

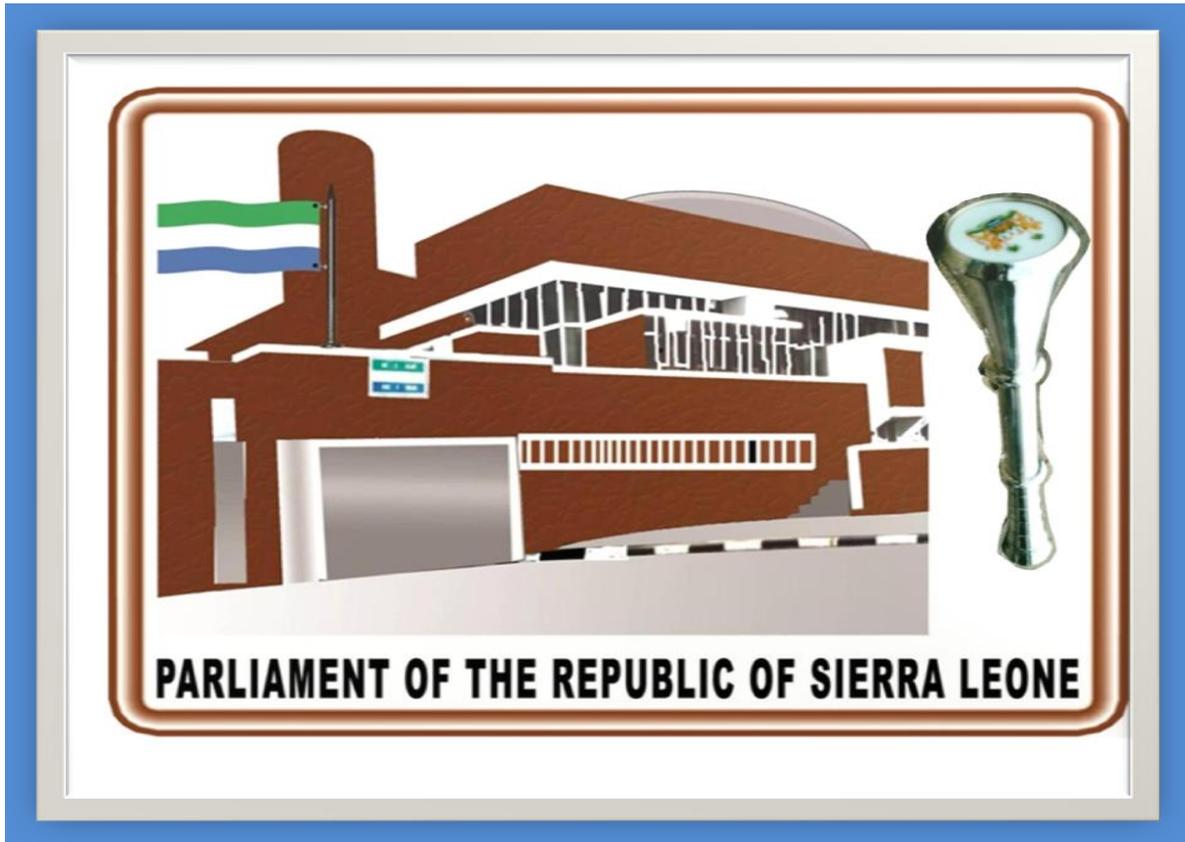
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
FOURTH SESSION –FIRST MEETING
TUESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021

SESSION – 2020/2021



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Tuesday, 16th November, 2021.

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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Tuesday, 16th November, 2021.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 10:00 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

[The Speaker, Hon. Dr Chernor Abass Bundu, in the Chair]

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA [*Leader of Government Business*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move to amend the Order Paper as follows: Item B, Roman 3 to be read and of course we are removing the one that we have now as amendment, Protocol on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation between the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education and the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation of Sierra Leone, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, and Technological Research Science of Turkey [TUBITAK]. These are the amendments. Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Order Paper has been amended accordingly]

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER, 2021

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Thursday, 11th November, 2021. As usual, we shall skip Pages 1, 2, 3 and 4, and start with Page 5. Honourable Members, do you have any amendments on Page 5?

