

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

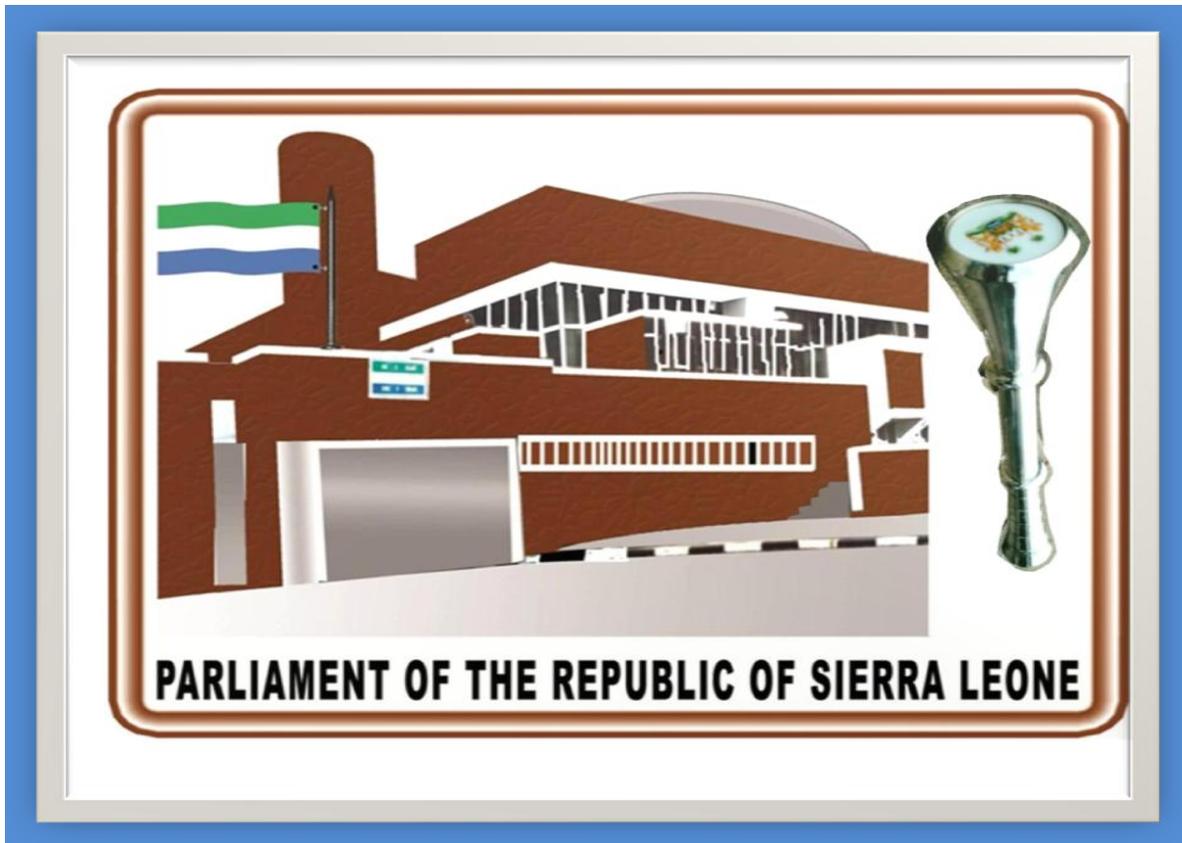
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION - SECOND MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 7th NOVEMBER, 2018

SESSION – 2018/2019



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: II

NUMBER: 32

Second Meeting of the First Session of the Fifth Parliament
Of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Wednesday, 7th November, 2018.

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LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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AGREEMENTS ESTABLISHING THE CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA.

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE RATIFY THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENT WHICH WAS LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER, 2018

AGREEMENTS ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA.

V. BILL

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

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[SECOND READING]

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

[FIRST ALLOTTED DAY]



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Wednesday, 7th November, 2018.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Mrs Bintu Weston, Read the Prayers]

[The House met at 11:55 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

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

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTINGS HELD ON THURSDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER, 2018 AND FRIDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2018.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we start with the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 1st November, 2018. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? Page 10? Page 11? There being no amendment, we go to the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Friday, 2nd November, 2018. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? There being no amendment, could somebody move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings, held on Thursday, 1st and Friday, 2nd November, 2018 be adopted as presented?

