



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - FIRST MEETING

FRIDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2017

SESSION – 2016/2017



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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Friday, 3rd November, 2017.

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THE APPROPRIATION ACT, 2018

BEING AN ACT TO AUTHORISE EXPENDITURE FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND FOR THE SERVICES OF SIERRA LEONE FOR THE YEAR 2018 AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Friday, 3rd November, 2017.

I. PRAYERS

[The Clerk of Parliament, Mr Ibrahim Sesay, Read the Prayers].

[The House met at 11:23 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown].

[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Chernor R. M. Bah, in the Chair].

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2017.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 2nd November, 2017. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? There being no amendments could someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 2nd November, 2017 as presented?

HON. MOHAMED KAMARA: Mr Speaker, I so move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. ALIMAMY G. KARGBO: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 2nd November, 2017 has been adopted as presented]

III. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH *[Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have not received communication from neither the Minister nor his deputy. I therefore request that we skip that item.

THE SPEAKER: Approved. Next item please.

IV. BILL

THE APPROPRIATION ACT, 2018

BEING AN ACT TO AUTHORISE EXPENDITURE FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND FOR THE SERVICES OF SIERRA LEONE FOR THE YEAR 2018 AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS.

SECOND READING

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

[THIRD ALLOTTED DAY]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the debate continues and you have to be very pro-active. I cannot just call you from where you are sitting. This is the first part of the debate. I have a list and I am not going to take all the names. In that regard, you have to stand up and I will decide from the list those who are going to speak. I have to apologise, but that is the only way out. We have started very late and it has nothing to do with us because the problem was with the Ministry of Finance. I will decide from the list.

Honourable Members, I am going to be stricter than all the other days. Therefore, I want you to make sure that you keep strictly to the time.

HON. FRANCIS KOWA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to make my submission to this all but very important 2018 Budget Bill. The base for every argument, one must have a hypothesis and today's debate is to examine the budget and come up with a conclusion.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to first of all bring to this Honourable House a research done whilst I was looking at the Budget. The research was done by the International Monetary Fund [IMF]. With your leave, Mr Speaker, I will read the overview of our economy as stated by the IMF. It says: **"Sierra economy proved resilient in the face of two major shocks in 2014 and 2015; i.e., the Ebola epidemic and the collapse of Iron Ore price between 2014 and 2015. However, economic growth has resumed with new investment in agriculture and fisheries; and recovery is on the way."** According to the IMF, projection is expected to remain sustainable for the short, medium and long term.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the reason why I started with this note is to go back to our debate yesterday, wherein an Honourable Member from Bo spoke about diversification. This economy has shown, as any other budget in the past, that this Government is focused and rely on diversification. Today, if you go back to the 2006 Budget, the revenue generated from the fisheries was **Le40.7bln**. This is an indication

to show that this Government have committed in generating revenue over **100%** increase in the fisheries sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about agriculture. Few years back, we were talking about subsistence agriculture; but today, we are now moving to commercialised or mechanised agriculture wherein the next couple of years, precisely just after we come back to power in March, 2018, we would see the output of the investment we have made. In that regard, we must endeavour to ensure that we have a strong economy and a stable country. Therefore, this Government led by the dynamic leader, His Excellency the President, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, deemed it fit to invest in the young men and women of this country in the Military Force. If you look at the 2006/2007 Budget, the sum of **Le43.6mln** was invested in the Military; but today we are talking about **Le106bln** being invested in the security forces of this country. So, we want to allay the fears of our brothers and sisters on the other side that this Government is very much keen and interested in developing our security agencies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will round up by stating here that all investments we have put in the security, education, health and infrastructure are yielding dividend. The impact of the infrastructural development does not only mean the beautiful roads, but the economic aspect of it. If we take a look at the cost of traveling, you will notice great improvement. Today, agriculture products are reaching the end-users within the shortest possible time. This shows that this Government has invested immensely in infrastructural development for the benefit of this nation. In education, no other government has ever invested than this particular Government. The reason for that is because all the public examinations; i.e., National Primary School Examinations [NPSE], Basic Education Certificate Examination [BECE] and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination [WASSCE] are being paid for by this Government for the past 10 years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to conclude by saying that with all the analyses, I see no reason why this budget should be not be approved today by this Honourable House. I thank you all.

HON. THOMAS S. SENGEPOH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are here this morning debating the national budget; we are here this morning talking about a stable economy; we are here this morning talking about huge investments in various sectors; and we are here talking about the prosperity of Sierra Leoneans. I want this Honourable House to know that today is the 3rd November, 2017 and many government workers are yet to receive their salaries. I am saying this before God and man that I have not been paid as a Member of Parliament. I have not been paid and I am serious about this. If you want to challenge what I am saying, ask the staff of Parliament and they will tell you that they have not been paid. If we are serious about development, these are the things we should be looking at. You cannot begin to talk about development without providing the basic necessities of life. Again, you cannot talk about development without providing the things that the man on the street needs. I am saying this because we all swore to an oath as Members of Parliament to represent the interest of the people of this country in this House. I am not talking about myself, but the poor and suffering people in the streets. If you go to your constituencies, you will prove me right.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the pension. Much has not been said about gratuity for retirees. We are the decision makers today, but we should not forget to provide for the retirees. That is why people are scared of retiring in Sierra Leone. This is because people retire without paying them and the only solution to that is to continue paying them until you fix their gratuity; so that at the end of the day, whatever amount you pay can be deducted. Many people are dying out of frustration. If you look at the faces of retirees, they are very emaciated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to tell this Honourable House that we have still not known the contributions made in respect of the mudslide victims. We have not been informed about that and it is part of the budget. If you look at Paragraph 3, something was stated regarding mudslide. As we speak, Parliament has not been informed about the amount of money or materials collected from sympathisers. This is extremely very serious. That tells you that Parliament is not respected by the other