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Mr Speaker, maybe today is going to be the last time I would talk about this issue. My last submission did not reflect and I am now seeing it to be deliberate. I talked about the disaster that took place in Wellington and the effort of Fire Force. We amended the last Votes and Proceedings, but it did not reflect here. They left that part out the last time and today again it has been omitted. So, I do not know and there are several channels we would use, but we do not want to go to that

end yet. If this is the path the Table Clerks are taking and I would be left with no alternative but to be using the media.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am advised that what you called for at the last meeting was an amendment to the Votes and Proceedings. I am assured that it has been done. It does not have to be reflected here.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Why, Mr Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: It does not have to be reflected here.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Well, can I have a copy of the amended version?

THE SPEAKER: Please contact the Table Clerks later.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? If there is no amendment or correction, can someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Thursday, 11th November, 2021 as presented?

HON. BRIMA MANSARAY: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. TENNYSON H. SANDY: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 11th November, 2021 has been adopted as presented]

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have no substantive announcement to make. My presence alone speaks volumes. However, I want to address this specifically to the Whips of the House. They are failing us because we have been talking about attendance almost all the time. They should take full responsibility for the lateness in starting our proceedings. Let us try to improve this situation please. I thank you.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Mr Speaker, I rise on S.O. 76[1]. I want you to make a ruling this time on the issue I have been raising here with regard the ad hoc Committees that was formed to investigate the alleged killing in Makeni. I have severally raised this issue here, but no effort had been made in that regard. We have lost precious lives and we want to know whether the report would be on the negative or affirmative. Let it be brought to this House. You would agree with that since July 2020 to date, the Committee had not brought its report.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your point is well taken. I do recall the Chairperson of that ad hoc Committee was the Honourable Paramount Chief from Kono District. I hope he is here.

HON. P.C SAHR YOUNGAI K. MBRIWA II: Mr Speaker, I am here.

THE SPEAKER: Please, let us discuss this matter immediately we adjourn this sitting.

HON. P.C SAHR YOUNGAI K. MBRIWA II: Okay, Mr Speaker.

IV. PAPERS LAID

A. THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

DR EDWARD H. SANDI [*Minister of Trade and Industry*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following paper:

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and MIRO Forestry Sierra Leone Limited, dated November, 2021.

B. THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

MADAM MAMADI GOBEH KAMARA [*Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the

Table of this Honourable House the following papers:

[i] Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone on Trade and Economic Cooperation;

[ii] Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the Elimination of Double Taxation with Respect to Taxes on Income and the Prevention of Tax Evasion and Avoidance;

[iii] Protocol on Cooperation in Science Technology and Innovation between the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education and the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation of Sierra Leone and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey [TUBITAK]; and

[iv] Protocol of Cooperation and Higher Education Scholarships between the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Presidency for Turks abroad and related Communities of the Republic of Turkey.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Deputy Minister.

IV. BILL

THE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY ACT, 2021

SECOND READING COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

PROF. FODAY JAWARD [*The Minister of Environment*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Environment Protection Agency Act, 2021 be read the second time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] Act was critical to the formation of the Ministry of the Environment because it is the technical wing of the Ministry. The EPA Act was first enacted in 2008; it preceded the development of SDGs 13 and the AU Agenda 2063, which provide concrete management and regulatory framework for sustainable management of the environment. In 2010, the Act was amended to strengthen its regulatory role, climate change is affecting our country in many ways. We are ranked as one of the most vulnerable countries globally to respond to the impact of its challenging climate. It is affecting our economies and societies. Bio-diversity laws are posing severe threats to

the resources that support our economy, including our fisheries, forests, waters, plants and animals. As a nation, we must take urgent actions to conserve, protect and make sustainable use of these resources.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the ways we can do this is to review and develop our legal and institutional frameworks to meet the current global and national environmental challenges. This draft Bill provides us with the opportunity to address environmental challenges by enacting meaningful laws that will protect our environment. We engaged in countrywide consultations with pertinent stakeholders to seek their inputs and views. Women, farmers and the youth who are the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change were consulted as they are critical to strengthen the legislative framework to ensure the green future.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have specifically and effectively provided the legal and institutional framework in this Bill at both national and local levels to address the issue of climate change, pollution, bio-diversity laws, chemical used and management compliance and enforcement. We have ensured that this Bill is a person-centric in environmental governance in Sierra Leone, as we seek to take responsibility to conserve, protect and sustainably use our environment. The key issues worth noting in this Bill include: administrative changes, fines and penalty, powers to prosecute and finally emerging issues of environmental concerns.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will start with the administrative changes. This Bill conforms to government instructions according to the gazette documented number 24 in April last year, which places the Agency under the supervision of the newly established standalone Ministry of the Environment, instead of being under the Office of the President. The supervising role will enhance sound environmental practices and promote effective and efficient collaboration and coordination in implementing best and sound environmental practices. My Ministry will now have the legal authority to facilitate and mainstream obligations in International Conventions and Agreement into our national laws and policies. It will also enhance the actualisations of the target in cluster

