



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

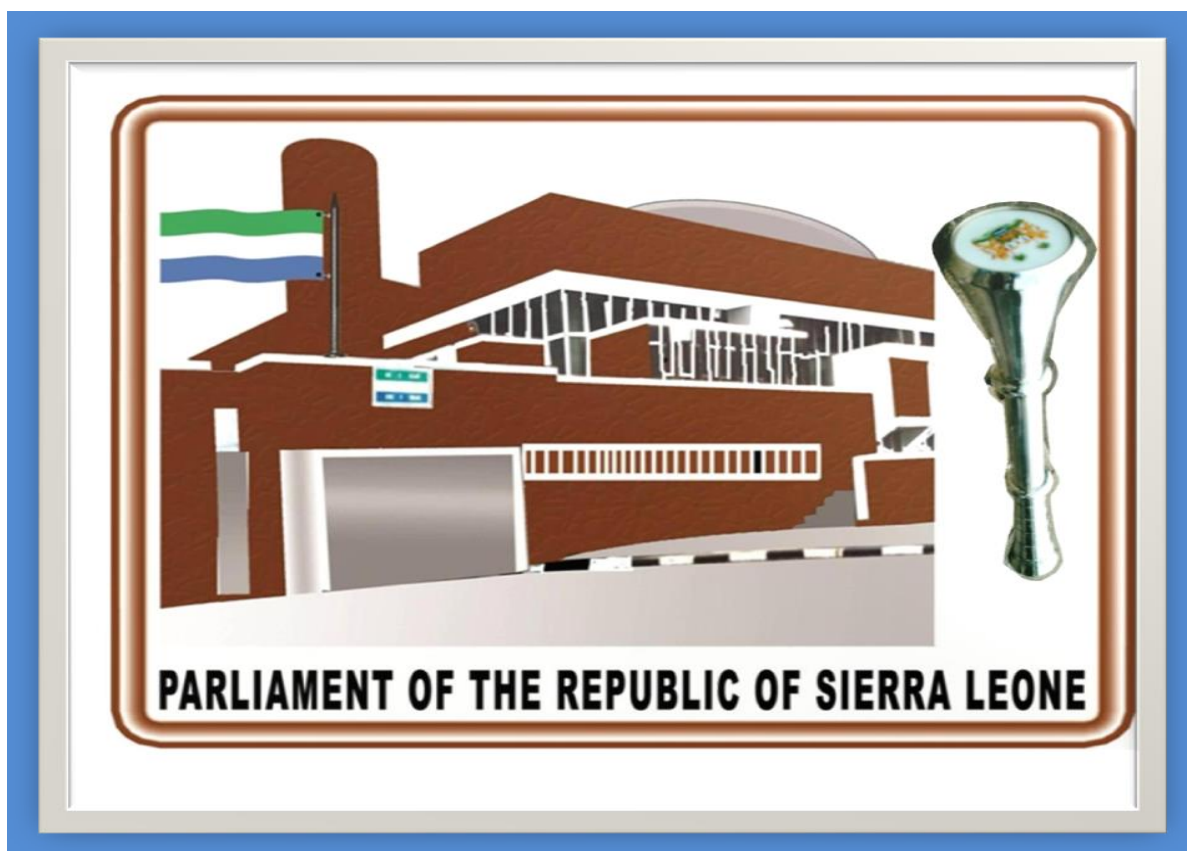
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SECOND SESSION –FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 16TH JANUARY, 2025

SESSION – 2024/2025



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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First Meeting of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
held on Thursday 16th January, 2025

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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

FIRST SESSION – FIRST MEETING OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

THURSDAY 16TH JANUARY, 2025

I. PRAYERS

[Mr. Gilbert Bosco N'habay (Acting Clerk of Parliament), read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:30am in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

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

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S.O 5[2]

[Question Proposed Put & Agreed To]

I. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR TUESDAY 14TH JANUARY, 2025

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the Record of Votes and Proceedings. Pages 1 to 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Can a Member please move?

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: I so move Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

HON. FRANCIS AMARA KAISAMBA: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Record of votes and proceedings for Tuesday 14, January 2025 has been Adopted]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: No announcement, please proceed.

PAPER LAID

SESSIONAL REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT, DATED JULY 2024

THE CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

HON. MOHAMED BANGURA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of the House, pursuant to Section 84 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act number 6 of 1991, Sessional Report on the activities of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for the First Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone to be debated and recommendations contained be adopted.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to amend the Order Paper. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Roman figure 4 dealing with the

Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion of Sierra Leone, I move that it should be expunged from the Order Paper.

THE SPEAKER: Any Secunder?

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS LAMIN: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[Motion moved by the Acting Leader of Government Business for the amendment of the Order Paper has been carried]

BILL

[I] THE COUNTER TERRORISM ACT, 2024

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE

THE SPEAKER: Yes Honourable Daniel Koroma.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for your information as a Member of the Business Committee, I participated in our last deliberations of the Business Committee, chaired by the Leader of Government Business, and some apologies were made during that deliberations, and promises were given also that the same will no longer be repeated. And the order of business based on deliberations on that day was unanimously agreed by all of us. But to my greatest dismayed, just after that, on the Order Paper yesterday, I saw these two Bills, and in my opinion, these two Bills are very important, and they are very sensitive. They require further deliberations before First Reading by way of pre- legislative hearing. The Social Protection Act is an innovation because it attempts to establish an Authority that has never existed before. Of course, I commend the Minister of Labour is an innovative Minister, and is a good score and a feather to his cap. But since it is an innovation, and Social Protection Authority has never existed before. I think we need to discuss it at the pre- legislative hearing, so that you cannot ask why because otherwise, no other Bill will require pre- legislative hearing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you will agree with me that pre- legislative hearing on every Bill is very important, and we cannot underestimate this particular two Bills. Social Protection goes to the welfare of every citizen, including all of us because it deals with both employees and non-employees of public or private sector. It bothers on our welfare. It bothers on our protection, and it deserves further deliberation before we

come here. Of course, for anti-terrorism that is why it is not only international, but even more important to our national security. It cuts across, and it is very important. It touches various other sectors of which they can further inform us so we can take better decision by the time we pass this Bill into Law, but for it to just come that way, and then we go into First Reading, it is like we are just taking it for formality sake, and we are not Parliamentarians here for formality. We are here for business. I want to support our Attorney General to ensure that Government succeeds. And for information, I congratulate you Sir, and I wish you well in your new office. You are assured of our support and we will support you to ensure you succeed. And this is one way we would support you. It is not out of bad fate. It is not out of ill will. The reason is for us to make the Bill better so that we will stand the test of time both nationally and internationally. They are both very important and we want to pass a better Law this time. Thank you very much

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Sometimes do we want to speak to the Galleries or we really want to do the business of the day? Mr Speaker, we met at the Business Committee, there was internal Notice Paper that we all looked at everything pertaining to the Bill that is presently under questioning. We agreed to come for deliberations for certain steps to be taken before we can even consider it back. You know the Bill very well. We need to discuss some of these things. I did not take them out of the Order Paper. You saw it on the internal Notice Paper and you signed it so that you can be in tune with us and this Bill is on the internal Notice Paper. It is clear there.

