage has been done and it can be very fugitive. The question is, what can I do? The choice I have is either to accept or to take primitive measures through the Court, but from what I have heard about the gentleman in question being the man of straw is hardly anything expect in terms of damages because that is the primitive way that will teach him a lesson. His pocket should suffer for the rubbish that originated from his mouth, but that is the predicament all of us have to live under, being a public figure. You are the subject of gossip; you are the subject of public discussion, you only hope and pray that most of the time what they say about you is good rather than bad.

Honourable Members, the creoles have a very apt way of describing such people, but I there not use the same language in this Well unless it will be described as unparliamentarily. However, I can say half way that 'he leaked his own... - *[Incomplete]*. You know what I meant by that... - *[Laughter]*. Well, I do not know and that is your own interpretation, but you are not a good creole speaker. The good creole speakers know what I meant... - *[Undertone]*. This is a malaise that we need to address in the social media. We cannot just laugh over these things because it shows lack of responsibility. I do not know why people take delight in pulling the character of other

people down. It is so sad for us as a nation. They have a long way to go in their search of civilization. Those who defame recklessly the character of other people have a long way to go. Some of them are prompted by others and I have no doubt about it. This particular character was prompted or induced to do what he did and now he finds himself compelled to 'leak his own soup.' Anyway, being that as it may, we hope he is now much wiser than he was when he invented his own statements about me.

With that, Honourable Members, let get on with the very brief duties that we are call upon to perform this morning. We shall all rise together when we adjourn and head for Committee Room 1 to be with our visitors from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the British Parliament. I thank you.

IV. LAYING OF PAPERS

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, lay the following Papers;

[i] Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons;

[ii] African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation [Niamey Convention];

[iii] Extradition Agreement between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Sierra Leone

[iv] Agreement between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Sierra Leone on Mutual Judicial Assistance in Criminal Matters.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before I call on the clerks to make any announcement that they may have, let me make one observation which is addressed mainly to the new Members of Parliament. New Members of Parliament please pay attention to this for future purposes. I want you to know that meetings in this Well of Parliament take precedence over any other meeting, especially where there is a clash that demands your presence, you give precedence to your meeting in this Well. This is overarching because some of you may not have known and that is why you headed for Committee Room 1 this morning. I want to repeat that whenever there is a sitting in

this Well and at the same time another meeting in Committee Room 1 or any other Committee room, you should come here first. You give precedence to your obligations to attend meetings in the Well before any other meeting. I thank you.

V. NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL OF CONSOLIDATED COPIES OF THE 1991 CONSTITUTION ACT NO. 6 OF 1991.

CLERKS-AT-THE-TABLE: Acting on the directives of the Speaker of Parliament, the Director of Legislative Services Department has been requested to retrieve the consolidated copies of the Constitution. The Constitution of Sierra Leone, Act No. 6 of 1991 for onward submission to the Government Printing Department; the reason for the retrieval is because there are fundamental graphic errors contained therein and contingent upon that, the necessary amendments would be done. We are sorry for any inconveniences this may have caused.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me elaborate on this a bit. I myself did not know of the serious mistakes that are contained in the consolidated version of the 1991 Constitution, which if you look at the back has all the amendments of the Constitutions since 1991 until yesterday, when I was writing the few remarks that I have made in a little while to the CPA Meeting. I was looking for the amendment of 2001, which actually introduces into our laws the District Bloc Representation System. I discovered that there are very unforgivable mistakes and as you know, there is a provision in Section 109, which makes it a treasonable offence to tampered with the Constitution and to introduce into it language that ought not to be there. It is that serious and that is why I have given this directive for the copies to be retrieved and sent back to the Government Printer, so that the corrections can remain.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, with respect to what you were just saying relating to the retrieval of the Constitution for the correction of certain abnormalities that are very grave. However, it will be important that Parliament is presented with at least a list of the errors or omissions, so that every Member in this Well is privy to the respective amendments that should be sent to the Printer. We do not doubt the Printer,

but amendments are many. I cannot recall all the amendments, but it is befitting for us to have a comprehensive list of the amendments before they are sent to the Printer.

THE SPEAKER: I cannot take responsibility of that, Honourable Member. I looked at one amendment yesterday and that was the amendment of 2001. Maybe there are others and I am sure the amendments that were passed by this Parliament in the 1991 Constitution are available. I do not know how on earth he deviated from using the official amendments that were made and inserted language that I know does not exist in those amendments. So, those amendments that exist have been done and all that needs now is for us to give him notice that he has to be a little bit careful to ensure that the correct thing is done.

HON. DAINEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, how are we sure that apart from the one you discovered, in the even there are no other mistakes or let us assume there are typos. I looked at it yesterday and both of us discussed it. How can we be sure now that apart from the one you discovered there are no other mistakes? It makes us even more worrisome.

THE SPEAKER: I wouldn't think it is necessary to setup a whole Arm of Government to do that. Let him be directed to produce the first draft of the prevised document and then bring it to Parliament before we constitute a Committee to examine it *[Applause]*.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker when, you were making your statement, you mentioned a creole proverb. Let me just start my own statement by making another creole proverb which says: 'nor draw bush mek bush nor draw rope [S.O 2].' Mr Speaker, I believe this Constitution was made during the last regime and I also believe that it was gazetted and there was a White Paper to that effect. So, if we are suggesting that there are mistakes, I do not know if there were mistakes or that was how they wrote the text. I am pretty sure that we have started a debate on it already and I suggest that we leave it like that until it comes to Parliament. It is only when the document is brought to Parliament that we will be able to know the mistakes contained therein. It has already been gazetted and there was a White Paper to that effect. We went to State House and it was launched.

THE SPEAKER: With all due respect to the Chief Whip, we are not seeking to introduce any new debate. This observation has come from me as Speaker and that is why I reported earlier. I do not know whether you heard me clearly. I said that during the course of writing my short statement to be delivered during the meeting we are about to attend, I had caused to consult the Constitution. When I looked at the amendment at the back, particularly the 2001 amendment, I knew it did not reflect the true amendment that was passed by this House. I brought it to the attention of few Members who were with me in my Chambers. For example, who is giving the authority to give directives to the ECSL that elections are conducted by the District Block System; is it Parliament or the President?

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, it depends on the circumstance. Parliament can give instructions and the President can do same.

THE SPEAKER: No, what is the language of in the law?

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: It is Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: No, it is the President.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, whatever decisions the President takes has to be sent to Parliament, especially those relating to elections.

THE SPEAKER: No, I totally disagree with you.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Why was the PR System brought to Parliament for approval?

THE SPEAKER: We never approved it, Honourable Member.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: We passed it, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am sure you have forgotten, but we never debated the District Block System because it was already law.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: But you are talking about amendment and the question is, who made the amendment? This House made the amendment.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, can we go by what you have said that they send the first copy for us to look at it?

THE SPEAKER: Let him do the first draft of the amendment he is asking for. He will send it to us and we will constitute a Committee to verify those amendments, in consonance with the Constitution as we understand it before he goes ahead to print.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, my bone of contention here is that I am sure this draft Constitution will come to this House for our approval.

THE SPEAKER: We have to deal with the Constitution as it is.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, you did you mean the 1991 Constitution?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member and I hope you are with us now?

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Adjournment

The House rose at 11:05 a.m., and was adjourned to Thursday, 8th February, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.