



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



**SPEAKER’S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SIERRA LEONE “PARLIAMENT OPEN
DAY”
PARLIAMENT BUILDING
9 DECEMBER 2019**

By the Rt. Hon. Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu

**Hon. Vice-President,
Ministers of Government,
Members of Parliament,
Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular
Corps,
International Development Partners,
Members of the Fourth Estate,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, I take great pleasure to welcome you most warmly to this inaugural “Parliament Open Day”. It is the first time ever that Parliament is organising such an event which aims at demystifying Parliament and bringing it even closer to the people of Sierra Leone whose direct servant it is. In the next three days of activities and festivities, therefore, we aim to achieve four key overarching objectives:

- First, to increase public awareness and understanding of the workings of Parliament;
- Second, to enhance citizens understanding of the constitutional role of the Members of Parliament;
- Third, to heighten public trust and confidence in Parliament; and
- Fourth, to make Parliament accessible, participatory and above all responsive to the interests of the citizenry.



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will all recall that it was the March 2018 General Elections that ushered in the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic. From that Election, for the first time in our history, the membership of Parliament changed from 124 to 146 Members. The number of MPs elected by universal suffrage increased from 112 to 132 while the number of Paramount Chiefs, whose election is by a limited franchise under the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of Section 74 of the Sierra Leone Constitution, increased by 2 from 12 to 14 corresponding to the number of Administrative Districts into which the country outside the Western Area is currently divided.

On the 25th April 2018, I was accorded the singular honour of being elected Speaker to preside over the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic. From its very inception, the Fifth Parliament started its life with a rather bumpy ride but with the grace, guidance and protection of the Almighty Allah, I have been able to manage and steer the ship through many turbulent storms over the past 19 months. I have always prided myself as being a good and safe pilot, but this time around, I found myself singularly inadequate, regularly needing the assistance of my flight officers so that together we can pilot the “Sierra Leone Boeing Flight 2018” safely to its predestined constitutional landing of 2023.

In one sense, the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic is an emerging Parliament like any of the Parliaments before it but in another sense the Fifth Parliament is very much unlike its predecessors, requiring somewhat exceptional skills and gravitas to navigate whilst also taking due cognisance of the delicacy, sensitivity and precariousness of the turns and corners which together constitute the irrepressible part of its democratic architecture. Inevitably, by themselves, and without more, they imposed their own unique requirements on Mr. Speaker thereby making his task especially daunting. Mercifully, however, throughout my life’s journey and experience, I have been extraordinarily fortunate to serve my stewardships unflustered in



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



some of the highest offices both within and without Sierra Leone. Notwithstanding this remarkable record of national and international service, spanning almost 45 years, I must confess to having experienced some of the most daunting moments of my life since my election as Speaker of this Fifth Parliament.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

My role as Speaker of the Fifth Parliament has been as much eventful as it has been politically challenging. Over time, I have come to the realisation that Parliament will always be Parliament; an institution among institutions that is not only unique in dynamism but must never be undervalued in its performance. Moreover, in the new age of multi-partyism and democratisation and digital technology, it can task its Presiding Officer in ways far beyond the ordinary. From interpreting and applying the Standing Orders to guide and regulate the proceedings of the House and the debate among the Members of Parliament; to managing political preferences and expectations; to preserving the dignity of the House; to maintaining Order in the Chamber and discharging duties with impartiality or at least the semblance of impartiality, there is hardly ever a dull moment at the dispensation of the Speaker.

Whereas to visitors in the public gallery, the Speaker's duty of ensuring that the business of the House is tidily and effectively disposed of in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the Standing Orders might appear mundane, dealing with multiple choruses of points of order from Members of Parliament rising simultaneously and vociferously, can push the patience and indulgence of Mr. Speaker to the outer limits of decorum, to say little about trying to enforce order in moments of tension and rancour interspersed with breaches of order which quite often leave Mr. Speaker with the stark choice of either issuing words of admonishment or making a referral to the Privileges Committee for a severer sanction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I could go on and on to narrate episode after episode of exciting moments in the Chamber but for the purpose of this occasion, permit me to zoom my lens on just three of the constitutional responsibilities of this Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic.



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



REPRESENTATION

Under my watch as Speaker, the Fifth Parliament has been able to uphold and discharge the injunctions prescribed in the Constitution of Sierra Leone.

We have been able to represent Sierra Leone remarkably well in national and international fora. Internationally, this current Parliament has represented the country at global, regional and sub-regional levels. In the next few months, for example, a member of this Parliament will be honoured by being elected to the Speakership of the ECOWAS Fifth Parliament commencing from February 2020. We have also been able to send able and solid representations to the Pan-African Parliament, ACP-EU Parliament, ECOWAS Parliament, as well as to the statutory meetings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Inter-Parliamentary Union and other International Parliamentary Organisations. And very recently, I also personally led our country's delegation to the Enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

Within the national sphere, this Fifth Parliament has also proven its mettle solidly successfully. As a matter of fact, it is proving itself to be the most vibrant Parliament since 1996 when Sierra Leone was restored to multiparty democratic dispensation. As part of my executive role pursuant to the provisions of subsection (6) of Section 54 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, I have served as President on at least four occasions when both the President and the Vice-President were unavoidably engaged in official duties out of the jurisdiction.