THE SPEAKER: Is it in the Notice Paper?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: It is there. We have all of it in a minutes. We have shared the minutes. We have even delayed with these two Bills. We have delayed to be very honest. First, the Terrorism Act Bill, we know what is exactly happening around the world. We encounter terrorism always. How do we address it? So many issues have been happening around the world. People are using Internet to radicalize people, to even incite people. Sierra Leone is not far from it. The other point, the Social Protection Bill if we are in sympathy with the people, we do not even need to debate it but pass it today because vulnerable people are in economic risk more so the disability people. These are issues that are enshrined in this Bill. Mr Speaker, let us go down to Committee Room One to have solution where we can engage the Minister, and even after the debate interested parties can make their inputs to the Legislative Committee. So the issue of you having concerns, you are not limited to give us your concerns even after the debate; we have done that time without number.

In addition to that Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, at any time that we have Bills we inform relevant parties that are interested in the Bill to come to Parliament, the Director of Legislative Services can attest to that. Mr Speaker, what can we not change when it comes to Committee Stage? We can change anything if we do not agree we put it to a vote. It is not a mandatory Clause that we should go to legislative meetings. It is an understanding when there are contentious issues so we can go to Committee Room 1 to have some understanding around the Bill and such Bills that we always go with to Committee Room 1 is the Finance Act. My understanding in this House is that we should go to Committee Room 1 for specific Bills that are very important, that we need inputs, or we want to see further deliberations from the professionals within Parliamentarians. We can do so. I do not want us to go to Committee Room One, the constraints we encountered but we can still do it because it is coming from the House.

Mr Speaker, I think these Bills, they are straight forward Bills. These are non-controversial Bills. These are Bills that are gearing to the empathy of our people, also trying to maintain our security as a nation. If there are issues these Bills that I think we have a process which will lead us to the Committee Stage. We are not stopping people not to make their inputs.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Daniel Koroma, all Leaders of the Opposition, I take your concerns on board but can we refer these needs to the Committee Stage for the necessary scrutiny to be done so that we do not waste any further time.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: That is exactly what I am saying. What we are doing is for posterity. As far as I know this Parliament, whatever Bills we pass must be treated with utmost importance. And this is your third term, you are not an MP now but there has never been a break from the day you entered Parliament, until now you are number one in Parliament. There has never been a break. So you can follow this trend of passing Bills into Law by procedure. It goes through pre- legislative hearing that gives the opportunity to relevant MDAS to inform Members of Parliament about the main purpose.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Point of Order. Mr Speaker, can he refer us to the appropriate Standing Orders mandating us to always do pre- legislative hearing? Mr Speaker, please put the question so that we can vote.

THE SPEAKER: It is alright.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I do not think that is the procedure as Leader of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Order! Order! Hold on Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: He is representing us badly. He has been shouting about Business Committee and we have met for us to be on the same page.

THE SPEAKER: Two Members cannot be standing at the same time.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: With all due respect to both of you please sit down. Honourable Members, you know what I am saying is that, sometimes we do not have these things in textbooks or in black and white. So what I will urge you as Leader of this House, to reach out to the Opposition because this is your Bill. Honourable Leader of Government Business you are right that there is nothing mandatory about pre- legislative hearings. In fact, let me read the provision under S.O. 47[2], 'pre- legislative scrutiny and discussion of the Bill in camera may be arranged'. So it is discretionary, but what I am saying, Leader since this is your Bill, I will urge you to reach out to the Opposition. Sometimes, when they raise these issues, you talk to them and they can be understood. Let us continue. I know you are perfectly correct. You are right. When it comes to the Law, there is nothing mandatory. Let us reach out across the Aisles. You know, for the purpose of doing the business of Government, the business of the State, because the more we argue, the more we challenge across the Aisles, we will end up wasting time. Honourable Daniel B. Koroma I understand your position like you said we have been here for quite a time and it is not in all cases that we go into the pre- legislative hearing, some Bills will come directly we deal with them in fact some of them we do not even send them to the Committee Stage. In the interest of speed in governance, Honourable Daniel Koroma, I also urge you to bend backwards, because if we are to deal with this matter strictly by procedure, every day we come here we would stay here until the wee hours. I am not going to allow anyone to contribute again.

HON. ABDUL KARGBO: This is not controversial.

THE SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business...

HON. ABDUL KARGBO: This is non-controversial issue. Since we began this Sixth Parliament, there has been some level of cooperation between the Opposition and the Government Bench, and I do not see anything that should destroy that level of cooperation. So I want to still employ on the Office of the Speaker to thank you for your admonition and I think it is good. And I want to also talk to my counterpart, the Leader of Government Business that we should not do anything that will raise tension. We can meet and discuss this. We are part of the process. We are part of Parliament, and this

is one of our primary responsibilities. So for us to have an opinion, Mr Leader of Government Business, I am not sure that it should fly out tensions. We should always have a meeting point and let us meet at a particular point. This Bill has to do with security, and the mere fact that it has to do with security the Opposition will be very particularly conscious about it so having suggestion from the Opposition is not a crime. I want to believe that we have been doing it on several occasions. Mr Leader of Government Business, this should not be an exception. Let us meet so that we expedite the interest of the country.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you Mr Speaker. In this same Chamber, I have apologized on behalf of Members. I have stood the test of time to advocate for Members. I do not believe in voting because I have the number. I cannot be talking to you and at the next moment, you are here doing something different. We have decided to do a virtual meeting. We did it on that day. And because I want Members to read, to understand the Bill we got the Order Paper out on Monday. Mr Speaker, if there are issues that they fishy, they should call me before this time to have a pre- legislative meeting with some understanding. I will do that before coming here. But we cannot come to the Chamber; we have Ministers in front of us, and he is saying every Bill is mandatory, but the Law is the Law. S.O. 11 is very clear; the rule of Law must prevail. So I will still reach out to them.

