

**TOWER HILL, FREETOWN**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

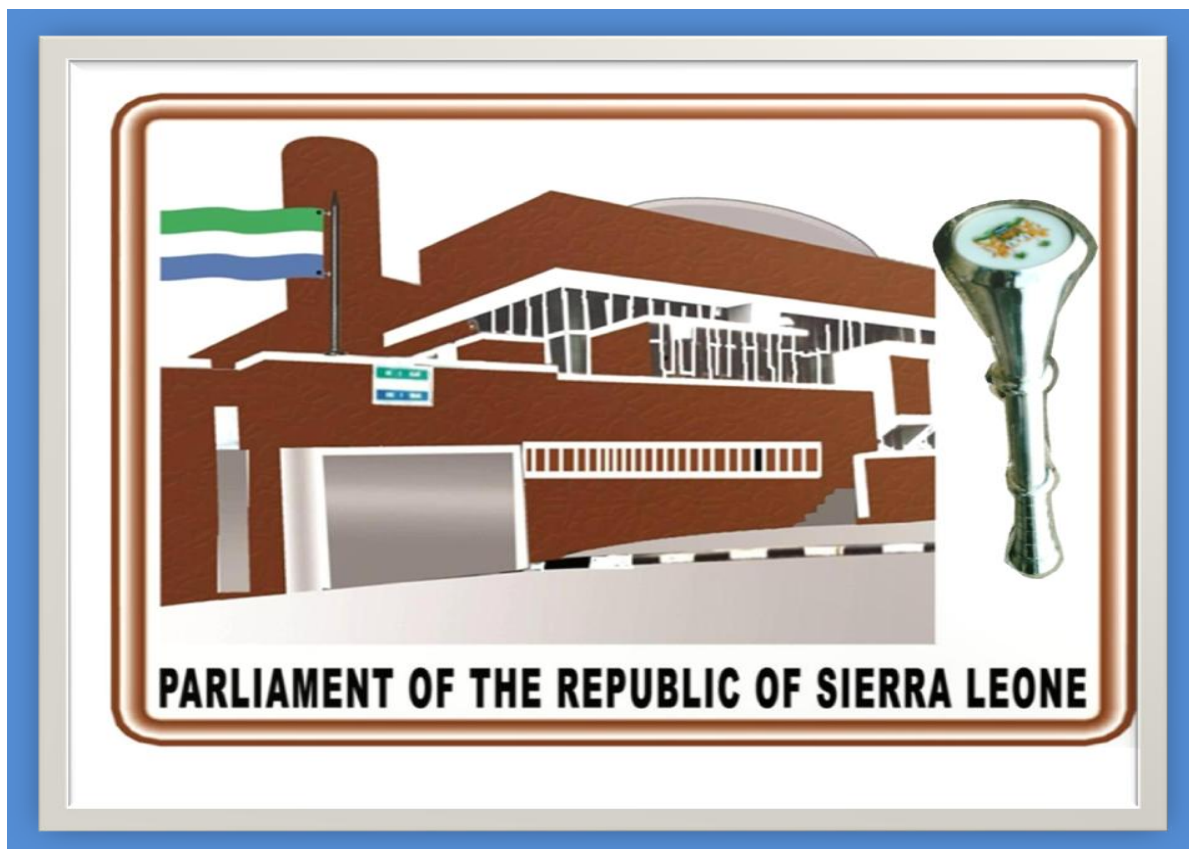
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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**FIRST SESSION – FIRST MEETING**

**MONDAY, 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2024**

*SESSION – 2023/2024*



**OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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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 Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

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SECONDER: HONOURABLE NENEH LEBBIE



## **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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**Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.**

#### **I. PRAYERS**

*[The Deputy Clerk Mr Gilbert Bosco Nhabay, read the Prayers]*

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

*[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh, in the Chair]*

The House was called to Order

**III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER,**

**THE SPEAKER:** I have few announcements to make. The first is to encourage all Honourable Members to acquaint themselves with the new security protocols put in place by the administration of Parliament and Members of Parliament are advised to follow the rules and to observe the principles that have been put in place. This is to ensure that the safety and security of Members of Parliament are guaranteed. It is difficult to elect Members of Parliament, but it is more difficult to protect you, particularly when you are within the precincts of Parliament. We are ensuring your maximum protection. We also want to ensure that whatever transpires in Parliament is what should go out to the public. We are encouraging Members of Parliament to understand and to adhere to the security protocols.

Honourable Members, the second announcement I have to make has to do with an issue relating to Orange Sierra Leone Ltd, which came up on Thursday. A Committee was set up. I realised that they have reduced the tariff to **1%** which means they have been extorting our people. So, the Committee must look at it and you advise or update the House accordingly. Again, there is also recognition of the fact that quite recently, they were offering the Orange MIFI Kola bundle for Le 75 weekly for 3.5 Mbps. They have reduced it to Le 70 for 2.5 Mbps, which means they are still cheating our people and the Committee should also look into that.

**IV. MOTION OF THANKS TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT, DR JULIUS MAADA BIO**

PROPOSER: HONOURABLE MATTHEW S NYUMA

SECONDER: HONOURABLE NENEH LEBBIE

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Leader, I think we have to amend the Order Paper because on the Order Paper the seconder is Honorable Bashiru Silikie.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Well, the one I have is Honorable Nenneh Lebbie. However, I move that the Order Paper be amended for the seconder of the Motion to be Honourable Nenneh Lebbie.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any seconder?

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

*[The Motion to amend the Order Paper has been carried]*

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today is a new dawn in our political lives, setting the pace of the trajectory of this nation by this current administration of His Excellency the President of the Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, please permit me to look at the Speech made by His Excellency the President in this Chamber on Tuesday the 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2024. The President even recognised the role of Parliament in his statements as a living embodiment. He said in Paragraph 2 that indeed we are living embodiments of our nation. Mr Speaker, you are going to permit me to transverse this Speech, so that Members can understand what we are doing in term of thanking the President. It is going to be an assessment of what the President has done for this country. We want President to give us proofs of his stewardship. I think all of us should come together and proffer solutions to problems. You have to suggest how we can solve the problems. That is why I said I am going to transverse this Speech right from the starting.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to first of all start with Paragraph 3. With your leave, it says: "Governance and politics, though intertwined, serve different purposes. Politics is the pathway to governance; it is spirited dance of democracy, yet once elections are behind us, we must embrace governance with single owners. If we allow politics to overshadow governance, we fail not only as politicians, but also as custodians of our nation's future." Mr Speaker, President Bio is trying to draw our attention to some of the issues within our political activities. First, there is time for politics; second, we need to focus our attention on governance and try very hard to uphold the values of democracy. I am sure that is why we are here as Members of Parliament. Our political rhetoric has to be controlled regarding what we tell our constituents. In other words, the message we pass to people has to be in tune with what we do or practice. Even within the political sphere we are campaigning, we should be mindful of the things that we sell out because we have our manifesto. Therefore, I extend my friendly heart, for the unity and progress of this nation, to my colleagues on the other side, including the Paramount Chiefs to ensure that we criticise where

necessary and proffer solutions. Let us give support and commendation where they are due. This is the beauty of democracy. I said I have extended my friendly heart to my colleagues on the other side, so that we work in the spirit of unity. We have problems during and after the elections.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me also draw your attention to the concluding statement of his Excellency the President's Speech on Paragraph 179. With the leave of Mr Speaker, it reads: "We hold positions of leadership, but the true holders of power are the citizens, the only group of people from whom we derive legitimacy to hold our various positions. Our fingers must never drift away from the nation's pulse. We must be both responsible and responsive." We are the people's representatives and we should not present ourselves as sycophants. We should present ourselves as meaningful representatives of the people. As Deputy Speaker presiding over us, you should know that you hold a position of trust and that is exactly what the President is asking us to look at. These are the things we need to do and the things we need to push to bring us together and focus less on what divides us. I can criticise you, but I should provide solutions to the problems. That is why I expect my colleagues on the other side to do and it is the reason I have quoted Paragraphs 2, 3 and 179. This is just to remind us about our civic responsibility as politicians.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we can use what the President has said in his Speech to change the political landscape of this country; to reduce the political tensions we have amongst ourselves. In Paragraph 2 of the his 2022 Speech, I still recalled that he quoted Martin Luther King Jr when he once said: "The ultimate measure of man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenges and controversies." Martin Luther King Jr is saying that when you have comfort, it is not the time you have to make a decision that you think is the best time, perhaps you are in your comfort zone and it may be difficult for you to decide. It cannot be meaningful, but during times of challenges like the political atmosphere in Sierra Leone, this is the time we have to decide what to do. The statement is very clear

because the ultimate measure of man is always considered where he stands at the moment of challenges, not where he stands at his comforts.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President has called our attentions to those values that you cannot make a comfortable decision and you think you have done this when things were okay. What Martine Luther King Jr said resonates perfectly with what President Bio did years back when he ushered in democracy. That was a difficult moment in 1996 because we had the civil war. Our politics was fragile, divisive, destruction was everywhere. The regime itself headed by the military Junta, he decided to take a decision to change the political landscape of our country by introducing democracy. People thought it was not going to happen, but indeed it came to pass. That is what we understand by the statement of Martin Luther King Jr. I am emphasising on this, so that we understand the trajectory we are talking about in terms of our political landscape and where we want Sierra Leone to be. What we should be thinking about is how to change the lives of the sufferings of the people we represent in this House. What policies we should put in place to improve their lives.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me take you to Paragraph 5. It says: "I am heartened by our collective decision to engage in meaningful dialogue, despite our differences. This gathering exemplifies the power of redemptive goodwill and our shared commitments to the peace, prosperity, and stability of our beloved Sierra Leone." This simply means that no matter what we do, no matter what manifesto we write, no matter the position you hold in society, if there is no peace and security, there is no way we can talk about developments. That is why I said earlier that if we are talking about decision making in the difficult circumstances, that makes you a leader, not when you are in your comforts zones.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to encourage my colleagues to look at some of these paragraphs so as to determine the position we need to take as leaders and as the people's representatives. I want to refer you to Paragraph 14 of the Speech. It reads: "Alongside a cooperative citizenry, we owe our peace, security, and stability to the tireless, dedication, vigilance, and heroism of our security and intelligence services.



They have confronted and foiled violent insurrections, coups, and numerous threats designed to destabilise our nation. We will never forget the sacrifices of those who have paid the ultimate price to protect our democracy.” Here the President commended the security forces for providing security across the country. We all know the attempted coups that tried to destabilise our democracy. That is why I made reference to Paragraphs 3, 179 and 14. The President is praising our security forces for their roles in protecting democracy. We are here today because of democracy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that no matter the position you find yourself, we should protect our democracy and stand tall to defend it. Those who are defending democracy, our policies and values of the state must be commended. All of us have a responsibility to protect our democracy, whether you are in governance or in opposition. This is because the consequences are huge if we fail to do so. This is why we should come together and use our institutions to address our grievances. Violence has no place in our body politics. The former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela once said: “Great anger and violence cannot build a nation.” For me, people with pride and focus can never be ashamed to talk about their own differences and proffer solutions. If you have read the TRC report you would have noticed the dire consequences of war. Those who witnessed the war understand exactly what they went through. We should not forget in a hurry at all. Why do we support insurrections? We should kick against insurrections and coups because they have no place in our body politics. There is no school for violence.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we look at the trajectory President Bio is taking, trust me, he means well for this country. I want colleagues on both sides of the aisle to help President Bio to change the trajectory of this country. In fact, if we are serious, we can approach President Bio and commence discussions around the ‘winner takes it all.’ We are embarking on constitutional reforms and we should be discussing some of these things. Do we talk about winner takes it all in our body politics? We should be talking about percentage sharing ratio, so that an Opposition party can have a share of state portfolios. The public pay more attention on ‘winner takes it all,’ but we can change that

perception. President Bio has drawn our attention to so many things that are happening. That was why I read some provisions for us to understand. We are encouraging bad people amongst us because of our political rhetoric. We should not support coups or insurrections. The question we should ask ourselves is that are we benefiting from these insurrections or coups? Mr Speaker, the decency of democracy is how we can iron or resolve our differences using institutional reforms. We should not resort to violence and we are open to some of the suggestions Members are going to put forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now draw your attention to our National Development Plan from 2024 to 2030. We can only talk about these things where you have peace and democracy. Democracy plays at its best where there is democracy. You cannot talk about national development or development plan if there is no democracy. We are talking about this because of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]. We need to dovetail the SDGs with our policies. That is what the SDGs are all about. Therefore, our policy formulation is also based on the African Union as stated in this report. We should make sure that the policies that we formulate are in tune with our development plan. We have ratified Treaties and Agreements and Sierra Leone is a member of many international organisations. Of course, we are now part of the Security Council. This is why we are talking about programmes that have to do with SDGs agenda. We should be talking about things that affect us like the global crises. There are so many issues at play and that is why we should be careful and think about a trajectory we should take.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw your attention to Paragraph 17. It reads: "Even the best-laid plans can encounter obstacles, but without such foresight, a nation remains vulnerable to the unpredictable challenges of our globalised world." This statement is under the middle term national development plan, 2024-2030. I said earlier that whatever we do should be in tune with the SDGs, which is talking about 2030 while the African Union is talking about agenda 2063. When we talked about the blue economy, projections were made, but the fact remains that there are challenges

with the blue economy. So, if you put in place your development plans from 2024-2030, there must be challenges we must encounter. President Bio has been very careful in trying to draw our attention that even when we are trying to put in place our development programmes in line with best practices or in line with the globalised world, there are challenges ahead. We cannot move away from them because even our budget support or resource mobilisation has to do with our international partners. These are challenges that affect us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have wars in the sub-region; we have been fighting against insurrections and coups in Sierra Leone and other places. We are also battling with terrorism and it is affecting us greatly. So, we are saying that we have laid down these plans, but there are things that will affect their smooth implementation and this is why we have to address them. We have to create a platform where we discuss some of the things. This is why in Paragraph 21, the President stated that the smooth implementation of our National Development Plan depends on 'our collective ambition and a guiding light for the prosperous nation we are building together.' In my opening statement, I said we have the pros and cons of what we do; and if the Opposition fails to bring us to speed, there is no way we are going to develop. As we move along with this debate, the best you can do for us is to proffer solutions or recommendations to areas you think we have not got right. You have to tell that if you take this step, you will miss out, but this other step will be better. You can criticise me for the wrong step I have taken, but do not forget to recommend.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, all of us have challenges and we have to look at them in a positive way. This was why I said earlier that you have to examine the issues in both positive and negative ways. Perhaps, at the moment, you are not under any considerations in terms of putting your arguments well. His Excellency the President is calling on us through the principle of collective responsibility to make sure that some of these programmes are rolled out. This is not going to be done only by this side, but also the other side. Therefore, I call on colleagues on the other side to ensure that when they criticise us, they should proffer solutions. When we argue on behalf of our