[7] of the Medium Term National Development Plan as well as SDG 13, which is climate action and 15 which is life on land.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Sierra Leone would now play an effective role in the Ministerial conferences on the environment at the global stage. The second administrative change is to change the Executive Chairman and replaces it with the Executive Director, and the functions of the Chairman of the Board will now be distinct to avoid duplication. This is very important because you cannot be a player and referee at the same time, also all heads of directorate will now become directors instead of deputy directors.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, representation of the Board was also revised to include relevant ministries like Transports, Lands, Water Resources, Health and Planning. In the previous Bill, these ministries were not represented. The administrative change is the control and mitigation of pollution through various pollutants, including chemicals and other hazardous wastes and products, spills and environmental emergencies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Bill established mechanisms for coordinated and innovative approaches for implementing multilateral environmental agreement to which Sierra Leone is a party and has ratified. The establishment of coordinated and innovative mechanisms and approaches on compliance and enforcement of environmental laws in Sierra Leone is key. Through these mechanisms, environmental institutions will now work in unity and not in isolation to undertake joint compliance and enforcement initiatives and actions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the last one under administrative action, decentralisation of environmental governance at the local level means that this Bill uniquely establishes Environmental Chiefdom or Wards Committees' headed by local authorities. These chiefs will now be in charge of managing and protecting their local environments with the supervision and support from the Ministry of the Environment and the EPA.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second reason for the review of this Bill is to reflect the fines and penalty. This provision will strengthen the compliance regimes and enables the Agency to easily ascertain and identify with precision on environmental violation. The provisions will be accompanied by enhanced penalties to deter environmental violators. The fines and penalties will now commensurate to the environmental crimes committed and financial security has also been included for the reclamation and rehabilitation of mines areas and fines to be imposed on defaulters accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other reason why the previous Bill is going to be reviewed is to make provision for prosecution. The power to prosecute environmental violation by the Agency is crucial for the effective protection and management of the environmental and safety of people in this country. The Agency, as a technical and professional institution, can initiate and swiftly complete investigations and prosecution of environmental crimes. The Police, who presently have the powers to investigate crimes, do not have the required knowledge and capacity to undertake these complex matters. Similar institutions like NASSIT and NRA have been given this power to enhance their work.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the last point is very important and that is emerging issues of environmental concerns. The environmental issues are very dynamic, especially in this fast evolving World. The 2010 EPA Act is over one decade old and cannot adequately address current acute emerging environmental challenges. Since environmental issues are global issues that cut across boundaries, the 2010 Act needs to be upgraded to meet international best practice and standards. For example, climate change was not adequately captured in the 2008 as amended 2010 Act. This Bill makes provision for climate change mitigation and adaptation mechanisms and climate change financing. The Blue Economy, which is also another emerging concept that encourages better stewardship of our ocean or blue resources, was not captured in the 2010 Act. Aspects of the Blue Economy, as they relate to conservation and management of these vast resources have been included in this Bill. Lost and damage is another emerging

issues that have also be included in this Bill. Previously, when something went wrong, there was no guiding principle to handle the issue.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if this House ratify this Bill, we would be on the part to an environmentally friendly dream revolution and we would make our society resilient and safe, and we will make our environment sustainable to support present and future generations.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Environment Protection Agency Act, 2021 be read the second time. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Minister for his presentation. Honourable Members, before I propose the question, I have been notified of the grave illness of one of our former Members of Parliament, Honourable Paramount Chief, Masspaki Kabombo Paki Masabong Chiefdom in Bombali District. May I invite all of us to rise and observed a minute of silence. May Allah provide the necessary medication for the Honourable Paramount Chief to fully recovered and regain himself. A minute of silence was observed.