THE SPEAKER: Leader of Government Business, please approach me.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Let me make my point.

THE SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader of Government Business, all of you please approach me.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Let me make my point Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on to that point. Mr Minister please proceed.

MR ALPHA SESAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled The Counter Terrorism Act 2024 be read the First Time.

[Question Proposed, Put and agreed To]

[Bill entitled the Counter Terrorism Act 2024 read the First Time]

MR ALPHA SESAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled The Counter Terrorism Act 2024 be read the Second Time. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Bill entitled The Counter Terrorism Act 2024 is intended to provide for the establishment of the National Counter Terrorism Coordination Committee to provide for offences of terrorism and terrorism related matters to provide for enforcement measures on the terrorist funds and other assets, to provide for the prohibition of financial support to terrorism, and to provide for other related matters. The Counter Terrorism Bill 2024 is divided into 11 parts as follows:

Part 1 provides for the interpretation of certain terms and expressions in the Bill.

Part 2 provides for the establishment of the National Counter Terrorism Committee.

Part 3 provides for National Counter Terrorism Coordination Committee.

Part 4 provides for the Counter Terrorism Fusion Center.

Part 5 makes provision for Offenses of Terrorism and Related Matters.

Part 6 makes provision for the Prohibition of Support of Prescribed Organization.

Part 7 provides for Prohibition of Financial Support to Terrorism.

Part 8 provides for Preventive and Ancillary Measures.

Part 9 provides for Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition.

Part 10 provides for Enforcement Measures of Terrorist Property.

And Part 11, miscellaneous makes provision for the Minister to make regulations to carry into effect the provisions of the Act.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled The Counter Terrorism Act 2024 be read the Second Time.

THE SPEAKER: This Bill is going to be sent to the Legislative Committee for proper scrutiny so two Members from either side will contribute and then the Leaders will round up.

HON. ALEX MATTIA ROGERS: Mr Speaker, it is a global benchmark that borders on preventing or responding to the act of terrorism. You will recall in September 11 2001, the incident that occurred in the USA, and we have attended series of conferences, seminars on this global threat on security. Therefore, there is a dire need for such Bill and I will only ask that you create room for joint Parliamentary and Security Intelligence

Committee that is very much important, because this Bill, I should presume will mitigate against the funding of terrorist acts. It will also create room for at least to avert those acts of terrorism, so with these few remarks, there is every dire need to expedite this Bill. I therefore call on my Colleagues so that we could pass this Bill because it is very important. It is a global Bill, and we are all aware of those global threats as well as regional threats. Thank you Mr Speaker.

HON. MOHAMED BANGURA: Mr Speaker, in as much as this Bill is very important to our security network, one has to look at various Clauses in this Bill and make recommendation. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the implementation of this Bill is very important. There must be an oversight Committee that will review the implementation of this Bill. We must allow community inclusion or participation into this Bill. This will enhance trust between the security apparatus and the community people and it is also going to discourage terrorists to infiltrate into these communities. If you have community participation, you will involve them in programs in this Bill. We all know about security and freedom; one has to look at them clearly. We do not want to see a situation wherein security will trample into the freedom of the people just in the name of security. Mr Speaker, capacity building is one key point that we have to take very seriously. The Agency, the security apparatus has to be trained and equipped so that anytime they are given the task to implement, they have to be ready at all time. Mr Speaker, I see this Bill as a very important Bill. We are now catching up with other countries all over the world. Honourable Members, if this Bill comes before us today to deliberate, we have to bear in mind that we are far behind this process when it comes to security. When it comes to counter terrorism, we must put all hands on deck to make sure that this Bill becomes a Law. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, terrorism is not a good thing. Terrorism destroys a nation, and terrorism is all over now, they are gaining strength by strength every day that is why we must take this thing very serious. Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

HON. DR UNPHA S.G. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very happy that this Bill will be committed eventually to Committee Stage for scrutiny. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we all know that terrorism is a global challenge, and Sierra Leone being a part of the global village, we cannot separate ourselves from that fight. However, if you look at the definition of terrorism, it states that terrorism is a criminal act intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes, circumstances or in unjustifiable whatever the consideration of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious, or any other nature that it may be as a nation. As much as we want to make Laws that are progressive, we also want to take cognizance of how a nation will

manage such Law. If we are making this Law, we should ensure that we do not make this Law in isolation of the global contemporary practice when it comes to terrorism. Of course, the word terrorism has been floated a lot. It has even been used against the Opposition as being terrorists. So as a nation, we should be critical about that. And it also talks about an attack against non-combatants, which means it could be an attack against the Opposition by people that have ammunition. I am not trying to skew this politically. I am trying to ensure that we do it in cognizance of what has happened and what has transpired as a person because I have been attacked by combatants as a person. I was beaten at Mamamah, and I was taken to Mile 38 and eventually transported to CID. So when we are talking about these things, we are not trying to be political. We should be mindful because whatever Laws we make now will hunt us and it will affect so many people that do not have an opportunity to have this seat that I have. So when we stand here and talk, we are talking for the people that do not have the opportunity to articulate their vision. So as a country, let us be mindful of this Law. Let us tailor it in a manner that it will benefit all of us. Let it not be a Law that eventually the Opposition can use against the Government, saying they are attacking us, and they are terrorizing our livelihood. So as much as we are happy that this Law is here, and we are mindful that we are part of a global village and that we should make Laws that have national or international best practices. We should endeavour that when we go to Committee Stage, we open it to debate and recommendations so we can make this Law workable for all Sierra Leoneans. So as a Member of the Opposition, I want to say we receive this Bill wholeheartedly, but let us ensure we dive deeply into the issues and make it more practicable for us as Sierra Leoneans so that it will benefit this nation for us to be seen in the global village as a country. Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