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. NENNEH LEBBIE: I second the Motion, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings held on Thursday, 1st and Friday, 2nd November, 2018 have been adopted as presented]

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS [Leader of Government Business]: Honourable Members, I rise on S.O 82 to suspend S.O 63[4] to accommodate other items on the Order Paper.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. NENNEH LEBBIE: Mr Speaker, I second the Motion.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Motion to suspend S.O 63[4] so as to accommodate other items on the Order Paper has been carried]

III. PAPERS LAID

[A] HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before laying this Paper, I would like to give brief information. Part of Westminster Foundation for Democratic Cooperation with Parliament of Sierra Leone, was to support the 2018 induction of Members of Parliament. The Papers that are about to be laid are support materials not only to provide information to Members of Parliament, but could be used as souvenir for the Parliament of Sierra Leone. Therefore, I beg to lay on the Table of the House the following documents:

- Visitors Guide [Welcome to the Parliament of Sierra Leone];
- Understanding Parliament [important facts and processes you need to know about the Parliament of Sierra Leone; and
- Parliament of Sierra Leone Glossary 2018.

[B] THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY.

MR PETER BAYUKU CONTEH [*Minister of Trade and Industry*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following agreement: 'Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.'

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, that was too scanty. In future, I will urge you to give us more explanation on some of the issues in the document. Honourable Members, at this stage, I would stand Parliament down for a meeting of all Members of Parliament in Committee Room 1. I can rest assure you that every Member of Parliament is going to be happy. I know everybody wants to be happy. I can assure you everybody is going to be happy. So in the circumstance, the sitting is stood down.

[The House was stood down at 12:00 p.m. and resumed at 2:25 p.m.]

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

MR PETER BAYUKU CONTEH [*Minister of Trade and Industry*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of this House on Wednesday, 7th November, 2018: 'Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.'

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today marks another milestone in our persistent effort to contribute in writing a new chapter in the study of African Unity and taking our rightful place in the Global Economy. What we are witnessing today, the ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, is the key to the creation of one African Market, which will change the dynamics of the African continent. This Agreement does not only symbolise our progress towards the ideal of African Unity, but it is an Agreement about trades in goods and services; about African workers adding value in Africa; and about services offered by African professionals using the latest technologies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the African Continental Free Trade Area will cover an African Market of **1.2** billion people and the gross domestic product of **\$2.5 trillion** across all **55** member states of the African Union. In terms of the number of participating countries, it will be the world's largest free trade area since the formation of the world trade organisation. This Agreement will progressively eliminate tariffs on intra African trade, making it easier for businesses to trade within the continent. But beyond the tariffs, the Agreement addresses non-tariffs barriers, such as heavy custom procedures, and excessive paper work, which are often an impediment to businesses generally.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Agreement also makes provision for the recognition of technical and sanitary standards, transits facilities and Customs Cooperation. Therefore, the aim is to significantly ease doing business across borders in Africa. Most importantly, it will create an opportunity for consolidating this continent into one trade area and provide great opportunities for enterprises, businesses and

consumers across Africa to support sustainable development in the World's least developed region.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Economic Commission for Africa estimates that this Agreement has the potential to boost intra Africa trade by **53.2%**, through the elimination of import duties and to double this trade [if non-tariff barriers are also reduced]. Mr Speaker, you will agree with me that small and medium size enterprises are key to growth in Africa. This account for about **80%** of the regions' businesses and these businesses usually struggle to penetrate into the overseas market, but they are well positioned to tap into regional export destinations. We can use regional market as stepping stones for expanding into overseas markets at a later point. Women are estimated to account for around **70%** of cross boarder traders in Africa. When engaged in such activities, women are particularly vulnerable to harassment, violence, confiscation of goods and even imprisonment. By reducing tariffs, the Agreement makes it more affordable for informal traders to update through formal channels, which offers more protections.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the ideals of the Agreement, when cascaded to our situation in Sierra Leone, it is in line with the vision of His Excellency the President, Rtd Brigadier Julius Maada Bio and his 'New Direction' agenda. Not surprisingly, His Excellency the President signed the Agreement in July, 2018, immediately after his election. For the continent, including Sierra Leone, to benefit from this Agreement, the Parliament of Sierra Leone is hereby requested to ratify this Agreement. I therefore urge you to ratify this Agreement. Thank you for your attention *[Applause]*.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: I urge you because the day is far gone. In this regard, I will only allow the Leaders to contribute on your behalf. I know some of you are extremely tired by now. So, pleased allow the Leaders to contribute.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA *[Leader of the NGC]:* Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this document put in front of us is an important aspect of the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity to the African Union to move from purely a Political