branch of government because we have allowed the tyranny of that particular branch. As a House representing the interest of the people, we should have the capacity to thank those who have contributed their resources. We have not been informed and this is very sad.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if I decide to refer to whatever is written in this budget at the end of the day I would tell you that in fact they have not told us anything in the budget. This is because it seems that government was all over the place shopping for reasons as to the present predicament of this nation. This Government stated that one of the reasons for the present state of the economy is the mudslide and natural disaster. The question is how that can seriously impact an economy that has been handled by the APC Government for the past ten years. How can mudslide seriously impact an economy that has been in the hands of the APC Government for nearly ten years? Why are you mentioning mudslide in this budget?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have also noticed that the same roads are being budgeted for every year. There is huge dishonesty on the part of this Government because even when they budget for the same roads every year, we are yet to see any improvement. Whoever told the people of this nation that the citizens of Sierra Leone do not like roads, that person has made a mistake. Everybody needs good roads, but let us talk about the cost of these roads. Some of those roads were only renovated or reconstructed but they always come to tell Parliament that the roads were constructed. To me, this is very dishonest and it is not in the best interest of the people of this country.

Again, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, much has been said about the free health care. Few days ago, I listened carefully to a radio programme where mothers who took their children to a hospital were saying that they had to buy almost everything. I am not challenging the fact that you are not providing some of these medicines or some of these items, but the monitoring aspect is very appalling.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to inform this House that since 2007, we have not progressed as a nation. We have been budgeting for the same project every year,

but at the end of the day nothing happens. I am saying this because I took a solemn oath before God and man on the day I entered this Honourable House. This nation has not progressed and we have to accept that fact, this nation has not progressed at all and we need to accept that fact, otherwise we are not doing any service to the people of this country. The people trusted us as their representatives and we should make sure that that we serve them well. I have observed that instead of serving the people, we are serving political parties. I am not loyal to any political party [*Undertone*].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to refer this Honourable House to Paragraph 15, the last sentence. It talks about the exchange rate which the document claims to be very stable. Who has told you that the exchange rate is stabilised? Are we actually going to the street to know what is happening there or just doing paper work here? People are going to the media to present all sorts of pictures? This kind of administration is unfair to the people of this country. Please pay the people now, so that they can solve their problems. We need to provide the basic needs for our people before we begin to talk about development.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member.

HON. SHEKU A. SANNOH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, couple of days ago, we have been listening to John the Baptist, prophesying the coming of Jesus Christ. I am speaking with facts and figures. I will not talk about salaries because during the Ebola scourge, we were able to pay our employees on time. so I would not belabour myself to talk about salaries. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is what we call the right to access of information passed by this Honourable House, if the lawyer is unable to ask for information to know that there is a law regarding that, there is no need to talk about something that has to do with engineering when he spoke about roads because within the law he has got limitations, I would not speak to that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, couple of days ago, I listened to Members of Parliament on the other side and they made mention of the handing over speech of the late President Dr Ahmed Tejan Kabba. They spoke about the **Le500bIn** that was left by

the then government. Forgetfully, they did not in any way put forward to this House the financial statement. I want this nation to know what this Government inherited from the then SLPP Government. I have with me here a report that has to do with the financial statement on our national assets and liabilities. With the leave of Mr Speaker, Paragraph 15 states that the then Government left over **Le500bln** as bank balance. That is a fact, but if you read the report further, the then President was very skilful to only talk about the bank balance, but he did not mention anything that has to do with long and short terms liabilities. With your leave, Mr Speaker, I will refer this House to the Auditor-Generals report on the accounts of Sierra Leone, 2007. Consolidated fund liabilities and short term domestic suppliers' arrears and public debts amounted to **Le667bln**. Those are the short term liabilities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us go to the long term liabilities, which is about **Le1.67tln**. If you add **Le667bln** to **Le1.67tln**, what we inherited was **Le2.355tln** debt. This was what this Government inherited from the then SLPP Government. This is for domestic debt and it is in the report. The report also talked about the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations. With the leave of Mr Speaker, it reads: **"An accountable document register was not maintained, neither a revenue cash book nor the general receipt for the financial year was produced for inspection. The Vote Service Ledger was poorly maintained, the Imprest Cash Book was not maintained to record the details of imprest totalling, Le134bln."** This was what this report was unable to capture from the Ministry of Labour.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to look at the Ministry of Lands. The AG's Report states: **"In spite of several requests, vital accountable documents were not produced for inspection. Reconciliation statement in respect of revenue collected and banked were not prepared and retained for the period under review, various disbursement totalling Le655bln were not recorded."** This is enough for us to know that we inherited shattered accounts.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI *[Deputy Minority Leader of the House]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member is reading the 2007 Auditor General's Report. In the same respect, I want him to tell this House the findings of the Public Accounts Committee of this House on those issues raised in the AG's Report.