HON. ABDUL KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like I said before, we have always supported Government in making sure that we pass progressive Laws in this Parliament, and will forever remain to be supportive. But again, we have to be critical, and when an Opposition is critical, I am sure the prerequisite attention must be given to ensure that we settle whatsoever misunderstanding may have occurred. I have just flipped through the Bill, and it is true that most of what is in this Bill are not too prevalent in Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, our Airports is not under threat. I have not heard for a very long time about hostage taking, kidnapping, harboring violence against international protected persons. So in other words, in as much as this Bill is important to meet international standard, it is also important to note that we should not use it against our political opponents.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like I said, we make Laws that will stand the test of time. We have seen change of governance but these Laws still remain. So when Oppositions are raising bone of contention on proposed Laws, I am sure that Government should be similarly concerned because they will one day become Opposition. So we have seen here, support for foreign terrorists, incitement of terrorism, and I am still insistent in saying most of what are in this Law are not too prevalent in our society. But that does not mean we should not be progressing in passing this Law. The Opposition is always willing to support the Government and ensure that we pass Laws that will feature our country in the international platform. But similarly, we have expressed concern on Clauses here, and I am grateful that you have agreed together with the Leader of Government Business that we commit this to the Legislative Committee so that by the time we come here it will be simple for all of us in this House. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we on this side will pay great attention to different Clauses that are entrenched here, and we call for a similar flexibility on the side of Government to ensure that we make Laws that will give the people assurance that nobody will use it to intimidate anybody. Mr Speaker, we have a lot today, and we have the laying out. So I do not wish to hold this House for long and I am looking forward in making my contributions to the Legislative Committee and the Committee of the whole House. We just want to prepare the minds of Leaders on the other side of the Aisle to be flexible whilst we get to the Legislative Committee and when we come to the Committee Stage of the whole House because this Parliament has a moral obligation to ensure that we make Laws for the betterment of Sierra Leoneans and not to advantage or disadvantage any group. So I want to cease here as I look forward in doing my own contribution to this Law as we get along. I thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have listened to the contributions made by the various MPs, and the concerns raised by them. I have said time without numbers we do not make Laws for certain interest. We make Laws for the interest of the State and they are subject to amendment as time goes on. If the Law is not in the interest of the people, it must be reviewed by the relevant parties involved.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the purpose of this Bill is to provide for the establishment of a Counter Terrorism Coordination Committee, to provide for the creation offences of terrorism and related matters. Provide for the enforcement measures on terrorist properties, to provide for the prohibition of financial support to terrorism, and to provide for other related matters. Even the most advanced countries you have like the United States of America they have what we called domestic

terrorists. Mr Speaker, all the security apparatus we have are part of the National Committee that is the seriousness of this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have not done anything different but to look at the merit of this Bill. Why do we need to have the counter terrorism Bill and enact it into Law? It is because this Government is so responsible and cares for the interest of the people and the State. We do not want political platforms to insinuate terrorist issues under the umbrella of a political Party. Political Parties have their manifestos and constitutions. So I see no reason why we on this Bench can term anybody in the Opposition as terrorist. It is not your facial look that they will describe you as a terrorist but your actions. Mr Speaker, let me read Clause three under the National Counter Terrorism Committee. Let me just read so that we can understand why we have no intention of using this Bill to go after our political opponents. They are not enemies, but if you commit an offence even if you are in SLPP, you can be treated like a terrorist. We will deal with you accordingly. Mr Speaker, the entire security department under this National Counter Terrorism Committee, the Vice President is the Chairman. So it is not by color, it is not by tribe, but it is by performing professionalism. In fact, if you have read the composition of the Committee it includes the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Bank of Sierra Leone because they are dealing with anti-money issue that has to do with terrorism. These are entities that they have put together and well trained so that they can make sure that they discharge the duty of the State in the process of counter terrorism.

Mr Speaker, there is no way when there is a terrorist attack, they do not look for tribe, colour or political Parties. When they bombed the Trade Center in America in 2001, they did not look for Sierra Leoneans or Americans, but people from different nationalities were involved in that tragedy. It was a disaster for the world. We do not circumvent the Law because we are very responsible. Mr Speaker, we repelled Part 5 of the Public Order Act to give people the freedom. I have never seen a presidential candidate like the President we have today. Mr Speaker, it was this Government that removed the death penalty. If we want to use death penalty to skew it against our opponents, we can do so, but we have removed that one. Even though they have labeled this President as a terrorist, they called him a killer; they called him human rights abuser and all sorts of nomenclature have been given to him but yet still there is complete stability in the country. The country is very important to us. So that is why we said if you use your money to finance terrorism, you can be taken care of adequately. Mr Speaker, my Colleague on the other side mentioned the United Nations obligation which we have signed to and also the Extradition Order under the ECOWAS Protocol is also enshrined in this Bill.

Mr Speaker, we have seen States going after another States for weapons of mass destruction because they think they are sponsoring terrorist. They have gone after them even when there is no evidence by means of rumour. We are part of that Resolution 1540 of 2004. Mr Speaker, if you have looked at the Extradition Order also, it is very clear. We also cited the ECOWAS Protocol that is Part Nine Clause 59 to tell you that this Bill is so fair enough. There are ECOWAS Protocols which the professionals can tell you that do not jump to it because we have to follow proper order. We are not targeting people but we are just making Laws for the good of the State. If you behave like a terrorist, there is no proper description that we can give you, but call you terrorist.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have read this Bill in line with international standard. Mr Speaker, the internet they are using it to radicalize people to behave like terrorists. Mr Speaker, let me read Clause 22 "a person shall not distribute, share, or disseminate materials by means of internet or unauthorized persons weighing on having grounds to suspect that such materials are linked to the terrorist group, terrorist entity that has to distribute the material over the internet." Mr Speaker, even sharing of information that tends to commit an act of terrorism you can be charged for it. These are all in this Bill. The Armed Forces, the ONS, the Central Intelligence Unit, the Financial Intelligence Unit; the Ministry that is going to be in charge of this one is the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They are not going to recruit anybody to come to be part of the committee. They are going to stand on their own. So it is a professional entity. That is why I said in the formation of this committee, we need to take into consideration the early warning and response mechanism. They are very important. Mr Speaker, let me make reference to Clause 18, Clause 19 and Clause 20. The reason why I am doing it, my Colleague mentioned them, and it is very important he mentioned them that have to do with harboring. If you are dealing with weapons of chemical and biological weapons, it is life imprisonment.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to make us very responsible State we cannot be reactive, we should be very responsive especially talking about terrorist behavior, that is the reason we should have this Bill to be enacted into Law as soon as possible. We are encouraging the view of anybody. That is why I said; let us use the normal route so that people can have more saying to give their ideas and inputs in this Bill. After the enactment of this Bill, they will check if you are transferring money that has to do with terrorism. It is an offence. They do not want to know if you know or you do not know, because you know where you are sending the money. There are countries that are labeled for terrorist behavior. So they are looking for those countries to send money to

them. If you send money to a certain group of people, or people who are labeled as terrorists, they can be charged it in this Bill.