government, we give evidence and that is the trajectory I want us to take; that is how we should move as a progressive nation. I am setting the stage for all of us to understand the path we should take.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you set development programmes, the achievements levels will not be **100%** because there are limitations or factors that are responsible for that. We are a donor driven country. This is why I want my colleagues to tell me what to do when we reach the resource mobilisation, under the blue economy. We have to look at what was collected in the first quarter. Some of these plans can only work best if the resources are available. We are talking about resources, the trajectory we should take in order to ensure maximum implementation of planned programmes.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to also talk about agriculture under the same rubric, Agriculture and Food Security. We are talking about job creation and agricultural activities. We have launched the Feed Salone Project because we thought that 'a hungry man is an angry man.' We are aware of the fact that if we take agriculture into serious consideration, we can mitigate the shocks from the economy. If we establish farms, as President Bio is doing, we are going to provide jobs. I just want to entreat my colleagues on what the President said. He was very transparent and upright in his statement. We have talked about food security during President Kabba's and President Koroma's administrations. The present Bio's administration is still talking about food security. There are reasons why we are still talking about food security, food sufficiency, affordability, accessibility, etc. and these are areas we are focusing now. The question now is, are we talking about practicalising agriculture? Food availability should be our utmost concern and volatility in terms of food production.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your permission, I draw the attention of the House to Paragraph 24. It says: **"Without the ability to feed our people, we risk sitting atop a volatile precipice poised for unrest and turmoil. The adage "a hungry man is an angry man holds profound truth, highlighting the direct link between food scarcity and national security."** The President is aware of the

fact that you cannot feed yourself if you do not provide for yourself. That is a recipe for chaos and turmoil. Food insufficiency is affecting us and that is why we should fight very hard to feed ourselves. This is a fact, Mr Speaker. He even states the adage that 'a hungry man is an angry man' holds profound truth, highlighting a direct link between food security and national security. These are facts that if you do not feed yourselves or come together to see how best we can do that, it is going to be a national security threat to all of us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me just respond to an undertone that for the first time in the history of Kenema, we now have tarred roads, University, electricity, to name but few. During the then administration of Ernest Bai Koroma, there was total blackout in Kenema and no University. I am drawing your attention to the facts. You cannot distract me because in front of me are the realities. I want you to know that President Bio is a talk and do President in terms of human development and food production. He is a living testament because we are seeing on social media what he is doing. That is why I said we have been talking about food security since President Kabba and President Ernest Bai Koroma's administrations. I also said that we are still talking about it in President Bio's administration. We are looking at those trends and find better ways of addressing the issues. He has stated that 'a hungry man is an angry man' and if we continue to have food insufficiency in this country, it will lead to a crisis.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we talk about agricultural productivity, we also talk about agricultural activities. Paragraph 23 is very clear about that. This Paragraph is saying that a nation's stability and prosperity depends on agriculture. The Sector has huge job creation potentials if you embark on serious agricultural activities. So, let us take note of that when you will be looking at agriculture. We should not only talk about agriculture in respect of subsistence farming, but we should also look at the job creation component one will get from agricultural. Mr Speaker, let me again state that the reason we need to talk about agriculture and food security is the fact that the points are very clear to us. We have talked about Feed Salone. When you are starting from zero, you have to go through some struggles if you want achieve. We are aware

of the fact that there are challenges, such as the global shocks. We had COVID-19, donor support, etc. We are still talking about human capital development. I want to state here that we have donor confidence because of our fiscal stability or fiscal discipline.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw the attention of my colleagues to Paragraph 26 again. The government has focused on addressing key constraints, such as fuel, water management, mechanisation, quality seed, infrastructure, development of technology and research to increase agricultural productivity in Sierra Leone. You cannot talk about having buoyant harvests or enhanced food security if you do not address some of these challenges. I said that if my colleagues on the other side do not believe that the Feed Salone initiative is not working, let them proffer solutions. But we know that we are on the right track. The steps we have taken are steps that will ensure food sufficiency in the country. This is why in Paragraph 29, the President stated that we have challenges, but we have taken steps to address same. In this Paragraph, the President said: "Since the launch of the FEED SALONE Programme in October last year, we have made the following strides in collaboration with International Partners and Non-Governmental Organisations:

- a. expansion of rice production, that's the priority;
- b. Mechanisation of value chain;
- c. Research and Quality Inputs;
- d. Revival of Cooperatives; etc.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that was why I referred you to Paragraph 26, which talks about technology and inputs, and soil fertility. This is because if you do not study the soil structure, there is no way you will have a better yield. Regarding revival of cooperatives, we used to have cooperatives in Sierra Leone, but because of bad governance by Siaka P. Stevens and Joseph Saidu Momoh's administrations, those Cooperatives became ineffective. We are now trying to mitigate some of the shocks because of bad governance. We are going through all these steps to educate our colleagues. This is not about political rhetoric. It is about what we face as a nation. The

President also spoke about the establishment of Agro-Industrial hubs and support to the Armed Forces Agricultural Unit. We used to have it and that is why the President drew attention to it. He also spoke about Financial Instrument for Agriculture, Ag-tech and Climate-Smart Agriculture.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the President also mentioned under the same paragraph about empowerment of women and youths, and also improve farmers' earnings. These are some of the issues we need to talk about when debating this Speech. We have seen increase in women and youth empowerment and their inputs in Agricultural sector. You are here as a very young Deputy Speaker and you been very consistent with our policies. I want to remind my colleagues that we cannot talk about these things if you are not seeing consistency in our policies. You have been very consistent with our policies. Female representation is everywhere because there is a feeling that women must be represented, both in the Legislature and the Executive.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to refer you to Paragraph 6. This Paragraph tells you how consistent our programmes are and that is why you need to trust us. We do not just talk, we talk and we work; we work for our people. Paragraph 6 says: "I am particularly pleased that the historic Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act I signed into law last year has realised our national aspirations for women to be significantly represented in Parliament and to participate fully in the legislative process. The achievement marks a significant milestone in our journey towards the inclusive and equitable society." Mr Speaker, when we started this journey of female representation, our colleagues moved away from it. They say it is not going to benefit the women. I do not want to start pointing fingers, but we know ourselves very well. We are very consistent in what we have said and we are very proud of the moves we have taken in trying to enhance women's representations. We have made sure that they achieve what they are supposed to achieve. You can see that even the numbering of the President's Speeches regarding women's empowerment, we have been very consistent. For instance, Paragraphs 131 to 135 of the 2022 Address and Paragraphs 132 to 135 of 2024 Address spoke about women' empowerment. If today you can see such

representation in this Chamber, it is due to our work and we are doing more for the women. We have surpassed the **30%** women representation quota.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw your attention to something that is very important. I want to state why we need women amongst us. We did what we did even when people were fighting against us. They said what we were fighting for would not work. There are women who could not make to this Chamber, but the veracity of what we are doing is to curb gender disparity; and today, there is successful implementation of the GEWE Act.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I take you to Paragraph 134. He said in the wise words of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala: "Investing in women is smart economics, and investing in girls, catching them upstream, is even smarter economics." President Bio has been very consistent in the last presidential statement delivered in this House. Let us read the last minutes of the last meeting. In the last presentation, you were not around. He said, "I have opened the political space, bringing our female folks into the political atmosphere, into our political drive from the tapestry of our democracy." The President has been very consistent. That is why he said in 2023 when he came for the State Opening and he said it in the 2022 Address that: **"When you educate a woman, you educate a whole nation."** In his current Address, he has linked the education of women to smart economics. President Bio praised us for what we are doing as a Parliament. In this Address, he thanked Parliament for the Acts we have enacted, both sides of the aisles. I only wanted to draw your attention to his consistency in terms of policies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I refer you also to Paragraph 7. It says: **"I commend the leadership of Parliament, the Leaders of Political Parties and the Representatives of Paramount Chiefs for their dedication to conducting the affairs of this Legislature with mutual respect and shared vision. Together, we can work towards a brighter, more peaceful and prosperous future for Sierra Leone."** Yes, we can do it. For us to make progressive laws, it has to be a bipartisan approach, whether we have the numbers or not. The most important



thing is for us to move together as a nation. That is the very first statement made by President Bio on the first page of his Speech. We need to come together to save this nation; we need to look at the Feed Salone programme, where the President listed eleven [11] items that are supposed to be achieved.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to look at the human capital development. Sometimes when the topic of education is brought up, we tend to politicise it. We try to look at it by the people you know. I told one of my colleagues that we did not use violence in our manifesto; we used polite language to persuade the people. That is why I read Paragraph 179 of this very Speech, which reminds us about our responsibilities. President Bio is fully aware of his responsibilities. So, the human capital development is about education and we should put all hands on deck to support education at all times. This is because we are here today because of education. It will be unfair on our people if we fail to provide quality education for them. Mr Speaker, you are here because you are educated. We did not take illiterate people to come to Parliament; we did not take Vamboi from Kenema to come here. We looked for people who are educated in line with the jobs. Your job descriptions speak to the fact that you must be educated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Section 9, Sub-section 2 of the 1991 Constitution and the side note states, 'educational opportunities.' It is not President Bio that wrote our Constitution; the Constitution was written by the then APC administration in 1991. I still need to remind people about this constitutional provision regarding the educational opportunities that we have. Why do we need to talk about this? Education is meant to capacitate our people, especially the underprivileged. It is clearly stated in Section 9, Sub-section 2 and you can read the side note. Why do we keep dragging this issue or treating it as if it is a political tool. Education is neither music nor a lyric. The Constitution says we need to educate the underprivileged or our people. It will be selfish on our part as politicians if we failed to do so. We have never talked about education, but President Bio was brave enough to empower women and talk about education. Why do we treat education as a political commodity? I am sure education cannot be a political tool; it is a right for every citizen to be educated. We are talking

about education because it has to be taken to the next level. It is the legacy we can give to our generation yet unborn and that is why we are creating space for them. People should stop talking or using education as if it is a political tool.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will read Section 9[1] of the 1991 Constitution. It says: **"The Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal rights and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels by:**

- 1. ensuring that every citizen is given the opportunity to be educated to the best of his ability, aptitude and inclination by providing educational facilities at all levels and aspects of education, such as primary, secondary, vocational, technical, college and university;**
- 2. safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, women and the disabled in security educational facilities; and**
- 3. providing the necessary structures, finance and supportive facilities for education as and when practicable."**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is good to remind our colleagues on some of these issues that have to do with education. It is not a child's play or it is not an issue that you have to play with. This is why the President has been very consistent in his approach. In Paragraph 34 of his Speech, he drew our attention to the words of Bob Marley, when he once said, 'you can fool people sometimes, but you cannot fool people all the time.' We have fooled our people for so long. We have leaders who are talking about violence; they do not want to address issues using democratic institutions or means. Please use institutions, even if you do not believe them. This is what a decent Sierra Leonean should do. I want to state here it is not only Sierra Leone that people are facing democratic challenges. The West is also facing these challenges. These are things we have within our domain, but we have to address them. We are not perfect in dealing with issues because we have limited resources to do so. The advanced countries are also facing these challenges. They are limited in terms of executing

policies and addressing every challenge. That is why President Bio said in Paragraph 21 for us to collectively implement our National Development Plan.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, under the human capital development, we have the health sector. It is not only talking about the health sector in terms of infrastructure, but also the human capacity to employ more health workers and try train them in the most advanced way. So, the infrastructure is growing with capacity building. This is in Paragraph 40, strengthening the Health Sector. These are the things we need to do in order to strengthen the health sector. You would agree with me that the health sector is something we have to pay attention to because of its significance to our existence. Paragraph 40 of the Speech talks about the recruitment of 5,000 healthcare workers and increased the number of doctors to over 600. Paragraph 41 talks about training of healthcare workers. This is very important because when you employ people, you have to train them or you give them the necessary capacities, so that they deliver the best service we are looking for. If you only provide the infrastructure without adequate capacity building through structured trainings, especially on how to use modern medical equipment, it will be a very big challenge. So, I want to encourage my colleagues to look at Paragraph 41 with all seriousness. I know there are many challenges in our health sector and we should not be ashamed to say it all. When we took over governance, the records were very clear because the child and maternal mortality rates were very high, but we did not shift blame to anyone. We said we were going to fight in a more robust manner to address the challenges. We are going to call on all players on board, such as WHO to help revamp the Sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have trained more nurses and doctors in this country. We have changed the policy that you cannot be at the Ministry and Connaught at the same time. If you want to be a medical administrator, you have to stay at Youyi Building and if you want to be a surgeon specialist, you have to stay at Connaught. We have drawn the lines, but there are still challenges. The child and maternal mortality rates are so high when compared with the global standards. We have units all over the district, with the exception of Falaba and Karene Districts. I am sure **80%** of the global

standards for special baby care units have been done or implemented. Mr Speaker, these are data that are available on the Website and Honourable Members can crosscheck them. I said earlier that when we took over governance, the child and maternal mortality rates were very high. As I speak, it has been reduced. I am talking about what has been done in the healthcare sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am not saying you cannot criticise us, but you have to give us proofs. We are representing our people and that is why we have to say the truth by stating the problem and proffer solution. You would agree with me that there is no perfection in humanity. That was why we have encouraged you for us to come together and move this country forward. Moving the country forward should not be done by promoting violence or rhetoric, but by ensuring effective service delivery to our people. Mr Speaker, when the Ebola virus was ravaging our country, we had to come in even though we were in Opposition. We assisted the government at that time to make sure that we put it under control. Again, when we had the COVID-19 outbreak, we used the lessons learned from the Ebola experience. That is why the infection rate, according to records, was the lowest. Thanks to whatever structure that was put in place from the then administration and we did not sleep when COVID-19 struck. So, Paragraph 49 is very clear. I say kudos to everybody that participated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw your attention to a very serious issue that has to do with job creation. President Bio said in a policy statement that he was going to create 500,000 jobs every year. That is an ambitious plan and it is good for us to see it. If you believe that your human capital development is working by establishing more universities and producing more graduates, you will be faced with the problem of providing employments. This is why we need to look at job creation at different levels. Therefore, when you talk about job creation, you are referring to youth empowerment. You however need to have the requisite qualifications for every job being advertised. This is important because if the position that is being advertised demands a PhD holder, but you only have a diploma, you cannot get the job. If you have graduated, you should be proud of whatever certificate you have.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in America, they have car wash centers all over the place. If you go to any of those centers, there are people who will be washing your vehicle or car. However, that does not mean that if you are a car washer, you are nothing in society. That is exactly the wisdom of President Bio when he constructed some carwash centers in order to engage our youths. We are better because we are making provisions where they can go and work, while you are using them as political tools to create mayhem. We put them in certain places to make use of themselves. I want you to go and check what they are gaining from what they are doing. You should not be sitting here and saying anything about car wash. They have a micro credit scheme amongst themselves. They have a place of work, just as you have Parliament as your place of work. They have offices in every carwash center and their own micro credit scheme. Please do not criticise them for what they are doing. We know they are suffering. Mr Speaker, nation building is like a pyramid; you start at the bottom and as you continue construction, you will begin to see the shape of the pyramid. I am sure not everybody can be an MP or a medical doctor or a lawyer.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Bob Marley once said that you can fool people sometimes, but you cannot fool them all the time. This statement is very meaningful to us. One professor, one vote; one car washer, one vote; one Honourable Nyuma, Leader of government Business, one vote; one man in Tonko Limba, one vote. I am sure beyond that is a criminal offence. So, why are we criticising them. Why are you not making their lives better? It is better we provide for them than throwing money on them and misinforming or misleading them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw your attention to Paragraph 53, which has to do with job creation and rural livelihoods. Most of us come from the rural areas. President Bio is genuine and sincere enough to draw the liberally minded people to issues relating to rural livelihood. In this Speech, Paragraph 53 says: **"Job creation is crucial for a thriving economy. Our Youth Empowerment Scheme focuses on protecting, supporting and creating jobs across the country for our growing and youthful workforce."** As I said, it is good that the President spoke about job