HON. SHEKU A. SANNOH: With all due respect, Mr Speaker, I am researching for my consumption. You have your own rights to do your research. The Reports I have referenced are not my reports. I have the handing over speech of the late President Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabba and the 2007 AG's Report. The handing over speech was delivered on the 5th November, 2007 and the 2007 AG's Report was concluded in December, 2007. So, this is enough for you to know exactly.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Speaker, point of order. The Honourable Member is misinforming the House. He said he is making reference to the speech delivered by the late Dr President Ahmad Tejan Kabba on the 5th November. So, I wonder whether he is making reference to the 5th November Report. I do not have that Report and it was never allowed to be delivered. So, I just want him to set the records straight. I do not have problem with his figures because they are all misleading.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your point is noted.

HON. SHEKU A. SANNOH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am saying because there was a deficit of **Le1.7bln**, but in the Presidential Speech, the late President mentioned **Le1.6bln** as waiver. My question is that if the budget is talking about **Le1.7bln** and the late President talked about **Le1.6bln** what about the difference? Where is the difference, Mr Speaker? I am trying to put the records straight.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have one minute.

HON. SHEKU SANNOH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Yesterday, I am not in agreement with the Honourable Member from Allen Town when he said that 'there are two thousand untrained and unqualified teachers who were employed. I think there is more to this. If you look between 1996 and 2007, there were different qualifications.

Qualifications means that for you to be employed, you must at least have what we call.... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time is up.

HON. ANSUMANA JAIA KAIKAI *[Deputy Minority Leader of the House]*: I thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, again we are here debating the statement of accounts of this country as presented by the Minister of Finance in the Well of this House sometime last week. Interestingly, I have gone through both the fiscal strategy statement and the statement of economic and financial policies for the next 12 months. In that regard, I would like to state here that I have seen these documents before, but this very one is a clear testimony of the shortfalls year in year out for the past ten years this country had suffered in terms of meeting relevant targets that must be met. When Dr Karifala Marah was Minister of Finance, he promised the people of this country, including this House that inflation was going to drop below double digits. Today, we are talking about **17%**; and it is in this document, the Minister promised the people of this country again that he would do all what he can in making sure that inflation is reduced.

Suspension of S.O 5[2]

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Interestingly, our GDP is **12.1%**, compared to the average in the sub-Saharan Africa, which is **17%**. We all know that the IMF has always advised countries like ours that it should be **20%** or better. Again, this is below the belt, and it simply means that we have not achieved enough to be taken seriously as far as our fiscal policies are concerned. We are talking about no new taxes. That is great because for the last twenty years, successive governments in this country have pursued the policy of making sure that fiscal management of our economy have all the instruments we can adequately work with to ensure that we do better than we have done in the last ten years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to specifically look at Paragraphs 38 to 44, which talk about agriculture. We should take this country seriously. If we are still talking

about increasing expenditure in the activities of agriculture in this country, then we should first of all take cognisance of the amount of money we had put into agriculture. Despite the amount of money being spent on agriculture, we are still where we are. I am not an agriculturist, but I come from Pujehun District, which is the backbone of our economy in terms of agriculture. I will authoritatively tell this House that the last time a Minister of Agriculture visited Gbondapi was some years that I cannot even remember. Gbondapi or Tormabom alone has enough resources to feed the whole of West Africa with rice.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we were told few days ago that the Minister of Agriculture has just visited that part of the country. Honourable Brimah Conteh will confirm.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: I said I cannot remember. Maybe he went to Tormabom and not Gbondapi.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I know you will not remember and that is why we are reminding you now.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Therefore, as far as I am concerned, spending money on policy areas where adequate seriousness is not put is a waste of resources of the people of this country. I want to remind this House that if we neglect agriculture, we cannot have growth and economic development in this country. Agriculture should be taken very seriously in this country because if we are to develop as a country, we must base those developments on agriculture. We will never be able to diversify in this country without proper policy implementation in the area of agriculture. Therefore, I want to urge the next government, which would come from the SLPP, to put all seriousness in agriculture. Before 2007, we used to export over 200,000 metric tons of husk rice to Liberia. In fact, **76%** of our food production was enough. We had achieved **76%** food sufficiency in this country before the end of the government of the late Dr Ahmed Tejan Kabba. The question is what do we have today? Can the Minister of Finance tell us? The indicators are telling us that we have actually spent more money and achieve less.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I keep reminding this House of small scale project that was meant for Tonkolili District. As we speak, the Ministry of Agriculture has not been able to tell us as to whether that programme was implemented. It was only a small project worth about **\$700,000**, but where did it go? It did not get to Tonkolili District at all. Now, as far as issues are concerned. I have seen the figures and we are making progress because we have a serious Minister in that Ministry. If the Ministry of Agriculture, headed by Professor Monty Jones, cannot make it for us, then who will do that? Gbondapi is being abandoned and we used to have a Japanese Project in that part of the country which was doing very well before the war. If we do not go back to Gbondapi, Tormabom and the other places, then we are not a serious people. After the forthcoming elections, we must treat agriculture properly.