Mr Speaker, if your action or behaviour has to do like a terrorist, you can be arrested and no mercy you can be charged depending on the gravity of the issues, depending on the crime committed, it can be life imprisonment or not less than 30 years imprisonment. What else can you do for your people? The only thing you can do for your people is to strengthen them. How do you strengthen them? It is by the rule of law. Those institutions that are embedded in this Bill are supposed to do different functions. Mr Speaker, they are not there because they are satisfying themselves. They are there because they are protecting the State and the citizens. This is a real responsible Bill which will need to enact into a Law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Mr Minister, there is confusion in your reference in the Bill that we need to look at. I do not see the reference appropriate in Clause 9; I have looked at it over and over perhaps my Colleagues on the other side can look at it. In reference to Clause 9, page 11, the Counter Terrorism Intelligence division under sub paragraph 1 or paragraph A of sub paragraph 2 of Section 8 shall be headed by the Chief of Operations, Central Intelligence and Security Agency, and be responsible to what? This reference is not given, look at it when you are responding from the questions posed by Honourable Members in your response. The same reference made in page 13 Clause 10, also proper reference is not stated. Let me read again "this time the counter terrorism operations division under paragraph 2 or paragraph B of section 2 of Section 8 shall be headed by Director of Police, and shall be responsible to." Mr Speaker, if you now go to Clause 8, the references that are made are not in line with what we have so that is the reason we want to look at them. That can be corrected when we reach to the Committee Stage we will try to deal with them decisively so that people can understand the references made which are not really clear. I have looked at it in my own way; I have not seen anything related to the reference you have made.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have read the intent of the Bill and the memorandum of objects and reasons why we want to pass this Bill into Law. I have also proffered reasons why we need to target those who are involved in terrorist act even if you are SLPP, APC, Paramount Chief or ordinary citizen if you fall victim under the Law, you are going to be prosecuted, and you can be labeled as a terrorist. There is no nomenclature we can give to you because of the way you have behaved. Mr Speaker, I have also gone further to say we are not talking about recruiting people. We are using professionals from different institutions that have to do with security, from the Military, the Police, etc, etc. Mr Speaker, let me commend the Minister and his team for bringing serious penalties in this Bill especially the one that has to do with chemical

weapons of mass destructions to life imprisonment. Tourism cannot be compared to money. These people are rich. They have money. We will go after them by sentencing them, holding them to ransom, giving them charges that due them, that people can satisfy for their act and what they have done giving those penalties. We are fully aware of what ECOWAS did for Sierra Leone so that we need to protect our sovereignty. An act of terrorism was committed during the civil war. So we should be very happy in having this Bill to enact it into Law. That is why we said Resolution 1540 of 2004 must be taken into consideration. We also said the Extradition Order talking about ECOWAS Protocol must be taken into Consideration.

Mr Speaker, what else can we do if I am in the Opposition one day to come? May God forbid it but if my act resembles like somebody who committed a terrorist act, let them charge me for a terrorist behavior. I should not hide under the umbrella of a political Party because all the manifestos I have read in this country have to do with how we can develop our nation. How do we transform our nation? And transforming your nation no other way you can do it but to have Laws that can make sure that there is peace in your country. They have also addressed issues that have to do with sovereign States that we need to protect our sovereignty, not also in the interest of any other person. That is why I said the Law is above any political Party when you are found wanting under the Law, the Law is the Law. Some of you are going through some terrorist acts within your jurisdiction, but you cannot call them terrorists now, but today, after the endowment of this Law you may have the right to call them terrorists. Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, please respond to the issues raised.

MR ALPHA SESAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, thank you for this very robust debate. The comments so far really reflect the interest that Honourable Members of Parliament have in this Bill, and I am confident that by the time we go through all of these issues, we will work together to make this Bill becomes a Law. Just to respond to a few of the comments, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, first is to note the point raised by the Leader of Government Business relating to the references. I take note of that, and once we get into these discussions with the Legislative Committee, some of these issues will be clarified, and areas where corrections need to be made will be made. To other issues of substance that have been raised by Honourable Members of Parliament, one of course, noting that there is a comment or a proposal for an oversight Committee in respect of the Bill which you know will become Law very soon. I am confident. We note that the National Counter Terrorism Committee as well as the National Counter Terrorism Coordination Committee are broadly representative and will provide significant oversight. We also note that the Parliamentary Oversight Committee

itself will provide Oversight so that is something that we will give attention to. We also take note of there is a proposal for community participation. You know, if you look at Section 50 of the Bill itself, it talks about prevention. You know, when we talk about prevention, we look at prevention beyond the work of the Counter Terrorism Committee or the Coordination Committee, or what the Minister does. We cannot do prevention without engagement with communities. So that is something that we will do. And of course, in discussions with the Leader of Government Business, he had made a proposal before now that an earlier warning response mechanism Clause be included in the Bill which is something that we have taken on board and having engagements with the Early Warning Response Mechanism here in Sierra Leone, a lot of their work focuses on community engagement and preventive mechanisms. So that is something that will be included because several concerns about security and freedom.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Honourable Mohamed Bangura, as well as the Opposition Leader are concerned about making sure that this is not used for political purposes. Firstly, it is really to note that this piece of legislation will not override constitutional provisions when we talk about due process. When we talk about the human rights provisions that are enshrined in our Constitution, specifically looking at chapter 3 of the Constitution, so they will not override that. In addition to the constitutional provisions, we also note that for the establishment of the Committee, but also talks about substantive offences which the Leader of the Opposition made reference to along with the respective sentences. But we know that for substantive offence in this country, we also have procedural Laws which really make provision for due process in terms of investigations, arrest, prosecutions and even sentencing. So this particular legislation will not override all of those, it will complement what we have in our Constitution which is the ground norm as well as the procedural Laws that we have in this country. Of course, you know, like every other legislation especially that which has to do with law enforcement will make investments in capacity building so that our Law Enforcement Officers are able to investigate. They are able to prepare evidence that will be scrutinized in Court and that Law Officers are able to prosecute. We will make sure that there is investment in capacity building. You are assured that this will not be used for political purposes.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also take note that the Leader of the Opposition has said that some of these offences not really associated with Sierra Leone, but we have to prepare ahead. You know, if you look at what is happening in Sahel now, they did not anticipate it. You know, in fact, Mali was such a thriving democracy that at the end of Alpha Umar's time, there was even need to move the African Union Commission to Mali. That is how much Mali democracy was thriving. And then, we saw a turn of