Organisation to one that is fostering economic transformation and development across the continent. This document is an important pillar of that transition. On behalf of colleagues who attended the Pan-African Parliament, we want to say our predecessors have been previewed to the debates on this document. It has been debated for a while at the AU and the Pan-African Parliament. When we were there recently, the President of Rwanda, who is the current Chair of the African Union, urged all Parliaments to move fast in ratifying this Agreement. Our President has signed and the Minister has already given some of the benefits that this could bring to our country. It is important to also highlight gender dimension. It is true that the marketing in our country and across Africa are done by women. The cross border trade itself, as the Minister said, a lot of it is done by women. So, I urge colleagues to move fast in approving this Agreement, so that we will be able to convey to the Pan-African Parliament that we have already joined other countries in approving this Agreement. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA *[Leader of the Coalition 4 Change]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, upon hearing from the Minister of Trade about this Agreement, it goes a long way to endorse what successful Governments have done. Specifically, this is found in pillar three of the last government's agenda, which gives a blessing to international trade between and among countries in Africa and beyond. Presentation of such a document will also add credence to the 'New Direction' agenda. It came up as a topical topic in the EU Parliament. I am a Member of the EU Parliament, a forum where countries from the ACP and Europe came together to get a bilateral Agreement in trade. This will go a long way to boost the International Market.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, another challenge that came up was in the area of the Marine Resources. Sierra Leone lacks packaging and processing systems, which came up as a challenge. The Leader of delegation reassured the EU Parliament and ACP countries that it will be transformed. Therefore, I want to urge my colleagues to swiftly ratify this document. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: If there is no Independent and Paramount Chief Members of Parliament who wants to contribute, I call on the Leader of the Opposition to make his contribution.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH *[Leader of the Opposition]*: Mr Speaker, whenever I rise to give contribution, I also do it on behalf of the Independent Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, following the cue from the Leader of the NGC, we are fortunate because we are just coming from Rwanda and I am sure, among the several days spent, this document might have been among the topics discussed. Like ourselves in the ECOWAS Parliament, we were in Abidjan for ten days and we were only there to ensure that we digest this document properly. So, we are urging the Minister not to allow this country to be left behind. You have to do all you could to add value to whatever we will be producing, so that we will be part of the market. We should not be moving towards creating a free zone wherein we will not benefit. I know that you are a man of action and I believe you will continue to do well in that Ministry. We want you to ensure that those in the production sector do what is right in making sure that our women, as the Honourable Leader of the NGC said, are going to benefit because they are the ones involved in trading activities and we have to protect them. I support the ratification of this Agreement *[Applause]*.

HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS *[Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this particular Agreement is very important for us as a nation. As a Government, we are trying very hard to develop the middle level man power. We have established several small and medium enterprises and we are also capacitating those enterprises. As such, this market is very timely, like what the Leader of the Opposition said, we were in Abidjan for over ten days to digest this Agreement. We also have the Mother of the House who was also there to digest this Agreement. So, I am very happy that we are ratifying this Agreement at least before going back to ECOWAS Parliament next week. We are now sure that once we are in Abuja and the issue of African Continental Free Trade Agreement comes up, we would be proud as a

delegation from Sierra Leone to say we have also ratified it. I therefore call on my colleagues Honourable Members to support and ratify this Agreement. Thank you very much *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister.

MR PETER BAYUKU CONTEH *[Minister of Trade and Industry]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank you very much for your contribution towards the ratification of this document. Indeed, as the leaders of the NGC, C4C, APC, and of course the Leader of the House said, I want to state here that this document is very important. It is good for Africa, but more so for Sierra Leone. I want to remind you that the second priority of Government is to develop the economy and trade is key towards building this country's Economy. So, I am very pleased that you have given the support to this document and I can assure you that this Government will do all it could to promote trade in this country. We want a very strong economy in this country.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House ratify the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of this House on Wednesday, 7th November, 2018:

Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Government Motion by the Minister of Trade and Industry has been ratified]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, because of time, we cannot proceed with the fifth item on the Order Paper.

AJOURNMENT

[The House Rose at 2:45 p.m. and was adjourned to Friday, 9th November, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.]