creation, focusing on agricultural productivity. We should use agriculture as the base to create more jobs. He also drew our attention to the fact that even the little jobs that are available, there are challenges; such as the industrial disputes within the industry. The Labour Committee has involved in settling industrial disputes relating to disadvantaged workers.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is not only about creating the jobs, but the difficulties we are encountering with the industrial institutions or companies. Therefore, in Paragraph 56, the President said: **"In addition, my government has helped resolve over 70% of industrial disputes, including the payment of severance benefits, collective bargaining agreements and union disputes."** Mr Speaker, I want to inform my colleagues that we are in this business together. There are many disadvantages regarding youth employments, both local and international. We have migrant workers, but the good thing is that we have passed the Act and other legislations relating to migrant workers. They are asking not to send people to go and work, but these are all part of the component of job creation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we should respect the legislations we have enacted here, by not just taking our youths or citizens and send them to go and work outside this country. Those in search of greener pasture should exploit all necessary structures that have to do with recruitment processes through the Ministry of Labour. This will help to avoid what is known as the Temple Run that happened in Lebanon. So, government is very open and that is why we have the Commission that is dealing with some of the issues of employments. We have enacted some laws, including the work permit issue. So, I want to implore my colleagues to also look at the paragraphs I have mentioned from the President's Speech. We need to talk about the disputes in the different industries and recommend suitable ways of resolving them. It cannot be my relative, but both sides of the aisles should use the Oversight Committees to investigate and try to resolve them. Most of our people have been disadvantaged. The foreigners in the shops are depriving Sierra Leoneans. This is the moment of truth and this is the time we should speak out some of these things.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have oversight Committees that should be undertaking oversight activities. When they present their reports, the onus is on us to call on the Executive. The President is very clear and I am sure that was why he deliberately mentioned the issue of disputes in his Address. I want you to take note of this because at the conclusion of these debates, we need to take some resolutions. The question is, how do we handle some of these issues? The Committee on Labour should take note of this very seriously. This is affecting everybody, especially the youthful population. The youth are disadvantaged, even though we have put in place robust policies. I want my colleagues to know that if we think we are fooling the people, we are making a grave mistake because when they come to us, they play politics. The unions are not talking for their people, be it APC or SLPP. When they come to us, they will say, S.O.[2] because me na SLPP/APC na in make so. Let us address the issues the President was talking about, especially the one relating to handling industrial disputes. These are challenges we are faced with and we need to address them. As politicians, we always think we are using our people; they are the ones using us because they play with our emotions and when they do, we tend to be very emotional in our thinking and the way we discharge our duty. We start to exhibit unfairness because of the statement, S.O.[2] me na APC or SLPP.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw your attention again to the rural livelihood, which is affecting us. He said rural development is crucial for this nation's growth and stability. A significant portion of our farming and food production come from the rural communities. I am drawing you attention to this because we are talking about agricultural productivity. Even if you invite the heavens to come and transform or supervise us, it will be very difficult for us. Our local authorities, the Paramount Chiefs can attest to this because they do not even have time to look at what is happening around them. There is no strict enforcement of our labour laws, talk less of protecting our people's rights. They will tell you, I am going to the police or to the human rights organisations. We are going to use incentives to achieve our goals. The last point under the Feed Salone initiative has to do with providing facilitation or financial help to

farmers. We want to involve those who can do farming better and trainings will be provided for them. We will give them some education on agricultural activities. We need to pay attention to the rural areas because majority of us come from those communities. We will be affected if we neglect those communities. We have to focus our attention on the development of our own people. People will just S.O.[2], because nor to me regime, na in make are dae ride Okada. No, no, no, no. We need to empower them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we cannot forge ahead if we do not give supports to the clarion call of the President. If we do not look at the livelihood of our people in the rural communities as a prime issue, all of us will be affected negatively. In Paragraph 63, the President said: "My government will continue introducing measures, policies and agreements to boost rural economic activity, support livelihoods and enhance the quality of life for us Sierra Leoneans. We are confident that some of these policies we are talking about are already in existence. The bulk of our population lives in the rural areas. The question is how do we manage the rural sector? How do we rollout some of these programmes we have? Under the same rural livelihood, the President has said that if you are in Kambia District and there is a problem, you have to speak it out. However, in terms of rural activities, this is not happening at all. Perhaps, there is no better way of providing services to the people. If the people of Kambia are suffering, we can mitigate that suffering.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I spoke about energy sector sometime back; and few minutes ago, we had the intermittent electricity supply. This means we still have challenges in the sector. I can assure colleagues that whether you have the best machines for energy generation, we will still have challenges. Mr Speaker, I can tell you for free that there are two things we need to talk about. The first is the agricultural sector in which we need to involve the private sector. The second has to do with the energy sector, where we also need to involve the private sector. We still have the human resource problem in the energy sector. It is a human resource problem we are facing because there are so many machines, but we have people who are callous in



discharging their duties. This is something we should not politicise at all and that was why I told my colleagues that we have allowed the people to use us because when they are trapped in corruption scandal and disciplinary actions are taken against them, they would say, S.O.[2], because me na APC or SLLP na in make den fire me. This is not correct; you are not fired because you are APC; you are fired because of corruption scandal or maladministration. That is what we should be telling our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, do you know what is happening now? There is more rural connectivity in terms of electricity than in the urban areas. If you go to places like Kailahun, Solar has been installed there. This is stated under the Energy Infrastructure. It is not the machines that we have; it has to do with the lack of human capital development within the energy sector. How do we address those issues? The private sector should come and aid the agriculture sector. If we ignore the private sector, it will be the greatest mistake we will make. There is no way we are going to ignore the private sector. If we want to enhance agricultural productivity, extending job creation, enhance efficiency in energy supply, accessibility and affordability, we need to involve the private sector. The private sector is very key and that is why the President mentioned it in his Address. If you go to the United States, even the prisons are being maned by the private sector; energy distribution is done by the private sector; and employments are controlled by the private sector. If we ignore the private sector, we will be a failed nation. The President thought it necessary for us to involve the private sector in order to boost the energy production and food security.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you read Paragraph 68, under the Energy Infrastructure, you will learn that semi mini grids in 45 towns now serve nearly 10,000 households and 200 health facilities and libraries. These are all powered by off grid solar systems. Mr Speaker, trust me, this is a fact. I went to Mano one year ago, the people there have consistent energy supply. If you go to Tikonko, you would discover that the people have consistent energy supply. This means the solar mini grids are working because they have limited human interference. In the Western Area, even if you bring Jesus Christ, we will still have the same problems regarding sufficient

electricity supply because of the human factor. You would agree with me that the human factor is the major problem we are having. We have invested so much into the Energy Sector, but the people are destroying the transformers because of Politics. No civilised human being would undertake such destructive activity. What kind of cheap politics is that? This is a total display of insobriety. As politicians, we should not allow the very people we represent to play politics with us without telling them the truth. If we do not tell the truth, we are bound to fail as politicians. That is why we need education; we need to rethink if we want this nation to develop. We cannot do this alone. We have to stop them from using us the politicians. Our colleagues need to understand the lyrics of politics; they need to understand the message of good governance and the message of governance is civility.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have focused our minds on connectivity the President spoke about. I want my colleagues to know that I do not play cheap politics. If I want to do that, I know where to go and how to do it. I am discussing issues affecting the development of this nation. I do not just talk because I feel like talking. I do my assessments very well. I have been to so many places in Sierra Leone. I come from a minority tribe in Sierra Leone, but I have been recognised as someone from the biggest tribes in the country. This means I am an outstanding Sierra Leonean. I provide for people I do not even know. That is why I am always open to my colleagues on the other side. I do not play cheap politics. We are Sierra Leoneans and we cannot continue to be used by people because of politics. That is what President Bio is referring to when he said we should be true Sierra Leoneans, ready to change the trajectory of our politics.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to encourage our colleagues to understand that the moment of change is here; the moment of empowering our people is here; the moment we have been talking about is here and that is why we should change the dynamics of our politics. The issue of winners take all should be seriously looked into. Let us think about it and find possible solutions. Mr Speaker, do you know what our representatives are doing to us? When some of them secure kicked backs from

contracts, even when they are in the Opposition, they will go to their party offices and say do not talk to them. This is because they do not want us to understand what they are doing. When we come here, they think we should be fighting. We will fight; we speak the truth. They are getting fast contracts out there. They are always trying to set us up. I want to state here that nobody is going to set us up. We are here to deliberate on issues. If you benefit, please say the truth. Let us say to ourselves that I have no personal reasons to hate my colleague because he is APC. I am free minded individual. When I was in Parliament in 2007, I came with my beautiful lady over there. She was my beautiful friend. When I was asked why I was close to her, I said because she has an open minded. I do not normally see her around me now because people perceived us differently. If I am closed to Honourable Aaron A. Koroma or Honourable Abdul K Kamara, they will say S.O. [2], den don sell game. What a hell? I want to know if we are enemies. We are Sierra Leoneans and we should be allowed to do things in common. When people involved in corruption, they want to put fire between us. I am sure our similarities in this Chamber are greater than our differences. ɔsay! ɔwoy! One country! One people! Our similarities are greater than our differences, no matter our political colours.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are talking about road infrastructure. It is heart-rending for people who are getting fat contracts are the ones trying to divide us. It is happening to all of us. I have seen it happening. That is why I said that we cannot allow them to continue to tell us what to do. We have to survive as Sierra Leoneans, but not by using us. If I get contract as a Sierra Leonean, I deserve it. I cannot 'sell game' because of that, but because I am a Sierra Leonean. When I come here, I have to do my job. I do not need to bastardise any Member of the Opposition because he/she is an APC. I need to say the truth; I do not need to 'sell game' because of contract.

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Leader, I want to add something. I want the press to understand the context in which the Leader is referencing contract. He is not saying Members of Parliament are going for contracts; he is saying that as citizens, if you secure contract,

you deserve it because you bided for it and you are qualified for it. That is just a clarification.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Sierra Leoneans like bad news. I am sure nothing stops me from getting a contract. However, if I failed to get it, there must be a reason under the Anti-corruption point of view. I have the right to express my interest under the anti-corruption drive.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about roads construction in Paragraph 70. I want you to take note of the fact that we have talked so much about roads construction. We should now be focusing our attention to the essential roads we are constructing. Are they for agricultural productivity or we want to score political goals? If we are talking about food security or the Feed Salone Project, the government needs to make progressive policies. The government itself cannot be at the peak of implementation and that is why you have to award contract to people. Mr Speaker, if you talk about the Tomabom Project, you need to talk about road infrastructure. This means you need to link the road infrastructure to agricultural productivity. I am saying that even if you have a bountiful harvest, if you do not have better roads, it is very difficult for you to transport those produce to the available markets and storage facilities. We need to talk about roads that are essential to agricultural productivity. In my elementary economics, we learnt about location and localisation of industries. So, if you talk about agricultural productivity, you should also talk about road infrastructure. This means both are intertwined. If I have to produce more in any particular locality, I will have to look at the roads condition and storage facilities. So, we have to provide these things, so that we can enhance food security.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the cyberspace. I am sure we are victims. People are using the cyberspace to attack us because you are in position of trust. However, Paragraph 83, it is very clear. We have enacted the Cyber Law here and we expect judges, lawyers or police to implement that law. We need to make sure that they are better trained for better implementation. It is indeed a new phenomenon. People attack you because through the cyberspace. They need to implement the laws

we make in this Parliament. We are back from recess and the issue of mobile companies extorting our people is going to be dealt with very seriously.

**THE SPEAKER:** Of course, because they have been extorting our people.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** I want to draw your attention to the telecommunications in Paragraph 70. We should not joke with them, but to give the full support to the Committee set up by Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** The other Members are still here.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, there is another thing I would like to draw your attention to a situation where people write negative things about us and when you go after them, S.O.[2], na bekus in na MP. I want to encourage us all to center our discussions around the cyberspace. Look at our new airport. We ratified an Agreement here and that has changed the face of the airport. The President congratulated us for what we did regarding the ratification of that Agreement. There are people who are still saying that we are not doing anything good in this House. No, we are very responsible Members of Parliament, irrespective of our political affiliations. We are focused on one agenda because we believe, as Sierra Leoneans, in the Coat of Arms of our country; Unity, Freedom and Justice. We do things because we are Sierra Leoneans. In Paragraph 77, the President thanked and showered praises on us for ratifying an Agreement that gives a facelift to our airport. You would agree with me that before now, our airport was nothing to write home about. So, I want to join the President to say thank you all for ratifying that Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Paragraph 78 is very clear. The President said: “I thank the House for ratifying Bilateral Air Service Agreements [BASA] with several countries, enhancing air travel options.” This House contributed in putting our airport to a standard platform. This is another area that has been affecting us negatively. When there is a change in governance, there are positions that can be shifted based on administrative arrangements or Executive Orders. There are others that cannot be shifted at all. It has to do with the system. The public sector reform is an integral part

of our governance architecture. We have seen governments back and forth. We need to look at the public sector reforms very seriously. This is because if somebody has given all his inputs or performed exceptionally well or the individual is doing the job that befits a particular institution, he cannot be changed or removed. We should not do so because we think the person is APC or SLPP. No, we should change that trajectory.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me read Paragraph 90, which mentioned eight initiatives aimed at reforming the public sector. People always say, S.O.[2] 'den don pul me pa wok bekus are go APC party.' Civil servants are not graded properly. They have looked at the structure and found out that certain individuals have been disadvantaged; whether you belong to the green, black, or red. This is because you have refused to play along. They post you to institutions where they expect reward in return and if you fail to play along, they will blackmail you, using politics. These are reforms we should not joke with at all. Reforms can make people have confidence in working with the system, whether it is party 'a' or party 'b' that is in power, we are still in the system because there are policies in place.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Paragraph 91 reads: **"The Wages and Compensation Commission is operational. Civil service reforms include reviewing the Civil Service Code, Regulations and Rules and developing a Competency Framework to guide recruitments, professionalism, and performance management."** Mr Speaker, we cannot expect Honourable Kadie Sesay, who has been working assiduously through the introduction of progressive reforms and all of the sudden somebody comes and dislikes her because she refused having a romantic relationship with the individual. These are the things that are happening in our institutions. How do we combat this menace? Well, this is why the President mentions Paragraph 91. We need effective reforms in these institutions and if we do not introduce these reforms, there is no way we are going to protect our people. You cannot intimidate me because I did not give you kickback or I am not favored by you or come from the same region or we do not think alike. You should not

disadvantage me because of that. These are the reforms we are looking for and it is the reason we should pay attention to Paragraph 91.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we need to agree on the reforms we should introduce. The budget will be read here very soon. In the 2019 budget, we did not talk about the micro-economic budget performance, which you know very well that there was poverty indicator. They examined the poverty level of our country and noted a sharp increase in the poverty level. The survey was done and the data presented revealed that from 2011 to 2018, it was **52.9%**, but there was a sharp increase in 2018 to **57%**. This is a very high increase in terms of the poverty bracket. This was noted as a deteriorating human capital development index. So, during President Kabba's Administration, the budget was in billions, but when President Koroma came, it was in trillions. I am sure the first budget they read here was three trillions. In this projection, we are saying that because of the poverty level and based on the economic performance, the human development index was also deteriorating at a faster rate. So, they need those projections and they were provided in 2018. The government said they had projections they were following. They said they were on track to meet the 4.0.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Paragraphs 95 and 96 are also talking about the economy. The two paragraphs are merely stating that our Economy is on track and there is an economic growth of **4.0%**. Paragraph 96 is talking about economic diversification. The President said that 'through import substitution and light manufacturing, we have increased agriculture and fisheries' contributions to the GDP from **3%** to **14%**, creating more jobs.' The things they have done in terms of service delivery added to the GDP. There was a projected figure of **4.20%** increase in the budgetary performance. If you look at some of these issues based on the increase from **52.9%** to **57%** poverty indicator, we should follow the instruction to mitigate some of these challenges. So, because we have diversified the economy, we are not expecting the **4.0%**. In Paragraph 96, the President proposed that to the Ministry of Finance that the growth from agriculture and fisheries has increased from **3%** to **14%**, thereby creating more jobs. In other words, both sectors contributed to the GDP from **3%** to

**14%.** The reason I brought this to the Floor is the fact that when we shall be doing the budget analysis under the micro-economic budget performance, you would realise that we have been talking about the Munafa Investments in certain areas. So, you can see the reasons for injecting more funds to alleviate poverty. This is why I am talking about this particular issue. In 2018, they introduced the Munafa Project and they used the Central Bank to provide more money to the people, so that they can help the business people to get out of poverty. Therefore, we are expecting a positive change in the performance of the economy. So, the President has said that we are expecting a growth of **4.0%** and economic diversification is based on small industries. I want to draw the attention of my colleagues that economic growth is happening, but we need to properly analyse it based on the budget they will be bringing to this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me draw your attention to something that is very significant under Paragraph 98, which talks about fisheries and agriculture. These two sectors will create jobs, ensure economic diversification and provide other services that will support the Blue Economy. Mr Speaker, Paragraphs 105 and 106 talk about domestic revenue mobilisation. The projections being analysed based on data is 4.0 growth in the economy. This growth can only happen under normal circumstances. Paragraph 105 is talking about meeting revenue target, but we need to also talk about inflation under Paragraph 106. Inflation is considered to be a dangerous thing in the economic growth and we need to talk about it exhaustively. That is why both paragraphs are talking about it. In October last year, inflation was at **55%**, which is a double digit. This means inflation was very high. In developed countries, the inflation rate is between 2 and 3. The fact remains there is inflation, although there is a downward projection from **55%** to **32%** in June, 2025. I do not want to waste your time to read these paragraphs. I said earlier that President Bio is an open minded person. We are talking about factors that are affecting us. If you talk about economic growth, there are certain parameters you need to take into consideration. You need to know your export and import value. We have diversified the economy, which plays an integral part in economic growth.



Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you fail to mobilise resources, what are you going to do or how are you going to meet your development plans? We have put in place our development plan in line with the 2030 SDGs or in line with the 2063 of the African Union. So, we are seeing some progress, but at the same time we are very cautious in dealing with such matters. In 2022, we had the fiscal strategy document and that document showed the direction in which the economy was going. So, I want to encourage colleagues to proffer solutions to the problems. Let us look at the macro-economic budget performance from 2020, 2022, etc., so that we can understand the projection. In October last year, the inflation rate was **55%**, but it plummeted to **32%** in June. What we always need to understand are the parameters responsible for inflation to take place. We have talked about extra budgetary supports, which are external supports. I want to draw your attention to Paragraph 111. It says: "In November 2023, we successfully concluded our previous IMF programme, meeting all benchmarks and securing over **US\$200 million**, essential for delivering services and mitigating external shocks."

***[Suspension of S.O. 5[2] being 12:00 noon]***

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are talking about the shocks and one of the shocks was COVID-19 in 2020. I want you to go and read the 2020 Macro-economic Budget performance. The government injected billions into the economy, so as to stabilise and be able to get essential commodities. So, they provided funds. What we are saying regarding budgetary performance is the fact that there is donor confidence from our development partners. They have given us the ambience to operate. In fact, if you go to Paragraph 112, we had millions of dollars support from the IMF. It is time for us to conduct an assessment, especially when we will be discussing the budget. We have also signed another Loan Agreement of **\$250mIn** due to our fiscal discipline. What are we doing as Members of Parliament to make sure that we put in place a policy guideline for the beneficiaries?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank everybody for our participation in the MCC. I was not here, but Honourable Abdul Kargbo and I were interviewed on the MCC. I became very angry when talking about the energy sector. However, they have promised to inject more money into the energy sector. In Paragraphs 117 and 118, there is special component about the energy sector. Mr Speaker, inasmuch we are debating this Speech, we should also bring out issues concerning the energy sector. We are aware of the fact that the MCC Compact is mentioned in this Speech. The President made it very clear regarding the energy sector and as Members of Parliament, we need to play our oversight responsibilities. If there are sufficient, accessible and affordable energy, you do not need to be APC or SLPP before you can have electricity. If the service is available, you will have it. So, we need to take this very seriously if we want the MCC to succeed. All of us should play our role, so that the MCC can succeed. We have to pay attention to Paragraphs 117, 118, and 119. Specifically, Paragraph 119 talks about the energy sector, which we invested so much funds. There is something that is very significant under the energy sector; i.e., good governance. One thing we are always proud of is the fight against corruption and this falls under good governance. The only way we can change this nation is by fighting corruption because corruption is cancerous to our development.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us focus on the energy sector, under Paragraph 119. I want to thank my colleagues and to also inform them that we are still under a state of emergency regarding synthetic drugs. All of us came together and discussed this menace. I know that people are passionate and that is why they always say, S.O[2] den don sell game.’ However, people point fingers at those who are taking kush in our communities, saying S.O[2], you na kush man. We all know the issue about taking drugs like Kush. We have the Social Protection Bill and we need to talk about it. It is already in the House and it has been mentioned in this Speech. We need to take advantage of it and scrutinise the Bill properly. We have to do the needful in order to combat some of these social issues. All of us are vulnerable and I have two vulnerable groups in my community; i.e., the visually impaired and physically challenged. These

are people we need to take care of. We cannot disadvantage them because they are vulnerable groups. We have the aged and other groups that cannot afford their daily bread. This is why we need the Social Protection Bill being passed into law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are proud of our foreign policies. We are in the Security Council. In fact, the President of Sierra Leone was the President of the Security Council for a month. I am sure that by next year, we are going to assume the same position as President of the Security Council. I do not want to talk much about the external policies because of the gains we have made. Sierra Leone is well known, both locally and internationally. They are now looking at Sierra Leone as a force to reckon with because we have chaired the Security Council. We still hold our position on issues affecting us or issues affecting the global stage.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, climate change should not be weaponised. We should treat climate change with a human face. People are using climate change, especially in the West, to make it weaponised, bringing policies affecting us. We have policies gearing towards protecting our people against climate change. In terms of ranking, we are third or fourth, there are countries that are still creating more danger to the climate and they are refusing to pay their own compensations based on the Paris Agreement. So, we should not weaponise it. Islands are disappearing or the Pacific Oceans are going beyond their levels. We are seeing what is happening. The rainfall in Sierra Leone this year has gone beyond our imagination. People said that we would not get enough rain, but it is still raining and disaster is all over the country. Thank God that we are able to establish the Disaster Management Agency, which has helped to combat some of these crises. Some of these things are affecting us, and that is why we need to strengthen the policies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in Paragraph 171, the President mentioned Waste Management Bill that will address certain issues relating to plastics management. It reads: "Meanwhile, the Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Agency ensures compliance with safety standards for medical and industrial X-ray equipment. We are

also developing a National Plastics and Plastics Waste Management Bill to address the pressing issue of plastic waste.”

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about human freedom or human rights issues. Members of the Fourth Estate are here and they can testify that when President Bio came to power, he repealed Part 5 of Public Order Act. It has an obnoxious law. People can be jailed for their professional misconduct, instead of death penalty. You can also take them to court for what they have done. So, the repeal of the said Act was timely and necessary. Mr Speaker, Paragraph 145 of this Speech states that no journalist was jailed for practicing journalism. You are not in prison because you are a practicing journalism. Maybe for the other crimes, you will be jailed, but not for practicing journalism. If I write against the Speaker, I should be taken to court and not to prison. We have enacted the Criminal Procedure Act and we need to free those with minor offences. People have been jailed because of minor offences, such as traffic offence. In that Act, we said that those with minor offences should work for the state or engage them in community service. We have to review the sentences because people should not be jailed for minor offenses. Well, I enacted those laws, and I did talk about it in my presentation to this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank colleagues for their patience. I have mentioned a plethora of issues and I want my colleagues to understand the trajectory I have taken. As I said earlier, if you criticise us, please proffer solutions because we are good listeners. We know how to implement policies. In terms of democracy, we know what to do because we depend on the Opposition to bring out issues. Your criticisms will be taken in good faith and they will help us to transform this country. I will end my presentation with Paragraphs 173. It reads: **“Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, a profound responsibility lies before us. Our journey from the enthusiasm of electoral politics to the solemn duty of governance is not merely a transition; it is a sacred pledge to the dreams and aspirations of every citizen of Sierra Leone.”** So, it is our right and our responsibility to make the necessary changes that we think will move this country forward. We have to look at the

pros and the cons of this debate. I have taken your time because I want you to understand the trajectory we are taking. We are no longer doing Vuvuzela; we are trying to create a platform where we can inject decency in our body politics. Thank you very much for your attention. May God bless us all.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Mr Leader. I think we have gone through a very good sing song and if your name is among the list of debaters, you have to be mindful of S.O.38[2]. This means after the Mover and the Seconder of the Motion, the rest of Members will be limited to ten minutes per speaker. This will help us to have as many speaker as possible.

**HON. NENNEH LEBBIE:** I thank you very much, Mr Speaker for this opportunity. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to be a real mother, a sister and a Sierra Leonean. The Leader has exhaustively done something good to this document. I will however find ways to make my points, even if I repeat what the Leader has said. Mr Speaker, I want to declare to this House that since 2008, I have been a peace ambassador. I have gone through trainings conducted by the Westminster Foundation. I have also attended seminars on peace; therefore, what I am going to say has to do with peace. This is because even His Excellency the President started his statements with peace. I want to thank the President for being an honest man; he does not tell lies to his people. He is very honest in everything he does. No matter how scanty his Speech is, as some people are saying, you cannot chew more than you can bite. He said exactly what he has done and what he intends to do. That is what we have in this document.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank His Excellency for this Speech. He has done well and I am sure he intends to do more because he loves our country. The screen is off and the President needs to hear what we are saying here. This is very important, particularly for our brothers and sisters on the other side. The President is very good at listening and he takes correction from people.

**THE SPEAKER:** Hold on, Honourable Member. A representative from SLBC informed me that they were constrained in terms of coverage because they were also covering

an event at Bintumani, which was hosted by his Excellency the President. AYV is also part of that event. I think ICT staff are working on the problem.

**HON. NENNEH LEBBIE:** Mr Speaker, as a Peace Ambassador, I want to re-echo what the President has outlined in his presentation to this House. I want to state here that Rome was not built in a day. This country has gone through tough times; the country has gone through bitter times and we are moving from the bitterness to something better. There is light at the end of the tunnel. I am going to talk like a Sierra Leonean without politics. We should be concentrating on what the President has done and what he intends to do for this country. He has done great things for this country. The passion the President has for this country is very good.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, sometimes we need to reflect our minds to the flagship programme of the President and that is why I want to start with Agriculture. Sierra Leone used to feed herself and even export to other countries, like Banjul. We used to sell our products to other countries. Mr Speaker, we have a generation that knows little or nothing about the past and that is why I am going to history, so that our children can understand what has been happening. They are just looking at this present and just a year or two backward. We should be thinking of where we were and move forward. We need to move on and that is what the President is trying to do. The Feed Salone initiative is something that is crucial and all of us should work towards achieving same. We cannot rely on others to be feeding us because we have the ability to feed ourselves. We should embark on agriculture, so that we can feed ourselves. That is what we should be doing as Sierra Leoneans. We used to eat enough because there was enough to eat. As Sierra Leoneans, we need to go back to the drawing board and ask ourselves relevant questions. One of the questions we need to ask ourselves is that why are we hungry? We have to think about the things that will help to feed ourselves. When we were going to school, we never experienced hunger. There are certain factors responsible for our current status. As Sierra Leoneans, we have to be very serious to feed ourselves.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are representing our people, but not all of us are farmers. However, we can encourage our people to embark on agricultural activities so that we can feed ourselves. I want to state here that rice farming is not the only farming activity; there are diverse ways to feed ourselves. We have cassava farming and other crops. We can practice fish farming as well. I am sure fish farming is beneficial. Our sister on the other side was talking about the feed Salone programme and said a lot of good things. The Feed Salone is very important for this country and we should work towards its achievement. We are representing our people and we should not fool them at all. The Leader of Government Business has said that we can fool the people sometimes, but we cannot fool them always. That statement is not only for those of us in governance, but for all of us representing our people. When we talk about Sierra Leone Parliament, it comprises the APC, SLPP and Paramount Chiefs. I will be referencing some paragraphs and I am sure the Leader has read most of them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Paragraph 11 talks about a statement made by Nelson Mandela when he said: **"Great anger and violence can never build a nation."** There are times we ignore certain things, but there are times we have to respond as well. Mr Speaker, this particular quotation from Nelson Mandela is very important. This is the bedrock of whatever we are to achieve as a nation if we are together as Sierra Leoneans. We have to work together, so that we make this nation great. There was a time I met somebody; a very good Sierra Leonean and the person told me that we need to change our attitude. We should not be too partisan if we want this nation to progress. The person further told me that even if we interchange Sierra Leone and America, we will cry to come back to Sierra Leone. Therefore, if Americans love their country, what is wrong with us not to love our country? This is the only country where people come together to destroy things that belong to them. Some destroy them because they are not in governance. Government has to be everybody's government. When they make roads, they are not just for the SLPP; they make roads for all of us; when we build markets, they are for all of us; when there is electricity, it is for all of us. You think of any goodies that come to Sierra Leone, they for all of us. So,

why can't we work together? Let us make the Feed Salone our baby; let us take it very serious and see how we can cultivate the land that God has given us. There are countries that have terrible soil with no nutrients, but they still feed themselves. If we are blessed with a country endowed with fertile soil, we can grow our own food and make our lives better.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me briefly talk about education. We all know there was a time in this country when education was a privilege and not a right. I am talking to the young generation. The leadership of His Excellency the President has made that pronouncement. It was rather unfortunate because it became a debatable issue in the schools we visited. Now, education is free for everybody. It is free for APC; it is free for SLPP; it is free for the Paramount Chiefs; and it is free for all Sierra Leoneans. We usually say one country, one people. We are serving this nation and this nation is ours. Let us own this country with sincerity and honesty. We should not make ourselves foreigners in our country. Education has developed and it is still developing. Some years back, education was almost destroyed by some ill-hearted Sierra Leoneans. Those people never loved us because they used every means to destroy Education. The President once said, "If you want to destroy the country, do not use AK 47 or bazookas, just destroy the educational structure and everything will go down. Those are the moments you get the ghettos; and those are the moments you find the youth going into bad practices. Today, we have got a passionate individual, a father of this nation who has decided to take education to the highest level. He knows that if you want a good nation, you must put in place good educational structures.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have been a member of the Education Committee since 2007, when I came to this Parliament. We have traversed the lengths and breadths of this country, both in the North, West, East and South to find out problems affecting our educational systems. Why education has gone down the drains? We tabled several reports, but they were just shelved to gather dust or thrown under the carpets. We found out that a good number of teachers were not approved or pin coded. Again, the schools were not enough to accommodate the children. Today, thousands of



children are attending schools, accessing the free quality education. We have been able to approve teachers and approval is still ongoing. The approval process is not discriminatory because the exercise is conducted nationwide. That is why we conducted exams for those teachers, in order to assess their ability. We wanted to have quality teachers. This is because some teachers in some schools cannot even control their tenses. All the tenses are jumbled whenever they are discussing in English. Of course, some teachers speak vernacular to the pupils. This was not happening in our days. That is why you have people in standard five with sound educational background. My father stopped at standard five, but whenever we wrote letters, we gave them to him for editing. He was a master of grammar. He spoke very good English and he even taught us how to write good English. I am saying all these because we want to build the structures of our educational system. We want to make sure that this nation improves from the bad to better, if not the best. These are the things we want to see in the news and not when the wind blows off a woman's shirt you make it a headline. We have very good pointers right now in the educational sector.