events and see what is happening there today. We go back to the Special Court for Sierra Leone which was set up to prosecute persons behind the greatest responsibility, but really set up as a hybrid mechanism to look at both international and domestic Law. But you will note that all of the charges we have brought under international law, is because of the perspective of the then Prosecutor of the Court. We did not have domestic Laws that rose to that standard of accountability for international crimes when we talk about inventory of the civilian population. In fact, several years ago, when we had a plane load of cocaine at the Airport, we struggled to find the Law that will apply to an offence that rose to the level of such an organized crime. So we want to really think ahead and prepare to really put Laws in place to ensure that this thing does not happen in our country, but if we get to that point where it happens, then we are able to respond. Terrorism Financing is real. We are targets already, but the actual substantive offences have not occurred. So let us prepare ourselves. So this has been a work of broad consultations. It has been a work of substantive engagement with various actors and these engagements will continue when we take this to the Committee Stage as well as when it comes back to the Well of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would want to assure you that all your comments are taking into consideration, and a lot of them are reflected in the Bill already, and they will be reflected in the final product. And so at this stage, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move again that the Bill entitled The Counter Terrorism Act 2024 be read the Second Time in this House of Parliament. Thank you.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: I stand on S.O. 51 to commit this Bill to the Legislative Committee for further discussions and inputs from those who have interest, and also Colleagues who have interest that are Members of Parliament. I so move Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any Secunder?

HON. MOSES EDWIN: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed To]

[Pursuant to S.O. 51 the Bill entitled The Counter Terrorism Act 2024 has been committed to the Legislative Committee]

[II] THE SIERRA LEONE SOCIAL PROTECTION ACT 2024

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY [MR MOHAMED RAHMAN SWARRAY]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled The Sierra Leone Social Protection Act 2024 be read the First Time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Social Protection Act 2024 has been read the First Time]

Second Reading

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY [MR MOHAMED RAHMAN SWARRAY]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled The Sierra Leone Social Protection Act 2024 be read the Second Time. Honourable Members, you might want to ask, why is it that the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security is presenting the Bill here on social protection? My response will be this; ILO Convention 102 of 1952 prescribes a set of minimum provisions for social protection already the National Social Security Insurance Trust Scheme is implementing three of those contingencies covered by the ILO provision. So this Bill is enacted to ensure that the remaining provisions are taken care of.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, social protection is a key element in national strategy to promote human capital development, ensure political stability and inclusive governance, thereby helping to address one of the main policy challenges in achieving sustainable development goals, productive and decent employment for vulnerable Sierra Leoneans. There has not been any regulatory or coordinating mechanism in the social protection section in the country, leading to fragmentation of programs ranging from NGO interventions to Ministries, Departments and other interventions. As a result, Government could either not ascertain its investment in the sector, or evaluate its associated impact. The Bill, when enacted into Law will create the mechanisms to regulate, coordinate, facilitate, promote, monitor and evaluate social protection delivery in the country to avoid duplication of effort and prevent dissipation of much needed resources. Mr Speaker, the Bill is not about taking over the mandate of other social protection players.

Suspension of S.O. 5[2]

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY [MR MOHAMED RAHMAN SWARRAY]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I just noted that this Bill is a very inclusive process at the inter-agency social protection meeting in Makeni in 2019 before I came to the Ministry, the social production forum led by the Honourable Vice President, agreed to institute a set of measures to improve coordination, collaboration, and to be able to harmonize the activities in the social protection section, so that is why today you have with me a delegation from NASCA and other social protection players just to ensure that this process is very inclusive.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the process in the development of the national social protection strategy included several workshops and meetings involving key sector stakeholders, discussing strategic targets for system strengthening, implementation and expansion of social protection programs. The response from the populace across the country was a resounding and encouraging one. They rendered full support to the Bill, taking into consideration the expected benefits to be achieved during implementation. The enactment of the National Social Protection Bill into Law is recommended due to the need to strengthen coordination of the sector, which in turn is expected to strengthen fiscal space and enable enhanced coverage of social protection for the population of Sierra Leone. You may all be aware that social protection interventions are done by many people, many players, ranging from NGOs, Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, so there is a need to enhance coordination mechanisms like you have in the telecom sector. This is all to promote synergies and leverage the potentials of the sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, enactment of the National Social Protection Bill is very important due to the heightened levels of poverty and food insecurity brought about by the experiences of COVID 19, the Social Protection Bill will be necessary for building a shock responsive social protection system for the country. Therefore, the Bill, when enacted will lead to the achievement of stronger State- citizens relationship, enhance human capital development, effective management of risk and vulnerability, empowerment and livelihood development, sustain social cohesion and nation building, inclusive macroeconomic policy, strengthen coordination amongst others. It is expected that the Government and the people will benefit from the enactment of this Bill through its cash transfer programs that tend to have positive spillover effects on local economy, and especially in beneficial communities, by stimulating growth of small businesses. It will also support Government's efforts at poverty alleviation by providing social assistance to the poorest of the poor and the economic play at risk.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, enactment of this Bill will also lead to stronger social cohesion and social inclusion with a focus on mitigating risk and vulnerabilities through

the life course to increase the likelihood that everybody can access basic social services and participate in society. In a nutshell, the Bill seeks to establish a national social protection agency to coordinate and promote the diverse delivery of social protection in Sierra Leone and to provide for related services. The Bill is divided into the following parts. Part 1, preliminary, it contains definitions of words use in the particular context, the limit and guiding principle for the application and construction of a Bill.

Part 2- Establishes the National Social Protection Authority and deals with matters relating to Board of Authority.

Part 3- Applies the functions of the Authority.

Part 4- Makes provision for the appointment and functions of Director General, Deputy Director General, amongst other staff.

Part 5- Contains financial provisions, including accounts and audits.

Part 6- Deals with social protection flaws and basic social protection guarantees.

Part 7- Contains provisions relating to social protection administration, including funding social protection projects programs and establishment of a national social protection register.

Part 8- Deals with complaints and settlement of social protection disputes.

Part 9- Miscellaneous matters which vest in the Minister the power to make regulations for the effective administration.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled The Sierra Leone Social Protection Act 2024 be read the Second Time.