On the basis of that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also have to state here that unless we treat our intentions with the relevant attitude and seriousness. What we have here that does not have much in it other than assertions will only remain as assertions. On that note, I wish all of us well that those who want to be here in the next appropriation may Allah help them.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, by way of introduction, after listening to various shades of opinions during the past days, I want to remind ourselves that the Government of President Ernest Bai Koroma is a Government for all Sierra Leoneans. It is not an APC Government or SLPP Government. It is a Government for all Sierra Leoneans. And the democratic structures of the State have helped us to make it very clear and to educate ourselves that even the distribution of Councils throughout the country, are shared almost equally between the SLPP and the APC. This means that both parties are actually running this country. It will be totally untrue to begin to throw mud at each other to assume that only one party is running this country. In fact, we have as many mayors in the APC as in the SLPP. So, this is an introductory remarks from me, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one man whom I will always declare as one of the honest Sierra Leoneans was the late President Dr Ahmed Tejan Kabba. He said in an AWOL Ceremony that 'I did not come to office to build roads, or to provide excessive electricity, I came to office to bring peace in this country and I think I have done that.' And the rest will now be done by Ernest Bai Koroma. He will now be handling the issues of roads and electricity, which Dr Ernest Bai Koroma has done remarkably well.

THE SPEAKER: And who was the Chairman of the AWOL that night?

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Well, I was there and you were also there. We had very strong AWOL members who have also held very important offices.

THE SPEAKER: I brought both of them together.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: You did, Mr Speaker. We allowed both of them to come out frankly to express their views about the running of this country. And of course, my good friend, Honourable Ansumana J. Kaijai, was saying President Ahmed Tejan Kabba was my friend. In fact, my mother brought him up, which means we were closer than just being friends.

Mr Speaker, Honourable members, the issue of agriculture has been mentioned several times. Agriculture has been stated by one or two people that it is the mainstay of a country's economy. In fact, without agriculture, this country simply cannot survive. We must also remind ourselves, like what President Ernest Bai Koroma keeps saying that it is not enough for us to talk about agriculture without introducing value addition. Value addition becomes very important, especially for those who are talking about the new mode in agricultural practice. It is not enough for us to just produce rice. We must put in place structural mechanisms that will make rice marketable, both locally and internationally. For many years, it has always been said that we have been talking about devolution of agriculture. And we have never seen the desired results. The fact of the matter is that we are going to see the desired results very soon.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Deputy Minority Leader came to a very close suggestion made by the Minister of Finance that the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry

of Agriculture should work in together in terms of putting in place structures for a national conference for the expansion of Agriculture in Sierra Leone. If that is the case, then it will give us a greater opportunity to exchange ideas that will enable us address issues relating to Agriculture in this country. We concede that we have to do more in the area of agriculture. We must also concede that more funding must be provided to improve agriculture in Sierra Leone. When we continue to refer to the late Honourable S.A.T Koroma, the then Minister of Agriculture who after the Second World War, spearheaded the export of rice from Sierra Leone to neighbouring countries and we had a well-structured system. Siaka P. Stevens was the President of this nation. People may tend to ask the question, why we have not continued to score those goals in the area of exporting rice to Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, etc. The simple answer is that there was no continuity.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, our friends on the other side seem to believe that they have answers to all these questions. But the fact is that they do not have answers to all the questions. They were in power for eleven good years and we really did not see any new ideas. Perhaps, what is going to be very clear after the conclusion of the elections is to come up with a new concept. It is not going to be Agenda for Prosperity, but Agenda for more Prosperity. And we are going to bring on-board some of our fellows from the other side to be part of our administration, especially those who have demonstrated intelligence in their debates.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I must also state here that the late President Ahmed Tejan Kabba was also very honest to discover that his government lacks effective Public Relations [PR]. They did not have the mechanism for PR and they were hit left and right. They had no PR system, but he was honest enough to say Mr Ibrahim Ben Kargbo, please help us to propagate our own concept or ideas. And that was how I was paid **Le1mil** by President Kabba every month to take Ministers of the SLPP to the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service to interview and give them the opportunity to espouse their programmes and policies. I brought these issues simply because thinking is important, but implementing your policies must also be seen as a very important component in