[Question Proposed]

HON. YUSUF MACKERY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister of Environment and its Agencies for presenting to us a non-controversial Bill that can also protect not only the environment, but the people of this country. If we consider the issues that make our country vulnerable to the effect of climate change, I think it is prudent for all of us to take this Bill very important and ratify it without delay. If we look at deforestation, natural resource depletion, air pollution, water pollution and food insecurity, I think these are sufficient for all of us to make sure that this Bill is enacted into law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you look at Part II of this Bill, the Environmental Protection Agency has been in existence, but the Bill is saying that the Ministry of Environment will now be supervising the EPA instead of the Office of the President. Mr

Speaker, before this time, the Executive Chairman has always been the Chairman for the Board, but provision has been made between the Board Chairman and the Executive Director. So, there will be segregation of responsibilities, but checks and balances will be enhanced in the implementation of policies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the functions of this Agency are very critical in terms of advising the ministry on policy matters. They will be reviewing policies relating to climate change, which has never been in existence. There will be formulation of policies on climate change and that is also before Cabinet. Again, they will be coordinating the various activities and implement programmes or projects that geared towards promoting environmental issues in Sierra Leone. They will also ensure compliance because the EPA is similar to the ACC. You would agree with me that sometimes people do not want to see the EPA around due to the illegal activities they are doing. So, they will be there to enforce also compliance issues through environmental impact assessment. Many people are depleting the environment without going through the EPA for proper advice. In fact, they do not care about the processes or procedures involved, but this Bill can further enhance that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the people in my village do not even know about the existence of the EPA. I am sure there should have been some form of public awareness for them to understand about the EPA. However, there are provisions in this Bill to address the issue of public awareness and also the involvement of local leaders. This is because most of those activities are done at local level and if the local leaders, like the chiefs, are brought on board, they can serve as liaison officers representing the Agency at the local levels.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as the Minister rightly said, the Agency has the powers to impose fines on those who violate or circumvent procedures. They will also collect environmental impact assessment fees to make sure the Agency is properly managed. Additionally, if we look at the administrative changes, this Bill will also enhance collaboration between the Agency and other ministries. In fact, the Board is composed of senior directors from the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of

Lands, the Ministry of Mines, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. These ministries are important in ensuring that we address issues relating to environment. The Board will be providing technical advice to the Agency.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister talked about fines; and because fines were very small before this time, people continued to violate the laws because they can afford to pay. If you embark on an activity without a valid license from EPA, you would be fined **Le25mln** for Sierra Leoneans and **\$10,000** for non-Sierra Leoneans. This has been upgraded because they want to make environmental issues expensive. They want to discourage people from depleting the environment without proper assessment or without technical advice from the EPA.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the things that is very important is the Directorate of Climate Change. You would agree with me that climate change is now a global phenomenon and that is why a directorate has been created in that regard. This directorate is going to be more proactive than the previous one because this one is going to have their own funds to manage that particular sector. If we look at funds mobilisation, you would realise that this particular Agency is 90% funded by itself and not by the Government. This is because it is a self-generating revenue Agency and they usually utilise 90% of what they collect.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, recently we talked about this Bill in Glasgow and people were so impressed because they wanted to know the commitment of this House in addressing issues relating to climate change. So, they were very impressed and they even asked about the possibility. I told them that the Speaker is committed to adhering to foreign policy objectives because he has been a Secretary General of ECOWAS and he has respect for foreign treaties.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Part 6 of this Bill talks about environmental impact assessment. This is very important because this has been a problem with factory owners, companies and other investors. You would agree with me that people sometimes bypass procedures and that is why environmental impact assessment is

critical. The compliance officers will ensure that whosoever violates the laws of the land is brought to book. I want to ask this Honourable House to ratify this Bill. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I have no doubt in my mind that a good number of Members of Parliament will have come to the conclusion that this is not an easy Bill. It is a complex Bill because it encompasses quite a lot of issues. I can foresee, at this stage, that a Motion under S.O. 51 will be moved to commit the Bill to the Legislative Committee, so that we will have the opportunity to deal with it in greater detail. This is a proper subject for the Legislative Committee and I am sure you will agree with the Acting Leader of Government Business. On that understanding, I will take not more than three speakers from both sides of the aisle.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is one of the most important Bills we are going to enact. I fully agreed with the Minister's justifications for amending this Act and make it even better. Of course, environmental protection will touch every sector; vis-a-vis fisheries, forestry, mining, energy, etc. Therefore, it is a very important Bill that will touch the lives people and will also impact the economy seriously.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I noticed that fines are included and we will give more teeth to our environmental protection officers, so that pollution is controlled. As the Minister mentioned earlier, there is rampant deforestation in the country. I looked at one of your documents and it is very comprehensive and excellent. There are lots of elements in that document and some of us will want you to translate that into law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have recently established the Committee on Climate in Parliament and it is a new Committee. I think there is a provision for the creation of a Secretariat. Well, sometimes some of us get worried because of the unnecessary bureaucracy it is going to create. The Secretariat is going to be fully funded and the officials will be paid salaries, but sometimes they do not do anything. This is a concern and it must be taken seriously. I am sure most of the provisions in this Bill are in place. Some of us feel that you create a separate chapter for chlorine fluoride and carbon. There should also be a chapter on forestry. You would agree with me that