[Question Proposed]

HON. ABDUL KARIM KAMARA: Mr Speaker, I have said in this Well, the greatest injustice we would continue to do on our people is when we go on oversight and the Reports are just being laid and not debated. That is the greatest injustice the Fifth and the Sixth Parliament will continue to do to the people of this country. Mr Speaker, the issue of social protection, if we have debated our Oversight Committee Reports, these are issues we would have done long before now. I was a Member of the NACSA Committee in this Parliament and also I was a Member of the Labour Committee in the Fifth Parliament. We went on oversight and we looked at issues surrounding social protections, how cash transfers were done, and how supports have been given to our people. Mr Speaker, with no fear, I will say what has happened over the years was a

total mess and such would have been used by this Parliament to have enacted this Act, even by a Private Member Bill because we saw the realities on the ground. Mr Speaker, we went to areas where we asked for records. We asked for the beneficiaries and how monies were being paid to them. To my dismayed, some of those monies that were given to people, there were no records at all. Some areas you will go, they will give you 10 people, and they will give you just one mobile number. It is terrible. You go to some community you cannot access the people who were given monies. And when you talk about aged and disabled people benefiting, you go to some areas the aged are as young as 35 years. It becomes a way of compensating certain people in certain communities for role played, whether for politics or for their social connection in those communities. It is bad and terrible. It is so sad. We have always stayed as a Parliament to ensure we bring out these issues not because we want to score political points, but because we still have the vulnerable people in our communities. We still have poor people in our communities.

Mr Speaker, most of the Honourable Members here whose areas social protection is being implemented they do not even know the communities the project is targeting and do not even know if the project is existing within their communities. I hope we are not just passing the Bill into a Law, and we are not just having an Act to empower those who are punishing our people in the name of social protection to enrich themselves. By 2030 the World Bank is saying they want to elevate up to 500 Million people away from poverty and to sustain them through social protection programs. How true it is in our country the people we have been supporting through this cash transfer, through support to agriculture, how far have they gone in transforming their lives? I am yet to see a true life story. I know the NASCA I worked for even when we were there under reparations, we would give life testimonies of people whose lives were transformed. But with the Social Protection Unit, I am yet to see such and until we have the practical realities of seeing how social protection is moving the life of our people. I will continue to say it has not benefited our people much, but even in a hopeless state, I still have hope. Even in despair, I still believe our people can breathe a sigh of relief. I think I met with the Minister some few months ago in Bo and we discussed some of these issues. So I am not in doubt when I see this social protection coming to the Well, and I am sure as Members of Parliament, we will do justice to it and we will put the necessary caveat to ensure it exists, and not just in black and white, but it exists to better the livelihood of our people. I know there are times when this Parliament will act in the interest of our people. I want to beg our Colleagues on the other side to understand that social protection issues are not political issues. Social protection issues are issues that are meant to elevate our people from poverty. Therefore, let us look at every dot, every comma, everything that is meant to protect the lives of our people.

You may deny politically that our people are not hungry, but the reality on the ground is our people still tell us 'Borbor dae', that is a sign to tell us things are difficult for them and for those in the Provinces who cannot say so because of their pride. We are not the people implementing the projects, but we are the people protecting them and those who implement the programs are not Politicians themselves, they are not supposed to carry Party cards. This is a fact, but every day, we take blame for people who enrich themselves, who build houses we cannot even afford to rent as Politicians, just because we want to protect our political colours. We will do justice to this Bill and we will ensure we help in elevating poverty out of our very poor people in those communities where they cannot even access good water to drink. We still live in a country where pure water is a challenge. You go to some communities to even access those communities by road is a difficult task, yet still we pretend as if everything is rosy. No, it is not. So our people are still facing the challenges, the troubles are still around them. They cannot afford basic three meals a day. We still have thieves in our society who will not give the people what they deserve. There is no better way to call them than thieves. Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, as I said earlier in today's proceedings, that the intention of the Drafters of this Bill which is pioneered by no less a person but by the Minister of Labour is to create an entity that has never existed before, which I believe is innovative and is meant to properly tackle the areas or the issues relating to social protection of Sierra Leoneans. Mr Speaker, I must use this opportunity to commend my Minister of the year indeed he is innovative, he is progressive, and this Parliament is ready to work with him again to ensure that our people are well protected. Having gone through the Bill I observed the following:

1. The long title, as against the memorandum and object of reasons I see that the main purpose of this Bill was clearly stated in the memorandum, while in the long title, if a particular Bill is trying to establish an entity for the first time that intention must be stated first at the beginning of the drafting of the long title. You must speak to the establishment of the Authority as the first point in your long title, and it can be followed now by what you intend to achieve, upon establishment of the Authority what you intend to achieve. But what I saw here is starting with the achievements, or the intended achievements, instead of the establishment of the Authority, you establish first, as you did in the memorandum.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the presentation by the Minister, he did say that he has no intention to take away the responsibility of any existing entity that deals with social protection. That was exactly one of my key concerns as I

speak now; I believe social protection for the aged is currently the responsibility of NASCA under 'Munafa fund.' It is also carrying out some form of social protection activities for the less privileged, and this Bill is also trying to create room for the Minister of Labour, or the intended Authority to be set up by this House to carry out those responsibilities so there may be some conflict of interest. Mr Speaker, we need some explanation in respect of that concern. Mr Speaker, when I look at Clause 4 sub Clause 1, I sensed some form of tsunami, some form of catastrophe. I sensed an attempt to struggle to make up in just one phrase to put together so many ideas. The point that the Drafters are trying to put in that single Clause can be neatly put separately, in three other Clauses, separately and neatly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, In fact, that is the procedure the drafting of Clause Four Sub Clause One cannot remain as it is, where I see a lot of struggle in making three points in one point. Those three points must stand separately and be put separately in a better form. There is no much worry about that. We follow those present and ensure that the three points you have clustered in one are done separately.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for the first time I am seeing a Board membership of about 22 members. Mr Minister, can you please give us some justification as to why the large number? Of course, I have problem with 22 and I am sure you know why I have problem with the number 22 apart from the quorum. I am not saying it is not correct, but I am saying with the permission of Mr Speaker, we need an explanation as to why that large number. And then my second issue is the very number 22 because in the event of equality of votes, the casting vote will be a nonstarter. And we always frown at even numbers. We prefer odd numbers in constituting Board membership. So we need to take note of that as well. And in that same Clause, you are telling us to accept a quorum of 5 out of 22. I think that is unprecedented, but you need to justify if you strongly feel that the quorum five is okay. Out of 22 then we will have a second Law, and Members will have an opportunity to decide.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, even the representation I know you are an innovative Minister, you tend to invent. I have no problem with your intervention. You referred to the Permanent Secretary which is the professional head of the Vice President's Office, you referred to the Permanent Secretary or his representative not below the rank of a Director, but in the other areas, instead of maintaining Permanent Secretary, you refer to professional heads. I have no problem, if you choose professional head, and then let it be professional head. If you choose Permanent Secretary, let it be Permanent Secretary. You need to comment about that. Why Permanent Secretary under item A, and the