state governance. We have done one thing when we came to office to make sure that the policies left behind by the SLPP are implemented. It was President Ahmed Tejan Kabba who came up with the idea of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation [SLBC], but the SLPP could not implement it. The ideas were not there, but what I did was to get people to implement that idea.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I decided to mention those good programmes which were put together by the Government of the late President Ahmed Tejan Kabba, but they could not implement them. Again, the Hillside Bypass Road was their concept, but they were unable to implement that project. They had to wait for President Ernest Bai Koroma to implement it. Also, the Masiaka/Conakry Road was their concept, but the Government of the late President Ahmed Tejan Kabba could not implement it. They had to wait for Dr Ernest Bai Koroma to do that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the fact of the matter is that even as a government, we will continue to create emphasis in the area of public relations. Any government that cannot sell its own programmes, like we are doing in our own case, is not going to be a government that will succeed. The fact of the matter is that our friends on the other side were unable to sell their own programmes effectively. Over the period, we have seen development in this country and we have been magnanimous on our side to also accept the fact that the SLPP did perform in certain areas, but we will continue to state that the All Peoples Congress Party will continue to come up with new ideas and to bring a new thinking in the management of this country. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have to apologise to the Leaders they will be limited in their contributions. Normally, I should not give them timeframe or limit their contributions, but I am kindly requesting that we endeavour to keep within twenty minutes. And for those who are unable to contribute, I also want to apologise to them, especially Honourable Swaray, Honourable Katta, Honourable Patrick L. Kargbo and the Honourable Alpha B. Lewally. Time is not in my favour now. Madam Minority Leader I know you have a lot to say, but there will be more time to say more things.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI *[Minority Leader]*: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable, I take the Floor this afternoon with mixed feelings. When I came to this Parliament as a first time Member of Parliament, I took the Floor for my first debates on the national budget with a lot of enthusiasm, happiness and expectations. I have spent the past few days reading and preparing my presentations. For the past few days, I have been going through the Hansard to look for my first debate on the budget and thank God I was able to get it. Today, I am here with mixed feelings because this will be my last debate on the budget as a Member of Parliament. I am saying this because I have given farewell to my constituents that I will no longer be available for elections in 2018.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my statement will be general based on my experience and my positions that I have made on every budget debate in this Parliament. I have always said a few statements of facts about budget and development, and I will state them here again that development is incremental. We continuously add to the development of a country. I also used to say that development is contextual. The rate and pace of development of a country is in fact determined by the context, socio-economic, political and technical context within which that development takes place. I have also been saying that development is a continuous process. That is to say, you continuously build on development and that every time you look back and see something that has not been there before you have to make sure that you add something to it. That is very great. When it came to finance and the budget, the same applies. To me, budgets are incremental. What that means is that the budget of 1996 will never be the same for 2017 because we have moved on.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as we put development strides together, we improve on the development environment; we also improve on resource base. Finance is also contextual because the finance of a country is also dependent on the context whether it is being generated within a stable context [within a context where there is peace and stability], or within a context where there is conflict and insecurity. It depends on how much finances you generate. It is also continuous because you will continuously

generate. But here is another statement of fact that no government, no political party, no individual, or organisation can claim credit for the development of a country. What however is important is that at any point in time there is a government, there is a political party that leads the way and everybody else follows. Another statement of fact is that no country has all the requisite resources for the development of that country. There will always be deficit and there will always be needs. In fact, as you continue to develop, you will continue to create needs for more consumption and those needs for more consumption will continue to create more problems and then you go back to the drawing board to come up with new solutions. So, this has been the statement of fact all the time I have taken either the presidential debate or the budget.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the budget is like the story of the elephant and the blind man. This means that it depends on the part you touch. When we debate, some parts are more important to some members depending on where you find yourself along the continuum. For some, it is social services; for some, it is economic services; for some, it is the security services. But for overall development, all are very important. They are inter-dependent; they are reinforcing; they are integrative; and therefore, one cannot work without other. Despite the fact that some sectors can be more important and therefore we need more resources because the payoff that comes from the investment in that sector has more impact than maybe other sectors. But again, it is contextual. There are a times when you need more money in a sector like when a country is in war or a country coming from war, you need more money to stabilise the economy. You will also need more money to bring peace and security because without those two, you will not be able to develop the human being. But as you develop or as you have peace and stability, you move from peace to development and issues like infrastructure and social services become eminent. Therefore, development is contextual and that is what we all need to remember.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also see the sectors as the organ of the body. All the bodies are important and are not indispensable. I want this House to know that every part of the body is very important and every part contributes to the smooth

functioning of the body. If one organ becomes dysfunctional, it will affect the entire organ. Like the sectors, they are all important but they have to work together because the educational sector reinforces the health sector and the agricultural sector reinforces the health and educational sectors. When you are hungry and go to school, you cannot concentrate and your performance will be abysmal. The transport sector reinforces the trade and agriculture sectors because even when you produce, you have to move your goods speedily from the farm gate to the market, you need a transport to convey those goods to the consumers. Therefore, every sector is important when it comes to development. The allocation of the resources to these sectors is not the same, but we expect that at the end of the day, when you put everything together, they sum up to development. Therefore, we shall always see the trend wherein no sector has enough funds. However, what is more important is the fact that you got something and you have to make judicious use of what you got to translate it into the goods and services or the objectives for which that sector is created. To me, that is what is important.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we look at the human development report for 2017, Sierra Leone is 179 out of 188. There is a column where the percentage change is stated for the last years. And if you have the green arrow, it means you have moved up; but if you have the red arrow, it means you have come down. Sierra Leone has the red arrow with 0.110 movements. That means we have come down. That does not mean that we have not been developing, but not at the pace we are expected to develop. That does not mean that we have not expended our income, but not at the expected rate. Normally, when these human development reports are being released, they indicate the high and the low because it is the average. That is why even if we have done well in area of health in Port Loko or Makeni, but we have not done well in Kailahun, Kenema or Bo; and when you put the figures together, that is the average we usually see. That is why development should be on equitable bases because we are assessed not only within our own national levels, but also at international levels. This is usually done in order to compare how we are doing; vis-à-vis, other countries or development variables.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of education is dear to my heart. I must state here that education continues to enjoy a chunk of our resources. The same goes for health, but my appeal is that those resources should be equitably distributed. Again, infrastructural development in the educational sector should be distributed equitably. Sierra Leone is not going to be complete without a university in the Eastern Region. I want to appeal that we do everything to ensure that we fulfil the promise of having an Eastern Region University.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the road infrastructure is also very important because I come from Kenema District. I want to appeal that we continue to improve and whatever money that needs to be given to the contractor to complete the Blama/Hanga Road, should be done speedily. Also, the road that was started in my constituency is still incomplete. I am begging for that road to be completed. It may be to somebody's credit and somebody's winning is important.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the gender issue is also dear to my heart. Actually, the Judiciary, the Executive and even the Local Councils have done better than us in terms of female representation. When I came to this Parliament in 2002, it was **14.5%** of female representation, but today, it is **12.09%**. We need to do more in that area. This advice is for all political parties to give more space to women, especially in Parliament because this is where they can make the most important decisions. A country's state of development can be gauged by the state of development of its women, children and youths.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, leadership and the governed are very important. At any one point in time there would always be one President in this country and not two. The one President would lead the rest of the people of the country. It is the obligation of all leaders, as the Bible and the Quran have stated, for leaders to be sympathetic to those that they govern. On the other hand, those that are governed have an obligation to respect those that govern them. They may not be from your party; they may not be from your region; but for the position they hold, they must be respected. We should give to 'Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. However, leaders should also