**THE SPEAKER:** For that, you would have to credit the Foreign Press. Whatever happens in Africa, nobody but if a wind blows off a woman's skirt.

**HON. NENNEH LEBBIE:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. So, we should be thinking of something tangible to talk about, and these are tangible pointers I am talking about in the education sector. That is why before this time, we had very good orators. I am a woman, and I will continue to say thank you to His Excellency the President for recognising the women of this country, for giving us space to talk or to be partners in development. Initially, women were relegated to the kitchen to cook. Although we do not have Mama Cooks, but we have daddy cooks. We used to cook for them, wearing African Fashion Dress commonly called Ashoebi. Today, we work side by side to see how we can develop this country. Let me assure you that with the women of this country, Sierra Leone will grow. We the women are here to join hands to make sure that corruption is minimised or totally eradicated. Mr Speaker, recently, we had discussions with other MPs from other countries like the United States of America. The

women's representation was not great or good. That is why we are all advocating for Kamala Harris to at least win this election.

**THE SPEAKER:** Sorry, Honourable Member, can you please expunge that from the record? It is not part of our debate.

**HON. NENNEH LEBBIE:** Thank you sir. It is an aside. Sometimes when we talk as parliamentarians, we make sure we compare and contrast. That was why I said what I have said. However, with your ruling, it is expunged. The space at which the President has ascended to the space and we are proud him. He signed that document without delay because he knows that he always explained himself to this nation that he was fully supported by the women. I am sure if you educate a woman, you have indeed educated somebody that will help the nation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I go to climate change. We are no longer talking about geography. We should be talking about social studies in our schools. I do not know the curriculum in the schools presently, but what is happening is uncalled for. We cannot teach Geography properly these days because of changes in the weather condition? Can you imagine it is still raining heavily everywhere in this country. It should not be raining at this time. Again, we have to look at our activities as Sierra Leoneans. We cut down trees and build on places we should not build houses or structures. We are still using charcoal in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Also, the use of plastics in this country should be carefully looked into and find possible ways of eradicating them. It is affecting us; and it is affecting our ecosystem. Our beaches are littered with plastics and this is also affecting our fishes in the sea. If you study the habitats of fish in the sea, you will find out that where we have this deposit are places where the fish come to spawn and even lay eggs. That is the area where they lay their eggs to allow them to hatch. They do not have conducive places anymore due to the plastics and other materials. So, let us come together as parliamentarians and try to take this country from the point of using plastic bags to something else. Plastic bags are deposited everywhere within the cities and the beaches. They are in the gutters and

other places, thereby posing environmental problems. Whenever it rains, all the plastics and other debris are eroded or swept into the sea. This is not good for us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, climate change is disturbing us because it causes destructions everywhere. Houses are collapsing either due to poor construction or they were constructed on places where they should not be constructed. We have to engage the Ministry Lands, Housing and Country Planning for their interventions, especially in disaster prone areas. I know my colleagues on the other side have already put together a lot of notes to criticise, but I want to inform them that I was on that side in 2007 and we were a bit constructive in our presentations. Let us come together to help this nation. My President will listen to the solutions you will be suggesting to better this country. We have to better the future of our children, irrespective of one's region or political colour. Let us behave like true Sierra Leoneans by being peaceful and encourage our government to take note of some of these issues that have the tendency to improve this country, rather than focusing on the things that bring the country down.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about rural livelihood. Our people continue to make reference to our leadership because of what we are doing. I am sure living in the rural areas is not a crime. It should not be seen as a curse, but an opportunity to live a better life in rural areas. All of us know that Freetown is congested, but if you go to the rural areas, you will have enough space to even make your garden and build very good and spacious houses. We have done so much in the rural areas, but we still need to do more in terms of providing electricity and social amenities. We have made history. Mr Speaker, there are areas in this country that never access electricity. They never saw light in their life, but with the mini grid that the President introduced in some Chiefdoms and headquarter towns, they now have lights in most Chiefdoms and headquarter towns. In fact, their electricity supply is uninterrupted. Therefore, we are proud of this government and we are proud of our Leadership. The President is a true Sierra Leonean because he loves his country. He wants his country to grow because he does not want to be proud of America or any other country that he does not belong to. We only go there for business, conferences, workshops, etc. In that

regard, we should be proud of this country. This document has been extensively exhausted by the Leader of Government Business. I only added some few words and to thank you all for your attention. Let us be genuine with our people and let us make sure that we provide solutions to problems that are affecting this country. I thank you very much for your attention.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Honourable Deputy Chief Whip II of the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party for such an eloquent statement and for ending on a very sound note that this debate should be about proffering solutions to seeming problems. This debate should not be about criticising because we have criticised for too long. As the people's representatives, we must be able to provide solutions to problems. I am confident of the pedigree of this House to proffer good solutions. On that note, I made a statement earlier regarding S.O.38[2], but I would rely on S.O.38[3]. Further to that, I would want the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Public Service and Administration, the Minister of Labour and Social Security, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance to be present in this Chamber on Friday, as part of the requirement of S.O. 38[3] to respond to some of the issues raised in this debate. I am sure they are listening to the debates. I want to encourage all of us to add value to the President's big five game changers agenda. Thank you very much.

**HON. DR UNPHA S. G. KOROMA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. We are here today to debate the Presidential Address. I would want to borrow the words of the former President of Kenya, President Uhuru Kenyatta, when he said that if you want to know the true character of a man, give him power; if you want to know the true character of a man, watch what he does with the power; watch how he handles his opponents; how he behaves to his family and what he does with his influence. I want to say we were impressed by the Presidential Address.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to refer you to Paragraph 3 of the Speech. With your leave, the President said: **"If we allow politics to overshadow governance, we fail not only as politicians, but also as custodians of our nation's future."** In Paragraph 4, he said: **"Our citizens have entrusted us with**

**their hopes and dreams, looking to us to transform political promises into tangible realities.”** Mr Speaker, as we debate this Presidential Speech, we need to reflect on what happened after the conclusion of the elections as an Opposition. Initially, we decided to abstain from participating in governance for certain reasons. The trust in electoral process was at its lowest end. As a nation, we decided to design an agreement to bring the nation together for national unity. In that agreement, resolutions were agreed upon, but to our greatest dismay, those resolutions were not followed to the letter. The President said if we allow politics to overshadow our governance or our actions as custodians of our nation's future, then we will fail as a country. Mr Speaker, when the APC decides to come to Parliament and participate in governance... - *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, every Member of Parliament should follow the queue for the Motion. If you are referring us to a particular page or particular reference, let us know the paragraph, so that all of us can be in tune.

**HON. DR UNPHA S. G. KOROMA:** Mr Speaker, I referenced Paragraph 3.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker. I was part of the team that went to Bintumani and I recused myself because I did not want to be part of the proposal we developed during the electoral reforms. However, there were going to be electoral reforms. We agreed that certain responsibilities or issues must be done by the APC and present same for government actions. I heard him saying that what was agreed upon has not been followed. They were supposed to do certain things, such as providing names of people being detained at the Correctional Centers. I want him to state the concerns expressed by the APC that have not been addressed. Let him bring them out. I thank you

**HON. DR UNPHA S. G. KOROMA:** Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that as the first speaker on our side, you gave me ten minutes to contribute to this debate. I am sure we should be given ample time to respond as an Opposition. The resolutions were sent by the APC.

**THE SPEAKER:** Let me state that I have stopped the time before making that ruling. I referred the House to S.O. 38[3], which is purely within my prerogative to allocate time, but I am sure we have agreed, across the divides, that it is for the best interest of this House to allow everybody and to give every Member the opportunity to speak. If we are going to manage time, I think it will take ten minutes per speaker. I am sure what a Member will not be able to say, another will say it.

**HON. DR UNPHA S. G. KOROMA:** Mr Speaker, when the tripartite was concluded, the Chief Minister circulated audios on social media that all eight resolutions have been concluded. However, I want to remind this House and the general public that not all the resolutions agreed upon have been implemented. In Parliament, for example, APC parliamentarians were told that they would be given their entitlements when they resumed parliamentary duties. As we speak, we have not received anything.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Point of order, Mr Speaker. This is part of the debate.

**HON. DR UNPHA S. G. KOROMA:** You are not giving me an opportunity to land at all. Mr Speaker, the Honourable Leader is distracting me. It is wrong to do so.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honorable Member, you still have the Floor. Let me admonish the House that the debate is for the House and parliamentary techniques are allowed. However, let us allow the listening public to understand exactly what you are saying. Let us listen and take note of whatever he is going to say before another Member responds. Honourable Member, you have ample time to make your contribution. I am going to give everybody the same time. Please, let us allow him to make his points.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, if you want to continue to tread on that issue, we can allow you to land. I am admonishing you not to go to that direction. You can talk to your leadership. I am just advising you not to talk about that issue. We do not have tripartite before us. However, if you want to go ahead with that, no problem, but I am advising you as Leader of the House. Please refrain from that issue because you will end up opening a Pandora's Box.

**HON. DR UNPHA S. G. KOROMA:** I take the queue, but I was referencing the statement made by the President because the President is not here with us, although he is a Member of Parliament. I am sure the public is following what is happening in Parliament. The President came to Parliament and made a statement relating to peace and national unity. He said that 'great anger and violence can never build a nation.' This is why we need to build our case regarding this statement. We need to build our case on this issue, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will take this House to implementable and actionable points. We want to remind this House that implementable actions were suggested and they were not followed. On the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2024, we received a press release from the Finance Minister and it reads: "The Ministry of Finance is pleased to inform the general public that the Executive Board of International Fund concluded the 2024 Article 4 consultations on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 to approve **\$253,000,000**, 38 months extended credit facility Agreement for Sierra Leone. He said the extended credit programme will support the restoration of stability through continued macro-economic adjustment to address debt vulnerabilities, reduce inflation and rebuild international reserves. He further stated that inclusive growth and poverty reduction through structural reforms and targeted social spending to revitalise the reform agenda, strengthen governance and institution to ensure poverty reduction. The President came to this House and told the people of this country that they want to reduce hunger through the Feed Salone Project. Well, this is envisaged in the Big Five Game Changers. The IMF has given a credit facility to the government, but the public should know that these are loans on behalf of the people of this country and the same people would have to pay.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to refer the House to Paragraph 11. The President said in Paragraph 11: **"I thank every citizen of this great nation who has remained committed to peace, despite attempts by a few to incite violence and fear."** Who will be the leaders and politicians without the citizens to serve? In the timeless words of Nelson Mandela, they quoted the issue of anger and

violence. Mr Speaker, as a nation, we are witnessing increase in spending. Of course, we want the feed Salone project to work. The President said they wanted to feed Sierra Leone, but the concern here is hunger. If you go to the 'Big Five Game Changers,' the President spoke about feeding Sierra Leone and one of the alignments the President talked about was to align the 'Big Five Game Changers' with the Sustainable Development Goals in order to reduce hunger. Nevertheless, the increment in tax for rice importation from **5%** to **10%**, as stated in the 2025 Finance Bill, will not feed Sierra Leone. As we speak, Sierra Leone is ranked 117 out of 127 as one of the hungriest countries in the World. This is according to the Global Hunger Index and it shows that Sierra Leone is a hungry country. However, we have not seen any dividend from the **5%** tax on rice importation in 2024. Again, I do not think the proposed **10%** tax for rice importation for 2025 will benefit Sierra Leone or will effectively support the Feed Salone Initiative. Now, the government has been given over **200mln** Dollars as an extended credit facility by IMF to reduce poverty and hunger. I want to encourage the government to use that money to help the Feed Salone project and remove the tax on rice importation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second part of the Big Five Game Changer has to do with human capital development and job creation. The question is how can you improve the human capital development without investments in training young people? We are forced to compare ourselves with other countries in the sub-region and I will want to compare ourselves with Guinea. Guinea is ranked 95, which means we need to study what Guinea is doing. Ghana is ranked 66 and their index is 13.9. We need to follow what Ghana is doing. As we continue to hold this government accountable, we should make no mistake that we have a moral obligation and a responsibility as Sierra Leoneans to provide a robust and critical assessment of this government's policy as we provide a clear alternative as a party in waiting. We are the government in waiting, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on the health sector, the Leader of Government Business stated that the infant mortality rate has reduced. I want to remind this House



and the people of this country that the Free Healthcare System was introduced by the government of the All People's Congress Party. So, you are preaching to the choir because we know that health is very important when the APC government inherited terrible infant mortality rate. When APC took over the governance of this country, the infant mortality rate was 111 out 100, but the APC reduced it to 80 out of 100 deaths. Today, the SLPP led government has reduced it from 80 to 72. If you check the percentage difference as at the time the APC introduced the Free Healthcare System, you will know that the APC has done more regarding the infant mortality rate than the SLPP. I want to state here that the Eastern Polytechnic is doing well. The APC planted trees, but they were not growing. However, the SLPP should know that all the programmes they inherited are the ones they have changed. So you are only preaching to the choir. I know we have a galaxy of MPs who want to contribute to this debate and I was trying to touch on the things I wanted to talk about, especially the Big Five Game Changers. I am sure we are going to do justice to this debate. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, the Honourable Unpha Koroma from the Western Urban District. Honourable Members, at this point I think we should take a short break. The House stands adjourned until 2:00 p.m. when the debate will recommence.

*[The House stood down and resumed at 2:00 p.m.]*

**HON. MAMODU KAMARA:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I rise to lend my voice to this Presidential Address. Mr Speaker, before delving into the debate proper, please permit me to entreat this House with an African proverb which says, 'do not be so much in love that you cannot tell when it is raining. Mr Speaker, every word, every sentence of this presidential Address is a disappointment not only me, but even the Kenema boys and the Eastern Province youth. The President said in Paragraph 24 that 'a hungry man is an angry man.' I am sure the Southern Province will soon speak out with melodious voices in line with the level of patriotism being manifested by the Kenema boys. With utmost urgency, let me salute the supermen and women living in Sierra Leone, where

the prices of basic commodities are not only skyrocketing, but they are now chasing Jupiter.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is raining heavily in the PAOPA's strong hold. I refer the House to Paragraphs 53 and 54. I read: "Mr Speaker, job creation is crucial for a thriving economy. Our youth employment scheme focuses on protecting, supporting and creating jobs across the country. We are committed to a cohesive approach, investing in education and skills training, developing inland valley swamps, digital jobs and technical skills to integrate youth into public sector agency." No wonder Mr President paused his reading when he got to job creation because he is fully aware that he has done more of job substitution and created little jobs. In the past six years, we have witnessed situations where the Kamas are substituted with Kannehs, the Turays are substituted with Tuckers, the Sesays are substituted with Sandys, the Banguras are substituted with Bonguays. No wonder the song that is currently trending on social media has an intro [S02] Mende ken, promise, ibami logo muma.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am disappointed by every word or sentence in this Presidential Address. This is a disappointment to me and I have spent so much time pondering whether I should thank His Excellency the President for this Address. I am sure that will have been the gravest of mistakes against the people I am representing. I have read all the 20 pages, but I was unable to connect the sincerity in words to the reality on the ground. I have tried so hard to connect the sincerity in words to the reality on the ground, as laid out in Paragraph 34 of Page 5, where the President said he has invested so much funding in education. He said student fees in tertiary institutions have magically bounced from **NLe2,500,000** some years ago to **NLe8,000,000**. What kind of investment is that? How do we connect the sincerity in words to the reality on the ground of a government that has claimed to have prioritised education? The University fee is now **NLe 8,000** per student.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAM-LAMIN:** Honourable Speaker, Point of Order, listens; the Honourable colleague is misinforming the public. There is no public university that is charging **NLe8,000**. The fee is about **NLe6,000**.