other items you preferred professional heads? I have serious problem with Clause 26 except the Minister convinces this House. Why the tax exemption and one thing to convince me is to tell me whether you were paid in the last month of 2024 on or before Christmas. If you were paid on or before Christmas, then you may convince me why the tax exemption in Clause 26 because as far as I am concerned, as an Opposition Member, one of my key objectives is for Government to succeed, is for Government to generate enough revenue to carry out its activities, including payment of salaries. But since I have experienced that in the last month of 2024 my salary could not be paid before Christmas, it was paid after. I know one of the key reasons was lack of money. If there was money, then salaries would have been paid before Christmas. So for me to sit here and allow a Clause that will not accept payment of tax that will further deprive Government of getting money to pay salaries on time, you will find it very difficult to convince me, except you tell me that you were paid before Christmas, otherwise, Clauses Six will not work.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in Sierra Leone context for unemployment benefits to be practical here, when our unemployment is over 80% of the adult population. Can you please tell us Mr Minister as to how you intend to achieve this one, because we are ready to support you? Majority of our citizens are unemployed. So if you have good plans to provide benefit for the unemployed in Sierra Leone just tell us how and how you need us to help you to succeed. There are other items stated under Clause 79.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of those items is employees who get injured during the course of their duty, they should have some benefits. That is laudable, and it is very good because as I speak to you, I have a case right before me now an employee of a mining company in this country. In the course of his duties, both legs were smashed. He lost both legs and he is absolutely a disabled person right now as a result of his performance of his duties right on site, he got an accident. Lost both legs, as it is right now, nothing has been done to help him. In fact, with your permission Mr Speaker, I intend to face the Labour Minister on that issue. It is my intention to come with that victim so you will see him and hear from him personally. He is benefiting anything and he has lost both legs.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, except we are able to finish the Second Reading within 15 minutes, I will be standing this House down for us to attend the laying ceremony of the late Honourable Moinina Conteh, I have been informed that the body is already here, and people are gathered waiting for Members of Parliament.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, on that note, I urge my Colleagues that we look critically into this Bill. We analyze the issues and we help Government so that this Bill will be passed into Law. Thank you very much.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I think is the other way round Honourable Daniel Koroma was talking about giving objects and reasons for the Bill and the long title. If you look at the Counter Terrorism Bill the long title, given an insight of the Bill what you are going to meet, the text expressly stated and the object and reason is supporting that long title. But what they have not done here which they need to correct is to express the state in the memorandum of objects and reasons. What they have given in the long title also is expressly stated in that particular section. So he is right and let us do that when we come to Committee Stage. The long title, when you read it clearly that has to do with the text as expressly stated in the Bill. Mr Speaker, this is a Bill with empathy. There are challenges when you want to talk about social protection, is challenging all over the world. It is a very difficult situation that you have to deal with. We know the situation of our GDP, We know our financial status. But as I said, you do not ignore the wellbeing of your people however poor you are. And it also expressly stated that what you are going to look in the Act is for things these people are suffering from that you have to support. We are doing it, but it is not coordinated. This is a challenging Bill so Clause 2 of page 5 the Act shall apply to citizens and non-citizens residing in Sierra Leone. The Minister is very clear on who are socially vulnerable, poor and economically at risk. They used the adjectives to us to understand the level of empathy that we should give to these people to enact into Law.

Mr Speaker, this Bill is making way for lactating mothers, people who are poor and who are above the age of 60 and do not have any social protection. Mr Speaker, this is a Bill that has to do with the wellbeing of our people talking about tax waiver, and tax exemption. You cannot go and lobby for people to come and you want to also tax them. I want to take you to part three before I conclude. Part three, Clause 14 [D], 'protects leadership and collaboration in the implementation of various social protection and national poverty reduction programs'. This is a pro bono business. These are issues that we need to treat with some amount of seriousness. Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, you have two minutes to respond.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY [MR MOHAMED RAHMAN SWARRAY]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. We understand the challenges involved with the direct cash transfer program. We are currently engaging the various mobile network operators to ensure that those challenges are

amicably resolved to the best interest of those beneficiaries. I am also aware that the reason we observed between Permanent Secretary and professionals in a few instances is because those instances where we cited a Permanent Secretary, they do not have professional heads, like in the Office of the Vice President, Secretary to the Vice President, and in all of the other representative groups, is either the substantive CEOs or their professional heads, because Permanent Secretaries get transferred, institutional memory is lost. You have a large number of representations on the Board, because social protection, as you say here is everybody's business. So that is why you have a large Board description.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, talking about tax exemption the reason is that like the Leader of Government Business noted, social protection is funded by donor funds. They expect you as Government to take care of the taxation. For that reason, NASSIT has taken NASCA to Court for payment of taxes on some of these resources. So it is from that wisdom that we decided to prescribe tax exemption for social protection bonds. It is also important to note that social protection like my favorite MP mentioned is not a political thing. It is not political because anybody across the political spectrum could become vulnerable and in need of social protection interventions. So that is why it should not be looked from any political lenses. The quorum of 22 I take note of that. It should be an odd number that will be addressed, five as this House will prescribe. I am open to that. On the Long Title I think the interjection we should have done there is being an Act to establish a social protection agency, to promote and advance and the rest of the reading continues. So these are very well noted. I have just been advised that time is not on our side. So on that note, I could dive into this during the Committee Stage, but I have taken on board all of the suggestions, all of the observations. I mean, this will help further debate. Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Social Protection Act 2024 be read the Second Time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I stand on S.O. 51 to commit the Bill to the Legislative Committee for further amendments, corrections and perhaps allow people to make inputs. I so move Mr Speaker.

[Pursuant to S.O. 51 the Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Social Protection Act has been committed to the Legislative Committee]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we have the laying out ceremony for the late Honourable Moinina Conteh. Please I urge you all to be there. The body is here now. Let us go and pay him the last respect. Do not forget, we are all mortals. Let us give him this very last respect. He was one of us.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman of the Legislative Committee is kindly informing stakeholders and relevant bodies that the Committee is open to receiving position papers on the Counter Terrorism Bill that has been committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny. In the same vein, Honourable Members are kindly informed that the Committee will meet on Monday, 20th, January, 2025 at 10am in Committee Room 1, Parliament Building to scrutinize the Bill entitled the Counter Terrorism Act 2024.

Mr Speaker Adjourned the House to Tuesday 21st January 2025 at 10:00 A.M.

The House rose at 12:45 p.m.