Of course the configuration of the present Parliament was not one contemplated by the drafters of the 1991 Constitution but it does lend credence to its vibrancy, vitality and complexity – a reality we all have to contend with almost every other day ever since I assumed the exalted office of Speaker. Currently, we have only 11 per cent female representation, which is considerably below the demands of the women of this country, not to speak of how that miserly figure compares to the male representation of 89 per cent. The numerical strength of First-



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



Termers is 80 per cent and this far outweighs the Second-Termers at 15 per cent and the Third-Termers at a meagre 5 per cent. Interestingly, whilst some might see this as a drawback, the flipside to this is that the distribution of the various termers is a clear pointer to the activism that characterises the daily sittings of the Fifth Parliament. In truth, there is hardly ever a dull moment!

LAW MAKING

The Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) vests supreme legislative power in Parliament. This is not only enshrined in Section 105 of the Constitution, it is also entrenched. That provision not only gives Parliament supremacy over the enactment of laws, it also empowers it to amend existing laws, ratify conventions, agreements and protocols; promote public accountability and transparency and monitors post-legislative implementation of laws.

Since my assumption of office as Speaker, the Parliament of the Second Republic has been able to consider 102 motions, pass 15 Bills into law, laid 134 Papers, approved 382 Presidential Nominees, stood upon Standing Order 5(2) 105 times, all indicative of the frequency of meetings of the Fifth Parliament in Plenary. The Fifth Parliament has also ratified 20 Protocols and Conventions, 36 Agreements, voted into law 3 Constitutional and 7 Statutory Instruments, and adopted 6 Rulings of the Speaker on the practice and procedure of Parliament.

Perhaps the most notable of all the laws passed under my Speakership is the Amendment of the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 and the Finance Act of 2020. On the Sexual Offences Act, the women of this country have every reason to be proud of the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic for passing into law one of the most progressive gender milestone legislations on the African Continent.



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



OVERSIGHT

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Constitution of Sierra Leone also vests authority in Parliament to conduct oversight responsibilities over the executive branch of government and to hold it accountable. This means, in effect, that there is nothing that is legally immune from the scrutiny of Parliament. And the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic has performed this particular role remarkably well through its Seven Standing Committees listed in Section 93 of the Constitution, over 30 Sessional Select Committees, 3 International Parliamentary Delegations as well as membership in several other International Parliamentary Organisations. The interconnectedness among these constitutional roles (representation, law-making and oversight), in my view, is far more accentuated in the oversight role of Parliament. In fact, the Committee system it has adopted offers the most efficient and effective mechanism for filling gaps and finding lasting solutions to the weaknesses and shortcomings of the democratic process. It also enlivens the Constitution of Sierra Leone from time to time and makes it more dynamic, representative and responsive to the rapidly changing circumstances of modern times. As of today, this Fifth Parliament has laid no fewer than 34 Reports on the Table of the House to give efficacy and vitality to its oversight functions.

CONCLUSION

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me finally conclude by drawing attention to the fact that this Fifth Parliament has embedded in it the finest example of a complex legislative web. Indeed the “Hung Parliament” produced by the March 2018 General Elections was the most glaring. Today none of the four political parties represented in the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic can claim to control an absolute majority at all times, still less a two-thirds majority of the seats. Precisely because of this, no matter how seductive or enchanting my personal charm or personal experience and wittiness might be, never have we been able to carry on with the business of the House or assist



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



the Government to fulfil its electoral promises to the nation without full and frank disclosure and consultation between and amongst the political parties and independent MPs represented in Parliament.

As a consequence, the citizenry of this country must gradually but assuredly come to the realization that parliamentary democracy is something more than just holding elections once every five years. It certainly also does mean that political parties must learn to listen and talk to one another and accommodate one another in the best interest of uplifting this nation from the affliction, quagmire and miasma of mass poverty and deprivation. Equally importantly, it is no longer acceptable for Parliament to believe that it can subscribe to and be part of international best practice without itself being transparent and accountable for its actions and inactions. The inauguration of this “Parliament Open Day” should therefore be welcomed by all because it constitutes a new beginning and it also resonates well with both the letter and spirit of the Bo Declaration signed on the 28th August 2019 by all the political parties represented in Parliament. That Declaration recalibrated and re-engineered the way forward by sanctifying the veritable principles and values of working together and accommodating one another, always recognising that the search for common ground is more edifying than the promotion of the interests of any single political party.

On this pathway towards openness and inclusiveness, I want to conclude my remarks by thanking the Hon. Vice-President who is here to deputise for His Excellency the President, Ministers of Government, Members of Parliament and our Partners in Development for gracing this special occasion. A special thank you to the Clerk of Parliament, the Political Leadership of all the Political Parties represented in Parliament, and the staff of Parliament for the exceptional degree of commitment and dedication shown in making this first “Parliament Open Day” possible.

To the United Nations family, the European Union, DFID, WFP, Ministry of Tourism, Africell and Orange, your support to this process has been invaluable and it certainly speaks eloquently



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER
PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
O.A.U DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN
RT. HON. DR. ABASS CHERNOR BUNDU**
Email: abass.bundu@parliament.gov.sl
abassbundu@hotmail.com



to your outstanding commitment to giving our parliamentary democracy a chance to flourish. We are most grateful to all of you and even more especially to you all our constituents who made it today to Tower Hill.