be magnanimous in the performance of their functions. It does not matter who voted for you, but once you become a leader, you are the leader for everybody. Therefore, what is 'good for the goose should be good for the gander.'

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to read my first statement when I came to this Parliament. These are messages I want to leave with you, as Members of Parliament. This was what I said; **"It becomes incumbent upon us Members of Parliament when we are debating the budget to mount effective and regular monitoring of the moneys we allocate to the MDAs."** In Paragraphs 18, 19 and 20, [which is the area where you and I have a responsibility], I said that **"to ensure that we hold the Government accountable for the effective implementation of this budget, irrespective of which political party you belong."** I was sitting on that side when I said those statements *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind all of us that this is a House of law and this is a House of constitutionalism. This is the highest House where we should uphold human rights, justice and the rule of law. Every day we come here, we have the parliamentary prayers: '...put aside all private interests, prejudices and personal affections above all else.' I thought it fit to leave this message before I vacate this seat in a few months from now. As the saying goes, 'to thyself be true.' Let us uphold the Constitution, let us uphold our role as law makers. Sometimes you are caught between your party and your nation, but search through your conscience and make an informed decision that would make you lie down and sleep well. You will sleep because you do not have any guilty conscience. Guilty conscience is the standard prison than anything in the world. If means standing alone while all others are on one side, especially when your conscience and your God tell you so, stand on your grounds. You will be vindicated one day.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank God for bringing me thus far. The journey has not been very smooth at all. I thank my parents of blessed memory, relatives, friends and sympathisers for the supports they have been giving me. I thank my constituents for giving me the opportunity to serve them and to serve my country as a

Member of Parliament. Again, I want to thank my party for giving me the symbol. I also want to thank those parties with whom I was in this Parliament because together we were family. I thank all the cohorts of the 2002, 2007 and 2012 parliamentarians for the supports and love. I thank the women of Sierra Leone who were my reason for coming to Parliament. I want to ensure that everything we do or say, we put in place gender sensitive laws to improve the women and girls in this country, especially the 50/50, the Sierra Leone Association of University Women through which I was educated from first degree to my Master Degree. Without them, maybe I would not have been educated or had the opportunity to come here. I am saying this because my parents were poor. I thank the international Parliaments that I have served; i.e., the ACP and the Pan African Parliament. I thank the Civil Societies and the Media we have worked with. Sometimes the road was stormy, but at the end of the day, we have worked well. I want to thank the Executive and the Judiciary because we are the three Arms of Government. We would not have parliamentarians if there is no Executive and Judiciary. I thank them for all the love and the supports and all those well-wishers, admirers and fans. I may not know everybody, but in their quiet moments, they have prayed for me during my turbulent times. I thank all of them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would miss this Parliament. This House has been my home for 15 years and five months. This has been my family, but as the saying goes, you leave the stage when the applause is loudest. I am no longer available for parliamentary work, but I am a Sierra Leonean. I would continue to serve my country in whatever capacity and wherever I find myself. I thank you all for listening and God bless us all *[Applause]*.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH *[Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one wishes the debates had just ended after the Minority Leader's speech. With your permission and on behalf of this side of the House, I want to wish the Minority Leader well in her future undertakings, having worked so diligently and carefully in her own right. I want to assure her that there is still a future for her in this country. I want her to be rest

