



# PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

Parliament Building - O.A.U Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown | [admin@parliament.gov.sl](mailto:admin@parliament.gov.sl) | [www.parliament.gov.sl](http://www.parliament.gov.sl)

## **SPEAKER EXPLAINS PARLIAMENT'S POSITION TO THE NATION**

The Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu on Thursday 25/01/2024 explained Parliament's position to the nation.

See the full speech below;

Parliamentary Sitting  
25 January 2024  
Announcement by Mr. Speaker

Honourable Members

Please allow me to start by acknowledging the fact that this sitting today is the very first day in 2024 that I am presiding over this august assembly of Parliament. I therefore consider it opportune to start by extending to each and everyone of you a blessed New Year and sincere best wishes for your good health and a fruitful and prosperous 2024.

Sadly, though, Parliament has started the New Year by capturing the news headlines for all the wrong reasons in both the mainstream and social media and also in general discussions in the public domain. And it has become so palpable that we are under heavy attack and denigration from the general public. For this reason alone, quite apart from there seemingly being also a lapse in the dignity and decorum of Parliament, as the arm of Government entrusted with the sacred responsibility to make the laws of the land, for the present there is absolutely nothing for us to celebrate about. On the contrary we should all apologise to the people of this country whose trust and confidence we bear and on whose behalf we act in this Well as their representatives. By the same token, we want to take this opportunity to express our collective regret and to ask for their forgiveness; we promise that we shall never again commit the grievous mistakes of the recent past.

Without exaggeration, a lot has been said and written about Parliament in the past weeks and they have continued unabated, but more particularly about the Speaker and the Clerk of Parliament. For the Clerk, we understand from the Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission that his matter is still under



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investigation. Therefore the less said about it here the better. We shall await the final outcome of the Commission's investigation.

As for the Speaker, please allow me to make bold and say that a great deal of what has been said and written has been either misconceived or misunderstood. So I want to seize this opportunity to try to set the record straight.

First and foremost, like the beautiful game of soccer football, for example, the Africa Cup of Nations currently being played in Cote d'Ivoire, democratic politics by definition means a game between two or more opposing teams and the Speaker's role as Presiding officer can be likened to that of the referee. He cannot afford but be a friend to both teams; more importantly he cannot afford to antagonise, still less become an enemy of either team. Occasionally, when things are perceived to be going not too well, he invites the two captains to the Speaker's dais for consultations. And, in those consultations they must all be guided by the dictates of fact and reason, not conjecture or gossip, but, above all, by the rules of the game as prescribed in the Constitution and the Standing Orders which must always reign supreme.

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

Third, the Speaker must not be a predator and he has never been, contrary to the accusations spewed extensively by some despicable sections of the social media. And for these I have already filed a complaint to the Police and the Independent Media Commission. However, let it be noted that there are two doors to the chambers of the Speaker. One door is reserved exclusively for his entry and exit and is also used occasionally by His Excellency the President whenever he visits Parliament. The second door is for the MPs and the general public. That door is always kept open and accessible. Whereas the key to the first door is in the custody of state security, the key to the second door is kept in the Secretary's office. The critical point at issue here is this: that no keys are ever kept by the Speaker nor, and this might surprise you, does he even know what they look like. So I exhort you all, especially the Honourable Ladies of this



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House, please don't be afraid to come to the Speaker's chambers. Not only is this Speaker now a frail and faint shadow of his once youthful masculinity, you can easily push him over should he ever attempt any act of bravado. Besides you can easily shout for help from outside and the doors would be opened in no time.

Finally, let it be stated here loud and clear that the Speaker and the Clerk of Parliament are not at loggerheads with each other, as some unscrupulous and frivolous media might want you to believe. The Speaker is indeed Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission, the highest decision-making body of Parliament, and the Clerk is the Secretary of the Commission. The two of them have to work in harmony at all times for the successful deliberations of the Commission and have indeed been doing so since the beginning of the Fifth Parliament. But ultimately the Speaker bears the greatest responsibility for the Parliament as a whole while the Clerk is only the Head of the Parliamentary Service and the controller of the parliamentary purse. If differences there are between the Speaker and the Clerk, they are miniscule and by no means extraordinary and no-one should attempt to build mountains out of a molehill.

Honourable Members

Allow me to end this announcement with the assurance that this Sixth Parliament is moving forward inexorably because there are bigger and more formidable challenges ahead of all of us. I hope this small word for the wise is sufficient for today!