deforestation is high in the country. So, we were wondering why it did not have as much prominence as CFCs. I am certain that CFCs are using air conditioning refrigeration, but forestry touches the lives of everyone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in other countries, mining companies are responsible to rehabilitate any damage they might have done in the communities they operate. They rehabilitate what they destroy instead of giving the communities money. I do not know if the Honourable Speaker could remember, but in the past, we had an issue in Cabinet when we were Ministers. There was a company we were chasing and they said that they have been paying to Government, but was a pittance, as compared to the everlasting damage they have done.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a good Bill, but I have a feeling that if some of us are involved, we can help the Minister to have a Bill that would stand the test of time or a Bill that will protect our people and the environment. I commend the Minister for this Bill, but we need more time to properly scrutinise this Bill and that is why we would likely commit it to the Legislative Committee. I was going to move a Motion to commit this Bill to the Legislative Committee. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I recognise the Honourable from Tonkolili.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to say something on this very important Bill that we have in front of us. Mr Speaker, environmental degradation is an issue that affect every Sierra Leonean. The Honourable Member from Kitchon said that the Bill is comprehensive, but we need more time because it is very complex for us to understand all the details before it will be enacted into law. The Bill must stand the test of time and we all know that the issue of the environment is one that is topical in global politics. Environmental issues are at the centre of global discussions and that is why we want to do justice to this Bill. We will appreciate it if more details are provided to us, so that we scrutiny it properly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you would agree with me that climate change is not a hoax; it is a real phenomenon. The President attended COP 26 Climate Change Summit in Glasgow. There was a press release for timbers that have been logged to be transported. I am talking about the issues and not about individuals [*Undertone*]. Mr Speaker, this is why we need more time, so that we can scrutinise this Bill properly. Sometimes when you say the truth, others think you are being personal. This is not personal because it is happening. We are talking about environmental degradation and you cannot talk about it without talking about deforestation. You would agree with me that deforestation is the cutting down of trees. We have to talk about it and it is not personal at all. We are addressing the issue before us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are also experiencing river pollution by the artisanal miners. They are not conforming to established rules and they also contribute to environmental hazards. This is why we need more time to understand the details of this Bill because it is so complex. We have to understand it better before it is enacted into law. We are not saying the Minister has not done a marvellous job, but we need to make it better. We understand perfectly where the Minister is coming from and that is why we want to ensure that we make a law that will stand the test of time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we want to ensure that those who think they can take the law into their own hands are punished severely. This is for Sierra Leone not for individuals or a particular group of people. People understand that we are coming from a nationalistic perspective. We are not talking because we are in Opposition, but because we are Sierra Leoneans and we care for Sierra Leone. When the mudslide hit Freetown, every family was affected because lives and properties were lost.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us try to be more proactive in terms of mitigating environmental disasters rather than trying to be reactive. I think that is what this Bill is seeking to address. I quite agree with my colleague from Ketchum when he said the Minister has done a marvellous job. I have not been able to look at the document he presented to COP 26 Climate Change Summit, but I would love to look at it. I knew the

Minister since college days to be very thorough. He believes in hard work and believes in what he is doing. I would love to look at that document.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I said earlier, I would like this Bill to be committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution.

HON. NENNEH LEBBIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am happy to add my voice to this debate. As mentioned by the various speakers who have spoken before me, I also want to applaud the Minister for a job well done. For those of us from the teaching background, we know that if you want to be sincere with your children in the classrooms, you should not be even talking about two seasons anymore. This is because climate change has altered the two seasons we used to know. This has resulted in a situation where teachers are no longer seen as saying the truth to the children. We cannot even determine which time of the year we experience dry season or rainy season. This is because even if it is the raining season, immediately after the rains, you see the place becoming so humid. This is as a result of climate change and it has to do with land degradation. So, I am happy for this Bill that has been brought before this House. I am sure it is going to address some of the numerous environmental challenges we are facing in this country. There are already global discussions on climate change.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about land degradation. There are many human activities that affect the environment, such as cutting down of trees for charcoal or firewood. This is so rampant nowadays and it is affecting the biodiversity. There are lots of animals that have almost reached extinction in this country because of human activities, particularly land degradation. However, there is one thing that pleases me in this Bill; i.e., the inclusion of our local authorities or the chiefs. We need them to talk to the local people in our villages. We all have villages and I am sure farming is a prevalent activity in our villages. You would agree with me that upland farming is good and we all enjoy rice cultivation, but we need to put policies in place to ensure that whosoever is engaged in upland farming should also replenishes the land by replanting