assured that this country will not turn its face from her. She has sacrificed a lot and to any journey, there is always an end. This is not the end of the journey, but merely the end of the phase that she has travelled. Indeed, Parliament will miss you because you have made very good friends. You have increased your family. You buried both of your parents when you are here. You gave them a lot of respect and you will reap the blessings. We wish you well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, coming to the budget itself which has been so philosophically digested by the Honourable Minority Leader, I think she has put the budget in a very special context and left all of us to make our own conclusions. My conclusion is that she has joined the Jury that is out there. Depending on your own conclusion, you will decide which way you want to put the budget. Before her contribution, however, Honourable Members of Parliament, even from the other side, have seen this budget as a good budget. I am not quoting anybody here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is one fact that I would like to bring to your attention. When we came here after the 2012 general elections, Honourable Members were paid a salary of less than **Le 2,000,000** per month. I want you to recall without quoting any figures what you are paid now. Like the Honourable Minority Leader said, there is always an incremental journey in every budget that succeeds previous budget. This is in the public domain and therefore, I am not spinning the beans unnecessarily. Honourable Members are paid more than **Le 12,000,000** per month and that is a long journey that we have travelled. So, I want Honourable Members to know that if there has been no improvement in this country, we would not have been able to pay that type of salary. However, I want to refer you to Page 17 of the budget, Paragraph 74. It states: **"Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the 2018 Budget will stick to raise revenue without introducing any new tax and without raising tax rate in any category."** Immediately a date is fixed for budget hearing in this Parliament, a lot of business people hoard their goods away and deny the nation from doing business within those days with the hope of actualising increases that would follow new taxes. This budget denied business people for the very first time, perhaps in this country. This

is because we wanted to make sure that the burden of increased taxation is not felt by our compatriots who are out there waiting for a budget to be read. This is an indication to show that this Government is conscious about the welfare and wellbeing of our people out there.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is therefore a miracle that a Government that is in need of resources, with all the buffeting, the mudslide, the Ebola scourge, the low prices of our export products that have deprived this Government from continuing its development strides in this country. This is a budget that is not raising any taxes purely because we are considering the welfare of our people.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Majority Leader, I think what the Members of Parliament were expecting is for you to confirm that it is as a result of the taxes they have been paying. Their take home is between **Le 11,000,000** and **Le 12,000,000** and not **Le 20,000,000**. That is what they were expecting. And Mr Majority Leader, I am sure the interpretation the public is giving, and I want to state here Members of Parliament have other obligations to their political parties which also goes further to reduce that as well.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH [*Majority Leader of the House and Leader of Government Business*]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am liberal enough to accept criticisms, but the one criticism I would not want to accept from this budget is the one that is criticising the educational sector. Fortunately, the Minority Leader has said enough in that direction, but the fact of the matter is that when this administration came into governance in 2007, there was not much to write home about as far as our education was concerned. That was why the Professor Gbamanja Commission of enquiry was established to take an in-depth look into our educational system. We know that a Commission of enquiry is normally instituted to find out faults that are within the system. Where a system is healthy, no wise man will investigate that system.

Following the Professor Gbamanja Commission of Enquiry, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, a lot of shortcomings were detailed to the government. The Commission looked into the reasons why we were not doing very well as far as the educational

standards were concerned. As a result, the Government issued the White Paper and the result of the implementation of the White Paper are now responsible for the passes we are getting for the improved education in this country and for all the things that have been going on now in the Ministry. For example, this Government insisted that before you go to the Senior Secondary School, you should have your BECE as a pass and that has improved the passes we are getting at the WASSCE level. In terms of money, the amount of money the Government has put into the education sector, especially for the girl child, is very huge. We now know that there are some improvements and that a foundation has been laid for the generation yet to come. We need to appreciate what this Government has done in the education sector. We are doing that because we know that without a firm and strong foundation in the educational sector, we will not be able to progress as a nation. Having said that, we want to assure this nation that we will continue to do what we can in the education sector because we believe that education is the basis of progress and foundation to come.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one area I like about this budget is the diversification policy that Government has introduced as a policy. Of course, agriculture has been listed as the backbone in terms of economic diversification process. And with the almost unlimited potentials in agriculture, we strongly believe, as the Deputy Minority said, that agriculture will be the transforming programme for our country. The landscape is going to be changed immediately with all the policy implementations that are recorded in the Budget Speech. With the EXIM Bank investing **\$30mln** and with another loan to the tune of **\$50mln** coming from the American Foundation, I am sure when Tormabom is revisited; we will be able to have sufficient rice produced in this country. With all the spill off that will follow, I am sure we are going to have a very good economy. The diversification will also go to tourism and with the type of potentials we have in tourism, I am sure we are doing well in that direction too.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you go to Page 12, Paragraph 55 of this Budget, there are lots of emphases that are going to be placed on the early childhood education. What do we mean by early childhood education? Until very recently, there