**HON. MAMODU KAMARA:** I am shocked that the Chairman of the Committee on Technical and Higher Education challenged the fact that students are not paying **NLe8,000**. He is the Chairman of the Committee on Technical and Higher Education.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, the point here is that it is not **NLe8,000**, but it ranges from **NLe5,000** to **NLe6,000**. I thank you.

**HON. MAMODU KAMARA:** Like I said, he is the Chairman of the Tertiary Education Committee and he is here misleading this House that students are not paying **NLe8,000**. I am really shocked. The government that has claimed to have prioritised education so much will pride itself to deprive 1000 promising Sierra Leones from taking their University entrance exams known as WASSCE.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, I am disappointed and I am in excruciating pain. The people of this country, most especially those in Lumely and its environs will not forgive me if I failed in my sacred duty, to present their plights and sufferings which are not only limited to the cost of living, but the extremely high cost of prepaid meter recharge card and the corresponding power outage which could not even power bulb properly, talk less of an electric fan. I am disappointed because the electricity expansion the President mentioned in Paragraph 65 should be thoroughly examined. Where are those expansions? We should summon the Energy Minister as provided for in S.Os 19 and 21 for him to guide this House on those expansions. Mr Speaker, S.O[2], bio bio President Maada Bio na the Energy Minister.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my continued disappointment, the Energy Sector presents the biggest skills to the fiscal year as a result of the poor performance of the sector. I am sure only **36%** of our population has access to electricity, limiting our opportunities in health, education, economic empowerment, etc. They are obstructing and limiting our opportunity in education, health and economic empowerment. According to the World Bank report on Sierra Leone economic corporate 2023 which was published on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024, reveals the reasons why we are unable to

attract foreign investments when electricity is below **36%** it is not even sustainable. **S02** Leh den hold we o na big big problem business this.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Lumley community has about 90,000 people and are still continuing to rely on a three bed room rented flats as hospital that is almost in an inaccessible location, while the 100 bed hospital is still uncompleted. I am living in the same community with Mr Speaker and he knows what I am talking about.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am disappointed because the Kamayama to Pentagon Road project, the Edmunds drive to Kanigo Road project, which are supposed to have been completed long ago and still not completed. This government should not only consider the importance of the people in these communities during electioneering periods. In fact, this has even narrowed my hope of constructing a road to reach Amboga Hill, Maribo Community, Chima community, Kabba Juba, Pipeline community and other communities.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, I am disappointed at what the President said in the third paragraph of the last sentence. I cannot connect the President's remarks to the reality on the ground. The last sentence of Paragraph 3 reads: "If we allow politics to overshadow governance, we fail, not only as politicians, but also as custodians of our nation's future." Mr Speaker, the Mammah Airport project and the 100 bed hospital at Lumley were abandoned by the SLPP led government, not because of anything, but because they considered them as APC led projects. That is exactly what is meant by allowing politics to overshadow our governance architecture.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am disappointed and I am sure many Sierra Leoneans are also disappointed. Mr Speaker, I spoke about the energy sector. You would agree with me that before the SLPP came to governance, when you buy a prepaid meter top up at **Le50,000**, you would be given 56 units. Today, when you buy at **NLe1,000**, you are only getting 120 units. That is why I said it is the highest form of wickedness against the citizens of this county. Today, a bag of Jasmine rice is **NLe1,500**. We used to buy a bag of rice **Le 250,000**. I think I will have to stop here.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honorable Member from the Western Area Urban for such an eloquent presentation of the issues.

**HON. FALLAH K. TENGBEH:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to add my voice to the Presidential Address. I feel honored and elated. I feel pampered for the privilege. It is a tradition for this Honourable House to thank the President whenever he delivers his Address to the nation. He has to be thanked and it is equally an imperative duty of elected Members of Parliament to do same. I was shocked and amazed when my colleague said he would not thank the President. All that I have to say is the fact that the President is an epitome of progress and development in Sierra Leone. You would agree with me that President Bio has got the right character, experience and vision to move Sierra Leone forward. He programmed himself in a process based approach. Mr Speaker, until you understand the processes involved, you cannot be able to govern your people properly. President Bio has depicted maturity, and experience times without number.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me use a quick political anecdote or attention grabber to usher myself into today's debate. We know among ourselves as Honourable Members of Parliament who are the true haters of our nation. We are not oblivious of the fact that our brothers on the other side took our country to austerity; we are not oblivious of the fact that our brothers on the other side signed bad mining and road contracts that led to the closure of London Mining and the African Minerals; it is not oblivious of the fact that we have freedom of speech. I want to assure this nation that President Bio has moved this country within the shortest possible time from the slumber it were in 2017 to where we are as a nation that can still pay salaries on time. We are also embarking on capital intensive development projects.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having said that, let me now get into the debate proper. I will start with the energy sector, on Page 3, under Infrastructure Development and Technology. I will start with the energy component under that particular theme. Mr Speaker, data has shown that in 2017, 2018, our energy access rate in Sierra Leone was between **5%** and **16%**; and today, we are at **35%**. This means in less than six

years, we have been able to double and about to triple the achievements of the 11 years of APC led government. The installation of solar power mini grids has been done and I was the only lead electrical engineer for that project. This has helped our families in the rural areas to improve their economic wellbeing or living standards. I say kudos to President Bio because solar power mini grids have been installed in almost every chieftdom headquarter town. People enjoy 24 hours electricity. We should not oblivious of the fact that Freetown is not Sierra Leone. Freetown is just part of Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me briefly go to the bridges and roads infrastructure. The President Bio led government has provided infrastructure for transportation, facilitate commerce and service delivery to-hard-to reach communities. This has ensured community integration and connectivity. For instance, the 163 meter Magbele Bridge, the Mabang Bridge, which is about 231 meters, the Shenge Bridge, etc. We also have the Matru Jong and Gendema Bridge are in advanced stage. If they are completed, community connectivity will be enhanced, both local and international levels.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I now go to airport. Owing to the fact that we have a very hard working President, I have the pleasure to announce that President Bio has constructed state of the art International Airport at lungi. I call on Honorable Members to celebrate President Bio's successes. I will refer to this airport as a politically diversified airport. President Bio did not say because he is coming from a stronghold of the South East, he should not construct it in the North. This shows that as a government, we are politically diversified. This is the airport we should be proud of as Sierra Leoneans. After an international audit, it scored **72%**. This is unprecedented and it is therefore the responsibility of each and every one of us as Honourable Members to be proud of President Bio. He has shown us to be responsible to international partners.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I go to the Blue Economy. On Pages 11 and 12, the Presidential Speech clearly stated that the revenue target that was set was exceeded. This is first in history of this country. Let us celebrate President Bio for that achievement. Mr Speaker, under the blue economy, this government has been able to

curb illegal fishing. That is also the reason we generated more revenue. Commercial aquaculture is at advanced stage. Mr Speaker, politics is not about criticism; it is about providing alternatives that can ensure positive changes. I pity my brother on the other side who was using words to see Sierra Leone retrogress. But the bad news for those on the other side that do not want to see Sierra Leone progresses is the fact that we are not moving backward; we are moving forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I go to agriculture and food security. Agriculture is the bedrock upon which our nation anchors. A nation that cannot feed its citizens is prone to popular uprising or a disaster. When President Bio introduced operation feed Salone into his midterm agenda, I was proud as a Sierra Leonean because it is only when we are able to feed ourselves, be you APC or the SLPP that we can think progressively. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, thank God we have a responsible government and this is why as a responsible government we have prioritised Operation Feed Salone. One of the components that has been infused into Operation Feed Salone under the agriculture and food security scheme is mechanised farming. We are using the private sector led approach with the view to luring private investors into mechanised farming. This is the only way we will be able to feed ourselves and do business out of it. In Sierra Leone, we have increased food production due to our investments.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start by thanking you for moderating the proceedings of this House. I also want to say that our government is willing to tackle the tough problems we have as a nation, and the biggest risk we can take as a nation is to descend to the old APC bad policies. We are not going back to those dark days. I want us to develop the spirit of oneness, love and unity. That is the answer for our development trajectory. The SLPP led government will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the future of our children, in order to ensure that Sierra Leone becomes the apogee or the Mauritius of modern times. I thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honorable Member for his wonderful contribution to the debate. I now give the Floor to the Honorable Daniel Amadu Bangura

**HON. DANIEL A. BANGURA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker for giving me the Floor. I am very pleased that the Honourable Leader of Government Business laid a very solid foundation for this debate, especially so when he mentioned the area the President quoted Martin Luther King, that it is easy when you are in your comfort zone. On that point, I want to remind all of us that the President was reminded during the 2018 Presidential debates that it is easy to criticise when you are on the other side than when you face the reality. I also noted that the Honorable Member from Kailahun was struggling to make his point. He stated that APC led government brought austerity to the country. Yes, it is true; but at that time, the inflation rate was **12%** and now that there is no austerity in place, the inflation rate is **60%**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, while we all have a shared hope for our nation's prosperity and progress, it is my duty, as a Member of the Opposition, to highlight some of the discrepancies that are in the 2024 Presidential Address, an Address that is filled with echoes of past promises spoken with conviction, but yet lacking in delivery. Year in year out, we have been met with similar pledges, the same visions and identical commitments to tackle corruption, unemployment, stabilise the economy, etc. If I may ask, Honorable Speaker, how many of these promises have actually improved the lives of Sierra Leoneans? The results are painfully absent.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the economy. The President spoke of growth and stability, but the reality is farfetched. However, let me use this platform to thank the government for reducing inflation on paper. I think that reduction is for the researchers. When I asked my people from Yoni what they understand by reduction in inflation, they said my son, all what we have to tell you is that, reduction in inflation is when a bag of rice that is now sold at **NLe 800** when the inflation is **55%** is sold at almost **Le500,000** when the inflation rate was **25%**. Unfortunately, what is happening now in this current regime does not support the definition given by my people. I can still remember in 2017 to 2018 when the former President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma was battling with the inflation which was at about **17%**, the current President, Rtd Dr Julius Maada Bio was not happy because at that time, the exchange rate for



**\$100** was **Le700,000**; he was not happy because at that time, the minimum wage can only buy two bags of the most expensive rice with a change of **Le100,000**. He wanted a better life for his people and therefore promised this nation that when he takes up governance, he would bring down the inflation rate from **17%** to a single digit. However, with seven years in office, the exchange rate for **\$100** has moved from **Le700,000** to almost **Le2,500,000**. The minimum wage cannot buy a bag of rice. In seven years, we have seen a flying competition between the President and the inflation. Just as the President has vowed to continue flying and keep his people in abject poverty, so do the inflation and the exchange rate.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me reveal in this house that the country is in a panic because as we approach 2025, the **10%** import duty tax on rice importation that was stated in the 2024 Finance Act will have to take effect. What is bothering Sierra Leoneans is the revelation made by the IMF in a press release of September 20<sup>th</sup> 2024. Mr Speaker, with your leave, I read: The exchange rate remains stubbornly high, over **40%** international reserves have fallen in less than two months of import. This is extremely serious my brother. Presently, the cost of living for many Sierra Leoneans is unbearable. The one year feed Salone has not shown any positive impact and the regrettable part of it is that there are no signs of changing the narratives for the future. The country is still among the ten [10] hungriest countries in the world. This is according to the Global Hunger Index Report of 2024 without real strategies of economic growth. These empty words will offer no relief to our suffering people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about job creation and youth employment. Perhaps, it is the most pressing issue we face as a nation. The President has been promising economic growth, sustainable jobs and skills development programmes. Again, Mr Speaker, where are they? The youth are the backbone of our future. They are still unemployed and frustrated without hope for a better tomorrow. This is pathetic for our nation. Programmes are announced, initiatives declared, yet none of these translates into genuine opportunities for them. It is time for action and not empty promises. Mr Speaker, the government must act on its promises to provide

the things we have been promised for the past six years. The people deserve progress and tangible results. We need a clear and actionable plan that will change promises into reality.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, while we remain hopeful for the future, let us also be vigilant and unwavering in our demand for a genuine change. Let us work together to ensure that the next State Opening Address does not only contain a list of unfulfilled promises, but something that will be meaningful for this nation. I thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honorable Member for contributing to this debate. I give the Floor to the Honorable Joseph Williams-Lamin.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Honorable speaker, Honourable Members, today is a special day in this House. I am extremely happy to add my voice to this special debate. The 20 pages Speech was delivered by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. He is a gentleman with focus and with ambition, dreams and passion for the Republic of Sierra Leone. It is no doubt that he has become a Messiah who came the second time. He was here before and he is here again to give the final endorsement for the development of this nation. But before I proceed with my contribution to this debate, I just want to call on the attention of the House to a few things that have been highlighted, which I believe have misinformed the public. Sometime in August last year, a meeting was summoned, involving educational stakeholders in order to come up with tangible evidence or to map out the way forward regarding fees. My colleague, who was coopted in my Committee, has just misinformed this House. He contributed so much in that meeting, but he is here today, misinforming the public.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honorable Joseph Williams-Lamin, if I were you, whenever you are coopting people, you should properly scrutinise them.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, this Honorable Member even left his family just to join the Committee when we were going on oversight. He enjoyed so

much with happiness. Today, he is here talking about **NLe8,000** for university fee. This is not true because it was agreed in that meeting that the fee should be **NLe6,000**.

**HON. MAMODU KAMARA:** I stand on S.O [34]. The Honourable Member, who is the Chairman of the Committee on Tertiary Education, accused me of being coopted. I do not remember at any time to have been coopted to that Committee. Let me say this, even though I am a Member of the Tertiary Education Committee, I have never attended a programme he was referring to. I do not know when I was coopted to participate in such as meeting.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, when dry bones are mentioned, what happens? Honorable Speaker, I also want to call on the attention of a colleague who spoke about the cost of rice. If we look at Page 2 of the Finance Act, 2024, and Custom Tariff Act on rice, the HS code 1006 is **5%** effective 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2024. If we want to move forward as a nation, taxation is something that is of importance for all of us. Those who have travelled out of this country would agree with me that even the food to eat, you are taxed. When you go to restaurants, you are taxed. So, what is **5%** of tax for rice importation? Go to other places. We are talking about **5%** while other countries are talking about **25%**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me go to Paragraph 1 of the President's Speech. With your leave, it says: "Today, we are inaugurating the Second session of the Sixth Parliament of Republic of Sierra Leone. We stand united in pride and honour; this is not just a ceremonial event, but a significant milestone in our nation's democratic journey." What a significant journey in our domestic politics. So, when we debate or share our opinions, let us do it constructively for the people of this country. Remember Section 13[B] of the 1991 Constitution of this country, which was pioneered by the President of blessed memory, Joseph Saidu Momoh.

**THE SPEAKER:** Why did you say specifically a Limba man?

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, please ignore them.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member is giving accolades to Joseph Saidu Momoh for a good job. I did not say he was a Limba man. I said wise people who are Limbas just like my grandmother.

**HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN:** I also want to draw your attention to the grundnorm of our land, Section 9[3] of the 1991 Constitution. With your leave, I want to read: "Providing the necessary structures, finance and supportive facilities for education, as when practicable." My Leader talked about Section 9[1&2]. If we go to Paragraphs 33, 34 and 35 of the Presidential Address, you will clearly see what has happened. A revolution in the education sector in this country is positive. What I saw in Makeni, Kono, Kenema, Njala, Milton Margai Technical University and other universities was impressive. The one that amazes me more is Ernest Bai Koroma University. There was no sitting accommodation for them because the classrooms were full. What I saw 25 years ago, when I was in the Northern, there was an exodus of young people seated in that jam-packed classrooms, seeking to transform the economy. I was very impressed. Again, if we go to Section 9[3], it is not only talking about those vying for formal education, but also the grassroots, as others refer to them. We have the low income earners, such as the Okada or Keke riders. In order to add more value to the Loan Scheme, we have increased the budget from **NLe6mln** to **NLe10mln** of the students' loan scheme, so that other privileges could be given to people who want to learn. We have changed the narratives in this country. If you look at Paragraph 107, it talks about the petroleum products. When we took governance of this country, we met 216 pump stations in Sierra Leone, but today we have over 420 pump stations across the country. This has added **12%** to our economy. I think we have done a great job.

Honourable Members, we are talking about the President flying too much. He is flying for a reason; i.e., to change the narratives. He is trying to end poverty in this country and therefore he wants to do what is right. I thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honorable Member for his wonderful contribution to the debate. I continue to encourage Members not only to criticise and not only to

thank the President, but to also put forward meaningful suggestions that can be taken note of and that can help in the furtherance of our nation.

**HON. IBRAHIM BARRIE:** Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. Indeed, the Speech of the President is a fundamental tool that Members of this esteemed House need to critically look at, and not just praise for the sake of praise, but to also ensure that we guide the President to achieve his vision. Mr Speaker, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 means the clock is ticking. I am trying to remind you that you do not have excuses anymore. If you have a 10 year project and you spent almost seven years, it means you are almost **70%**. It is not about plants, it is about harvest; it is not about words, it is about action. I am here today with very interesting truth. This is the 2018 SLPP manifesto and this is the 2018 Presidential Speech. I want you to allow me, with your permission, Mr Speaker, to quote something on agriculture.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, while I will allow you to do that, I also want you to take due note of S.O.32[5] and S.O[36].

**HON. IBRAHIM BARRIE:** Noted, Mr Speaker. When we handed over power democratically to this government, the President said that Sierra Leoneans were **49.8%** food insecure. I am sure from 2018 to date, the statistics that the President presented in 2018 are the same statistics on food security. In fact, we now have **82%** food insecurity in Sierra Leone. I am going to do the analysis. This is according to the 2024 WFP Food Security Monitoring Report. It is the same document that President Bio referenced on Page 5 in his 2018 Speech. You can verify this information that out of 10 Sierra Leoneans, eight Sierra Leoneans are not sure where they can get their next meal. Mr Speaker, this is something we should not politicise at all. This is an Honourable House and we are here to represent our people. For those of you painting a glimmer picture, your people will be very angry with you if you fail to say the truth. They are very angry with you. They are fighting for their kids to get jobs after their university education. Today, Instead of looking for jobs, they are looking for centers to take their sons and daughters for rehabilitation.

**THE SPEAKERL:** Honourable Member, you have just made a statement that there are Members who are painting glimmer picture of what the President said and that their people will be frowning at them. Please be mindful of what you are going to say going forward. It should not be glimmer; it should be a brighter future.

**HON. IBRAHIM BARRIE:** Mr Speaker, I will focus my attention on three critical areas; i.e., agriculture, which is the flagship programme of this government, job creation, where this government promised 500,000 jobs, and youth unemployment, which has bearing on drugs and substance abuse. Mr Speaker, according to Paragraph 23 of the 2018 Manifesto, the President recorded that **49.8%** of households were food insecure. Let me say something and this is for the press. I want this to be the headline. The 2018 minimum wage could afford families two bags of rice, but today, the minimum wage will only get you half bag of rice. These are not about statistics, it is a reality. This is a local market perspective. You go to the market, you can see yourself. If you pay a teacher **Le800,000** that teacher can buy a bag of rice and still have something in his pocket. Today, even if a teacher is paid **NLe1,000** or **NLe1200**, for that teacher to get a bag of rice is a luxury. The Tomabom and the Chieftom Youth Farms are one of the celebrated projects of this government. They implemented these projects to address the issue of food insecurity. To date, we are still looking forward to harvests from the Tomabom Project.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, I want to urge the ACC to please publish their report of the investigation on the Tomabom Project. In his 2018 Manifesto, the President quoted that out of **60% to 70%** between the ages of 18 to 35 are unemployed. They do not have the necessary skills. I believe that was what triggered the 500,000 jobs promise. Today, we are dealing with the Kush crisis and this is also referenced by the President in his Speech that we have declared a national emergency and setup District Task Force. As we speak, there is no district outside Freetown that can boast of having a Kush Rehabilitation Center. Therefore, if we are serious about protecting our youth, then we have to do something very fast. Today, they are victims of business cartels.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, I visited the Rehabilitation Center in Makeni and I discovered that the managers were worried. They said they have been isolated and nobody is visiting them. They need medical support. Inasmuch as the government is committed to ensuring that they address the issue of youth unemployment, we are battling with Kush victims. I think we have over 10,000 young Sierra Leoneans who should have been in the police force helping us to protect lives and property. They should have been teachers or doctors; but today, they are victims of Kush. Is that the promise for our youth? The issue of drugs and substance abuse is very important. Today, if we are here as Members of Parliament it is because we were protected and supported. This is why we are here doing our best for this country. We have to invest in the next generation. Today, graduates from Fourah Bay College, IPAM and other universities are now drugs addicts due to frustration. The issue is how we can support them. The 2018 presidential Address has not been fully implemented. What can you prove to us or what can you tell us? Last year, we advised this House not to increase tax on rice importation in the name of revenue mobilisation, but you failed to heed to the advice. Today, a bag of rice is a luxury for those who can afford it. We have not intensified rice production in this country. This is not politics; this is very important and it is a reality.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, you would agree with me that one fundamental issues affecting this country is bloated Wage Bill. On the issue of climate change and environment, we have EPA, the Ministry of Environment and the Chairman of Renewable Energy and Food Security. We have many organisations that are also dealing with the same issue.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I will not take your Point of Order because the Honourable Member has only one minute left.

**HON. IBRAHIM BARRIE:** I wish I have more time. This is not a contest of ego when we are debating the Presidential Speech. It is not like a football match between the opposition and the ruling; it is a way to guide the President and his government to achieve or deliver the tangibles for this country. The issue of agriculture is still a

problem in this country. There are lots of promises and nothing is happening in the agriculture sector. We need results this time. When do we get harvest from the Tomabom Project? When are we going to achieve the creation of 500,000 jobs? How many jobs can we point at? How can we ensure we save our young people from drugs? This is not just declaring a National Public Health Emergency. If we want to finance our programmes, the imposition of **5%** on rice importation could not even address the problem. Let the President go to the drawing board and reduce unnecessary travels. Mr Speaker, what we are seeing in this document is the fact that the promises and the reality are completely apart. The President needs to cut down on travels, calculate funds spent on travels and allocate same to the health sector or establish a rehabilitation center. Mr Speaker, this document is farfetched from the reality.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Member.

*[Suspension of S.O. 5[2] being 12:00 noon]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, before next speaker takes the Floor, I would want to state for the records, that data available shows that rice importation has dropped significantly. I want to believe the reduction in rice importation is not as a result of the purchasing power, it is as a result of the production level. The data also shows that about 607,000 hectares of lands were cultivated this year for rice production. So, it shows that between 2023 and 2024 there was an increase of 277,000 of lands that were cultivated. That is for the records.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, for the same records, we are used to the Abass Bundu method. Mr Speaker, considering the damage by the climate change on rice production, that data is manmade. It is not correct at all.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you would agree with me that every data is manmade.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** This one is fictitious. You did not give us a source. Please provide the source of that information.



**THE SPEAKER:** Please go to the AWOKO's daily news. This was published.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** AWOKO news?

**THE SPEAKER:** It is the same AWOKO news that usually says inflation has increased and you believe it.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** No, we take inflation from the Ministry of Finance.

**THE SPEAKER:** This information is coming from Ministry of Finance.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** AWOKO is not quoting that.

**THE SPEAKER:** AWOKO quotes exactly what comes from the source.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, there is no source.

**THE SPEAKER:** If you make a statement now in Parliament, AWOKO will quote you exactly. So, AWOKO is a credible source of information. From that record, it also shows what is negative and what is positive. We should not cherry-pick the types of developments and improvements.

**HON. KOHKOFA MANSARAY:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to say a big thank you to His Excellency the President for giving us this detailed report for just one year in his second term of office. I want to assure Members and the Speaker that the President is very consistent with whatever he says. That is why we call him talk and do. He always keeps to his manifesto promises and agriculture is his flagship programme. Well, before I go into agriculture, let me make this very clear. I think the Leader of Government Business and the Deputy Leader [1] of the Opposition always say that if we are to succeed as a nation, Members of Parliament should work together. Members of Parliament should support the government to succeed. We always welcome criticisms, but let us do it genuinely and see how best we can chart the way forward.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, I would like to talk about agriculture. What we have achieved in this one year under the Feed Salone programme is enormous. His Excellency has established what we call cluster farms in five major districts: Kambia Tonkolili, Moyamba, Bonthe and Pujehun. There were conditions they took into

consideration, such as the lands that have riverine and bolilands. These lands ensure large scale rice production. We also have the Agriculture Value Chain Development Project [AVDP] that is supporting the government to succeed in this agenda. Under the AVDP, we have seen farmers benefiting from inland valley swamp development.

**THE SPEAKER:** I have said that if you are making references, you have to take us to the exact document and page number, so that we can follow the cue as you continue your debate; otherwise, we will be flipping the pages over and over. You have to take us to the exact paragraph and page number.

**HON. KOHKOFA MANSARAY:** Mr Speaker, what I am seeing here is not detailed. I am an agriculturist and I know what is going on within the agriculture sector.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you can still add flesh to the information, but let it relate to something that is relevant to the debate. I earlier on referred the Honourable Barrie to S.Os 32 and S.O. 36[1] that whatever you say must be relevant to the debate.

**HON. KOHKOFA MANSARAY:** So, I refer you to Page 4, Roman No. two, under mechanisation of the value chain. We are moving from subsistence farming to mechanised farming and value addition. We have seen increase in rice production; we have seen increase in the production of other crops, like onions, vegetables etc. Let me assure this House that we have seen a drop in the importation of chicken as well as eggs. It is over **50%** reduction and that has saved us over **\$2mln**. I am an agriculturist and before I came to Parliament we had our own farm projects called NEHE AGRIC Limited with support from the Honourable Minister, Napoleon Koroma. So, last year we supported over 45 farming groups. We said politics is over; we should work together as a nation and as a people within the four chiefdoms in Koinadugu District. We started this project and we supported each group with **NLe4,000** to construct seed beds, so that they can plant cassava. These cassava farms are now thriving and we have even sent a team from Bo to train them how to process the cassava into gari. So, this is value addition and we are achieving with the 45 farming groups.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, under the same agriculture, we have seen government supports to farmers with thrashers, windrowers, rice mills and few harvesters to harvest rice. In fact, this year, we have the highest increase of rice production. As I speak, our farm in Yoni Chiefdom is ready for harvest, hopefully this weekend and I will be there as well. We have 100 acres of farmland cultivated for the production of rice. So, we need to do more as MPs. We should not sit here and talk without action. We need to go to the field and help the government to do the work.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, the government has also created a loan scheme for farmers' medium level or medium enterprises that are doing agribusiness. These loans are available in the central bank. You get it through the commercial banks and the interest rate is **10%**, which is very low. After you would have secured the loan, you will be given 8 to 10 months grace period before you start payment. These are opportunities for us to come together and work as a team to help those who would want to access these loans to help the government.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, this leads me to electricity.

**THE SPEAKER:** I encourage you to continue with agriculture because it is your area of specialisation.

**HON. KOHKOFA MANSARAY:** I know, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, under the electricity infrastructure, within six years of the leadership of the President, we have seen increase in electricity, not only in the capital city, but in the rural areas. In Koinadugu, we have benefited over six communities that have never got electricity before. Towns like Yifi, Bianco, Numaya to Bafodia are enjoying 24 hours electricity.

**HON, HAMIDU H. MANSARAY:** Mr Speaker, Point of Order. The Honorable Member is claiming that Bafodia is enjoying electricity and I want to challenge him on that.

**THE SPEAKER:** What your Point of Order?

**HON, HAMIDU H. MANSARAY:** I stand on S,O [34]. I am sure for the past six months we have been suffering from severe blackouts in Bafodia. I want the Honourable to be properly guided. I thank you.

**HON. KOHKOFA MANSARAY:** I want to tell the Honorable Member that for the first time Bafodia was electrified in 2020. Again, we have also seen five major towns, where electrification project is ongoing, such as Kabala, Kambia, etc. I remembered in 2012 when our people voted **100%** 444 for APC, they could not give us electricity. There was 24 hours electricity in Makeni and two standby generators. Kabala did not benefit at all. Kambia was also neglected, but in 2012 our people voted 4-4-4 for the APC. This government has however made some frantic efforts because we can now see poles being erected. They have also installed the transformers and what is left now is the networking.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to briefly talk about public infrastructure. You would agree with me that within this shortest time we have seen lots of infrastructural developments in my Chiefdom and other constituencies within Koinadugu District. I will end with road infrastructure. I urge the government that we continue to do more of the feeder roads. The road from Makaura to Yifi is very critical for agricultural production. Therefore, I want to advise the government to expedite the completion of that road. On that note, I say thanks to His Excellency the President for what he has done for this country. I want to urge all of us to support the Feed Salone Agenda. I am sure together we will succeed.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honorable Member for stating a diversified agricultural system. He has stated eloquently that egg importation has dropped significantly from 500 metric tons in 2021 to 200 metric tons in 2023. These are the progress we want to hear in the debate, so that you understand exactly what is happening in the country. He has also stated that chicken importation has dropped by **61%**. These are the things we want to hear, so that the people of Sierra Leone understand exactly how Parliament influences government policy.

**HON. MABINTY A. T. BANGURA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to lend my voice on the 2024 Presidential Address that was delivered in this Well by the President on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 on the Occasion of State Opening of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone. I want to take a cue from the Leader and

Deputy Whip of the Government Bench. In their opening statements, they admonished us to be less aggressive or not to attack them aggressively. However, I want to tell them that we are not defenders, but attackers. This is because we are from the Opposition. They should know that our role is to attack and their role is to defend.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me use this opportunity to thank the President for his Speech so graciously delivered. I want to thank him because he did not give us a long Speech. I want to thank him because his speech was as brief as a ladies mini skirt. My debate here will focus on several topics and one of them is the Feed Salone programme. Mr Speaker, I refer you to Paragraph 24 of this Speech. With your leave, it reads: "In my address to this esteemed House last year, I emphasised that prioritising investments in agriculture can mitigate food price volatility, enhance our resilience to external shocks and advance our journey towards food self-sufficiency." Wow! These are flamboyant words by His Excellency the President, but we want to see the reality on ground. You would agree with me that before the Feed Salone Programme, the cost of rice was below **Le300,000** or **NLe300**. Now that the Feed Salone Project is on course, the cost of rice is more than **Le1,000,000** or **NLe1,000**.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, can I ask an innocent question? I have heard lots of comments regarding the movement of price. Can anybody show me any country where the price of rice remains constant?

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Mr Speaker, this is not the issue of increment of price. It is an issue of the income as against the increment. That is the burning issue we must address appropriately.

**THE SPEAKER:** The question is, can anybody show me any country where the price of rice has remained constant? It is just an innocent question and I want to know. I am seated here as the arbiter of these proceedings, but honestly I am ignorant of most of the issues you are presenting to this House. This is why we need to ask for clarifications.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, what the Honourable Member from Wellington was saying is that in most countries, including Sierra Leone is the Minimum Wage and that has been the recurring theme of this debate. Honourable Members have been saying that the Minimum Wage used to be **Le500,000**, but it can buy two bags of rice. Today, the Minimum Wage is **NLe800**, but cannot buy a bag of rice. So, the problem is not just the increase in the price of commodities, but is the income or the affordability of the ordinary people. We are not talking about the cost alone, we are talking about the affordability. If a police officer is paid **NLe1,200** I am sure that can only buy a bag of rice and nothing more.

**THE SPEAKER:** The reason I asked that question is the fact that when we want to present a case like that, we should also state clearly that in this country, the Minimum Wage can afford a, b, c and d. This is because I am just from the UK and most times, things are not the same. For me, it is good for our people to state that yes, the price of rice has outgrown the cost of living. Similarly, in other countries, this is the situation or this is what is happening, so that people will understand what is going on.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, one of the things you have made clear in this debate is the fact that we should state the problem and proffer solutions. I am sure one of the solutions we should proffer as Members of Parliament is that no matter the cost of rice, the Minimum Wage should be able to at least buy three to five bags of rice. So, we determine either the cost of rice or the cost of the US dollar. Before I came to this Parliament, I was paid **NLe 11,000**, which is a little over **\$1,500**. If you compare my current salary now to dollar is not up to **\$700**

**THE SPEAKER:** I wish you can state your current salary.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** No, I will. Why not?

**THE SPEAKER:** This is to educate the public on why your salary has moved.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Nothing has moved, Mr Speaker. The figures have moved, but the value is less.

**THE SPEAKER:** You were receiving **Le11,000** when you came to this well.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** And that was **\$1,500**. Today, even if you have **NLe30,000**, you cannot still get \$1,500. My current salary is **NLe25,000** and that cannot give me more than **\$1,200**.

**HON. MABINTY A. T. BANGURA:** Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, the President also promised huge investments in Tomabom. Again, when the Finance Act was passed last year, the Finance Minister, in his argument for the increment of tax on rice importation; i.e., **5%** in 2024 and another **5%** in 2025, stated that the tax on rice would be invested in the Feed Salone programme. So, one year down the line, my question to Mr President is that where is our Tomabom harvest? We want to know, Mr Speaker. Apart from rice, the prices of local commodities have also skyrocketed. For example, the cost of pepper is now **NLe20** per cup and pepper is grown in Sierra Leone. So, what is the essence of Feed Salone?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Feed Salone initiative is nothing but a rhetoric that is meant to write starvation on the faces of our people. One of the solutions I want to proffer is that the President should declare a state of hunger emergency. According to the his Speech, infrastructural development only means roads in Kailahun, Pujehun, Bonthe, Moyamba, etc. Today, Kambia, Falaba, Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Bombali, Western Rural and Western Urban are not part of Sierra Leone. This SLPP administration lacks the capacity to provide a national infrastructure programme. You would agree with me that it is only the APC that can undertake developments that are of national character. We saw during the presidency of former President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, Sierra Leone was nicknamed, works yard. This was so because we saw infrastructural development all over the country on a simultaneous scale.

**HON. BASHIRU KAMARA:** Of course, those are cosmetic developments. The roads you are boastful of are in terrible state.

**HON. MABINTY A. T. BANGURA:** I am sure cosmetic roads are better than none. If this administration is serious to feed the people of Sierra Leone, they will concentrate on the roads where the farms are. For example, the road leading to Samu needs to be constructed because we produce almost half of the goods we consume in this country.

Our youth, who are representing the future of this country, are destroyed by drugs and other dangerous substances. Of course, we were in this Parliament when a state of emergency on health was declared and after that declaration, did we succeed to contain the supply of these substances in the market? The answer is no. If we do not contain the supply of these drugs, our youth will go down the drains and the country will never be developed. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honorable Member for her eloquent contribution to the debate.

**HON. MUSA LAHAI:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to seize this opportunity to thank the President for his Speech so graciously delivered in this House on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2024. I have gone through the Speech and I will limit myself to three key areas; i.e., the economy, human capital development and Feed Salone. Over the years, our economy has been facing series of challenges as a result of global economic impact. However, due to prudent financial management systems being put in place, our economy has experienced **4%** growth as stated in Paragraph 74 of this Speech. In addition, our GDP has also increased by **11%** as a result of economic diversification in the agricultural sector, manufacturing and fishery sectors. There are also positive indicators that the economy will grow in 2025 and 2026. I want to thank President Bio for managing our economy well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I refer you to Paragraph 50, under the human capital developments. The President mentioned the provision of clean drinking water. With your leave, please allow me to go through the activities of major institutions that are responsible for the provision of water within this country as a road map to help the President achieves his objective. I will start with Guma Valley Water Company. Guma Valley is responsible for the provision of water within the Western Area. Guma has launched two major projects as a way to transform water supply within the Western Area. One of the projects is the wash project and the other is strategic water supply project. With your leave, I will briefly go through the activities under the wash project. The wash project is divided into eight contracts, and each of the contracts is very



important for the wellbeing of this nation. So, contract 1 is about the Angola Water Supply Project and it is expected to be completed in December, 2025. It has a distribution line of 42 kilometers. It will cover Angola, New Jersey, Adonia, Ogu Farm, Laka and Hamilton. Contract 2 is about the rehabilitation of the Babadorie Dam. The Babadorie dam is 72,000 meter. This is expected to be completed in December, 2024 and the communities that will benefit from are Regent Village, IMATT, Hill Station, Gloucester and Leicester Peak. Contract 3 is to assure you that this government is doing something good for our people. We need to look at the reality on the ground. I want the Chairman of Water Resources Committee to note this very seriously. This is the key product the people need because water is life. So, I want to briefly go through the activities, so that people will know that the government is doing its best for the people of this country. We have the Naira water which is 60,000 cubic meters. It is there to support the regions during the dry season. The Babadorie facility cannot suffice during the dries and that is why we have contract 4, which deals with the Congo Dam. This is also to be completed in February 2025.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also have contracts 5, 6 and 7, which deal with the OPEC Fund for International Development. Mr Speaker, contract five [5] deals with Allen Town; contract 6 deals with Mongo and Mogegeba, Contract 7 deals with Africanus Road, Hook Street and Wilberforce, contract 8 deals with the expansion of the electricity grid within Freetown, which is about 42 kilometers. We have the strategic water supply system from certain communities, such as Hamilton, Waterloo Township and the Hastings dam. When these are completed, the issue of water supply within the Freetown will be a thing of the past.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, SALWACO is responsible for the provision of water in the provinces. I want to inform this House that the headquarter towns are enjoying borehole facility. SALWACO has launched the six town water project and six districts are benefitting from such gesture, such as Kambia, Magburaka, Kailahun, Pujehun, Moyamba, etc. We also have the Lungi water supply project. Most recently, the government has launched a **\$25mln** project at Lungi regarding the provision of water

for the entire Lungi community. We also have the Makeni water supply project, which is ensuring the free flow of water supply within the Makeni Township. In fact, the government is embarking on the balancing reservoir, which is **\$4.7mln**. We also have the Rokupr Project. There are lots of projects this government has launched for our people in the North, East, South and the Western Area.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, please conclude your speech.

**HON. MUSA LAHAI:** I want my colleagues to thank the President for the good work he has done for the people of this nation, especially in the area of the water sector. You would agree with me that water is life. I thank you for your attention.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honorable Member for confining to a particular sector and for expertly educating us on the water sector. Honorable Members, before I give the Floor to the last speaker for today's debate, the Honorable Ibrahim Barrie has said that if anybody casts a shadow on this Speech or gives a glimmer face to this Speech, your constituents would not agree with you. I noted that statement and as far as I am concerned, whatever that is being said is in line with proffering solutions and commending the President.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I am from Falaba District, the land of milk and honey. I bring you greetings from the noble and beautiful people of Falaba District. If Honourable Members on the other side allow me, I intend to be very brief because I am here to do only one thing; i.e., to give receipts to the President. When I said to give receipts to the President, I did not mean those fake receipts issued by State House officials to the Auditor General. I mean I am going to fact check the President's Speeches he delivered in this noble House. The Leader of Government Business said that whatever we are doing here today is just to give thanks to Mr President. I am sure he wants proofs. Mr Leader, I am going to give receipts and those receipts are your proofs for giving thanks to Mr President.

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, please permits me to reference Paragraph 23 of the Presidential Address in this noble House. He says: *Agriculture and food security are the*

*cornerstones of a nation's stability and prosperity. They transcend mere substance and form a crucial pillar of national resilience, economic growth and social wellbeing."* In line with this Paragraph, I want to refer you to the 2018 Presidential Address delivered in this noble House. Paragraph 5 of that Speech states: "*The recent past efforts in agriculture have not produced the desired results despite the large acreage of arable land, Sierra Leone continues to be a net importer of rice.*" Mr Speaker, after almost seven years of the Bio Administration, it displeases me to announce to this noble House that Sierra Leone still remains a net importer of rice. This is the first receipt.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in line with Paragraph 24 of this year's Speech by the President, the President said: "*Without the ability to feed our people, we risk setting atop a volatile precipice, poised for unrest and turmoil. Hence the adage, a hungry man is an angry man holds profound truths, highlighting the direct link between food scarcity and national security.*" In line with this, I want to refer this noble House to Paragraph 5 of the 2018 Address. The President said: "*According to the 2015 comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis study conducted by WFP and FAO, **49.8%** of households were food insecure in 2015 compared with **45%** in 2010.*" Mr Speaker, even though by the time the President took up office in 2018 this number had dropped to **43%** which is less than the **45%** in 2010, but today, shamefully after almost seven years of the Bio led administration, food insecurity has risen to **82%**. This has never happened in this country, even during the war. This is the second receipt.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am still on Paragraph 5 of the 2018 Presidential Speech. The President said: "*The global hunger index in 2017 ranked Sierra Leone as the third hungriest country in the world, ranked 117 out of 120 countries.*" Mr Speaker, after seven years of the Bio led administration, it displeases me to inform this noble House that Sierra Leone still sits at 117 in the global hunger index out of 127 countries. This is receipt number three.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honorable Member, can you go over that entire sentence?

**HON. MUHAMMAD ALPHA JALLOH:** After seven years of Bio Administration, it displeases me to inform this noble House... - *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Please begin with the introduction.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** I quoted that statement from the 2018 Presidential Speech. It says: "*The global hunger index in 2017 ranked Sierra Leone as the third hungriest country in the world, ranked 117 out of 120 countries.* Therefore, it displeases me to inform this noble House that Sierra Leone is still ranked 117 out of 127 countries in the global movement.

**THE SPEAKER:** It means we still sit on the same number, which is ten [10]. I think it is better than where we were.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Mr Speaker, the new countries are below Sierra Leone because they have just gained the status.

**THE SPEAKER:** No, we are no longer third hungriest again.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** We are still within the bottom 10.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, when the assessment was done, it was done on a fear scale, using the same metrics. So, all the countries are treated as the same. If you are the third hungriest and you have moved from the third hungriest to the 10<sup>th</sup> hungriest it means you have made progress.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Mr Speaker, the denominator has changed.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, please allow me to finish. It means you have jumped several places from where you were to where you are presently. So, we should also state those things, so that the public understand exactly what we call no progress is indeed progress made.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Mr Speaker, the denominator has changed. You have to remember that that is very key. That is why I mentioned denominators in both instances. Please allow me to compare Sierra Leone's performance in the global hunger index in eight years of the Koroma led administration, and almost seven years of the

Bio led administration. In eight years, from 2008 and 2016, we are better off by **12.4%**. This means Sierra Leone moved from **45.2%** in 2008 and to **32.8%** in 2016 and for the Bio lead administration, they moved from **32.8%** to **31.2%**. This means **1.6%** reduction in almost seven years. This is receipt number 3[b].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to refer you to Paragraph 26 of the current Speech. It says: **'Increasing investments in the agricultural sector has the power to create jobs, reduce dependency on essential food imports, boost export earnings from cash crops and catalyse sustainable economic growth. This investment is a safeguard for national security and a vision for a prosperous future.'** Paragraph 7 of his 2018 Speech states: **'Investments in agriculture will be largely private sector driven, while my administration is committed to increasing budgetary allocation to a minimum of 10% in the next two years, in line with the Maputo Accord. We shall rely on private sector investments in this sector.'** In line with this statement, I got two receipts. The first receipt is that the President said in two years would meet the Maputo Protocol of **10%** allocation to the agriculture sector. Sir, it is almost seven years, and we are still at **7%**. Mr Speaker, despite the fact that the Feed Salone, which is a flagship project of this government, much has not been achieved. In line with that, the President also 'investments in this sector will be largely private sector driven.' Mr Speaker, even though I am not aware of any sober minded agriculture company this government has attracted since 2018... - *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** No, you cannot use microphone for undertones. I have cautioned you before and please do not repeat that again. Undertones should remain undertones.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was saying that even though I am not aware of any sober minded agriculture company this government has attracted over the years, what it has done instead is to ensure that companies that came to this country during the previous administration are dying or struggling to survive. You have companies like the Sierra Leone Agricultural Company in Mange, Port Loko District, the Ned Oil in Yele, Tonkolili District, the Adax Bioenergy is struggling to

survive. We also have the Socfin Agriculture Company Ltd is also struggling to survive in Pujehun District. One thing that is strikingly is the fact that four out of five of the companies I listed are operating in the North. So, I asked myself why frustrating companies that are operating in the North? Mr Speaker, please permit me to issue out my last receipt to the President. The President said in Paragraph 106 that... - *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Please end your submission there.

**HON. MOHAMED A. JALLOH:** Mr Speaker, please give me 30 seconds.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I like the way you give out receipts because when you make transactions, you must see receipts. I like the fact that you have issued out receipts. However, if I can clarify, the only receipt I think is the one relating to Adax Bioenergy. You would agree with me that Adax was already dead before the Former President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma exited. They were not struggling because of government interference, but they were struggling because they had the wrong investments format. They constructed a lot of lines, and they did not have the requisite support from their bankers or their investors to continue. Again, they resorted in buying grass to generate electricity using biomass. So, they have been struggling even before President Koroma left power. I am sure their struggling is not as a result of government. The only part that is related to government is the fact that they were generating two megawatt of electricity that they were supplying to the national grid and between 2015 and 2018 they were not paid by the government. This has been an accumulated problem. That is the only one I know.

Honourable Members, we have come to the end of today's debate and I want to thank Honourable Members for their wonderful contributions. I want to state for the attention of Honourable Members of the Committee we have set up to take their responsibilities seriously. This is because for far too long mobile companies have been extorting our people. Africell has been extorting our people through money transfer charges and calls. The number of drop calls has increased and this House is the people's House. We must treat their business seriously. If we have realised it, we must put utmost attention

to it, and we must summon them as quickly as possible, so that they provide explanations to the people of this country. When this House made a ruling on the percentage charge on cash out, orange immediately reduced their tariff to **1%** effective 1<sup>st</sup> November. So, it shows that something is not adding up and we must treat this issue very seriously.

### ***Adjournment***

*[The House rose at 4:00 p.m. and was adjourned to Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.]*