were very few schools which were called nursery schools that cater for the three year old children. Government is going to take over that area and make sure that the early child education is available in every section, district and for every school going child. That is where the early foundation will be laid in terms of education for the children; and we hope that by the time they grow and mature and transform into primary schools and secondary schools, they would have got a very good foundation to proceed to their WASSCE examinations and universities. This is a very special attraction for the girl child, especially those who are studying in the sciences. Government has indicated that you have a scholarship as long as you are in the sciences at the universities. This is another policy that is geared towards encouraging the girl child, so that they can further their education to university level or other higher institutions of learning they may want to attend. I believe the budget is almost unlimited in the diversification process because facilities are going to be created. Opportunities are going to be given to everybody who wants to further his/her education.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in terms of agriculture, when we subsequently pass the Food and Feed Safety Bill, it is going to enhance the fishery programmes in this country. With the Food and Feed safety Bill that is still with the Legislative Committee, I believe that when that is finally passed into law and implemented, we would have been able to lay down a firm foundation in the fisheries sub-sector. That will be time we start exporting our fish at a far more valuable price than we are now doing. Therefore, I want to assure this Parliament that immediately the Food and Feed safety Bill comes here, we will be able to pass it into an Act of Parliament and then the fishery sectors would have been put on a good footing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the skills training programme in the education sector is also equally important. Until recently we have not been laying emphasis on skills development. The Ministry wants to direct its attention to skills development because the middle level man power training is extremely important in a developing country like ours. It is therefore encouraging that the Ministry of Education is going into that particular direction. We are all aware of the integrity issues in the Ministry of Education

and in our secondary schools. The Minister of Education was here in 2015 and he outlined a lot of integrity issues. Certificates are being forged, children are being exploited, particularly the girl child, either in secondary schools or universities. So, government is paying particular attention to integrity issues. You will recall that very recently, the President appointed the Special Presidential Committee on Education and that committee is going to look into educational issues.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to urge that the Appropriation Bill be speedily ratified. Thank you very much.

THE MINISTER: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me start by thanking Honourable Members for participating in this debate, especially those who have spoken in favour of the budget statements. Notwithstanding that, please allow me to respond to some questions and concerns raised by Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Brimah Conteh spoke about the need to look at the micro-economic part of the budget, especially in terms of revenue generation which has to do with export and mining. As a responsible Government, we have instituted a fiscal strategy statement and a revenue mobilisation to Cabinet and to this Noble House. Some Honourable Members spoke about ghost teachers. Please allow me to say that since we came to power, our goal has been to reduce wastages in the human resources in this country. We have targeted teachers and the health sector. We have also done studies and submitted reports on the Wage Bill Management with recommendations to be implemented.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of debt management was not created by our Government, but we inherited it from the past government; and since then, we have managed our debt burden to satisfy our development partners. Moreover, whatever debt incurred was for the development of this country; namely, roads, schools, hospitals, markets, etc. The issue of Kenema is of concern and I want to inform this House that we have awarded contracts for the rehabilitation of main streets in Kenema, including other districts. The Hanga-Blama Road is currently under

construction and I want to assure this House that it will be completed before the end of 2018.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of allocating resources for oversight functions should not be a concern to this House because to the best of my knowledge we have provided resources to this Parliament to perform its functions... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, to the best of your knowledge?

THE MINISTER: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Well, to the best of my knowledge is not true. I do not want to talk about what transpired this morning while we were late. So, it is better we skip that area, please.

THE MINISTER: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of student loan is on course and it will be addressed through NASSIT Programme. The Pendembu-Kailahun Road Project has been approved and the resources have been provided. The project will commence very soon. The ONS is currently in charge of disaster management and as a responsible Government, we have provided resources to address the issues of our people. Plans are currently underway to establish a Disaster Management Institution.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one Honourable Member made reference to our investments in roads. Please permit me to state that without roads there will be no access to education, health centers, markets for farm products and even for tourist to go to areas Gbanga-Kagbandeh in the South, the Gola Forest in the East and Bintumani Hills in the North.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have introduced the Barefoot College to promote and enhance rural women in the energy sector. Since then, we have provided resources thorough the Ministry of Education. Let me state categorically clear here that all regions have benefitted from this project as they all enjoy solar light.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with the establishment of the Ernest Bai Koroma University, we have provided scholarships for female students, especially those in the sciences. Moreover, our Government in the past have paid **70%** for all students in universities of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me conclude by addressing key issues raised by the Minority Leader with regards Kenema District. The development of Kenema District is dear to my heart, not only because I come from Kenema, but because I have an innate passion for development. I want to assure the Honourable Minority Leader that I will do whatever I can to ensure that Kenema District is developed.

With those few remarks, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Appropriation Act, 2018 being an Act to authorise expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2018 and other related matters be read the second time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill entitled, the Appropriation Act, 2018 being an Act to authorise expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2018 and other related matters has been read the second time].

HON HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O 64, Sub-Section [2&3], in tandem with Section 112[6] of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. We have come to the conclusion of the debate. Some of us looked at the facts and figures whereas some have not. In fact, some did not even come to Parliament on a regular basis, but they seem to know what is going on in Parliament more than some of us. I want to appeal to Members of Parliament that when we move to the Committee of Supply to work with the Sub-Appropriation Committees, we make sure that we come to the end of the Committee of Supply on time because time is not on our side. We are going to form six Sub-Appropriation Committees and if you go outside the Dispatch Desk, the lists have been posted. You will find your name where you belong. I am therefore appealing to you to make sure that you come on time. I also want to admonish the supervisors on both sides to monitor the process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with those few words, I move that the Bill entitled the Appropriation Act, 2018 be committed to the Committee of Supply for further scrutiny.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Mr Speaker, I so second.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill has been committed to the Committee of Supply]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I want to thank you very much for the precious time you spent for the last three days. You have done very well and I hope we continue going forward.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 1:20 p.m. and was adjourned to Monday, 27th November, 2017 at 10 a.m.]