some trees. This is why I am happy because I know that this Bill has something to do with that by educating our local authorities to talk to the farmers to also ensure that afforestation takes place. I am happy about that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, during the pre-legislative hearing, I spoke about Part 7, which talks about chemicals, toxic and hazardous substances. A colleague spoke about water pollution, particularly for some of us along Taia River along the Bo highway. All of us know how the Taia River has been seriously polluted and we have not got the report from the Committee that was asked to go and investigate that issue. However, I am sure the Committee must have realised that some mining activities are being undertaken and that is affecting that river. If this Bill is enacted into law, I am sure something is going to be done, so that the rivers and communities are protected.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am also happy because this Bill is going to help this country to participate at the international level because if you listen to international news, you would realise that the main topic of discussion is climate change and it also has to do with our activities in our different communities. This Bill is non-controversial, but we will continue to look at it critically, so that we can have a perfect law at the end of the day. We want a law that will stand the test of time. I want to applaud the Minister for a job well done and I must say we support him wholeheartedly. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution. I will take two more speakers before we round off.

HON. REBECCA Y. KAMARA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand here as the Chairperson of the newly constituted Committee on Climate Change in this House of Parliament. I want to thank the Leadership of Parliament for setting up this Committee. The issue of environment is not far from climate change issues because of the activities in the environment. All of us listen to local and international news and we know that issues relating to climate change are serious issues and we should not toy with them at all. We are suffering from climate change in Sierra Leone. Honourable Neneh Lebbie has just said that we are

experiencing rains even in November. In fact, we have experienced heavy rains in Sierra Leone this year.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, maybe some people would want to downplay the issue of climate change, but it is something that has to do with our lives or our existence. If you go to the market, you would realise that the cost of a cup of pepper has never gone down due to climate change. This year, our farmers planted pepper and something went wrong that resulted in bad harvest. This led to the high cost of pepper in the market. In fact, many other farm products are also expensive due to climate change and that is why I said we should not treat environmental issues with levity. We should treat them with all seriousness.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to congratulate the Minister for bringing this Bill to Parliament. It is going to tackle environmental issues and climate change. I will be very happy if this Bill is committed to the Legislative Committee for thorough scrutiny. This is because there is a particular area I think is not too clear in the Bill. In other words, the issue of climate change is not too clear at all. I want to remind the Minister that climate change is not treated like a minor issue. In fact, apart from the COP 26 Climate Change Summit, a lot of other activities on climate change are ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is a particular section that talks about the Secretariat seeking funding. Well, if the Minister could do some additions on climate change and other areas, I believe funding will not be a problem. This is because when you went to Glasgow, you heard how much countries like America, Britain, India, etc. promised to invest on climate change. If you look at our surroundings, you would discover that there are many environmental hazards that are taking place. When it rains in Freetown, for instance, people normally empty their dustbins into the gutters and this is why we always experience flooding. People will start shouting, where is the Government? The place is flooding and Government is not doing anything. I believe the issue of climate change is not natural at all; it is artificial because of human activities on the environment. These activities are posing serious climate change issues that are affecting our lives. I want to state here that when there is disaster, you should not just

put the blame on the Government, but you equally blame yourself. I am saying this because even when the authorities in our communities see things going the wrong way, they do not say anything.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am totally in support with other Honourable Members that we look at this Bill critically, so that other areas are included. Somebody told me that there is an organisation that wants to train Members of the Committee on Climate Change, but the person wanted to know if we have a Bill on climate change in Sierra Leone. I told the person that we only had a reviewed policy in place, but I am sure this Bill considers issues relating to climate change. This is a very big achievement for us. I want to believe that in the not too distant future, you would work with other institutions to draft a separate Bill on climate change. Mr Speaker, I support the idea of committing this Bill to the Legislative Committee, so that other areas that are not in this Bill are captured. We have to work for the interests of ourselves, our people and our communities. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution. I do not think I can entertain more than two more speakers because climate change is currently affecting the temperature in this Well.

HON. ALEX M. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think we have done justice to the content of this Bill by recognising me to make an input for very obvious reason I will tell you shortly. I am a practicing consultant in many mining companies in this country and I have made some observations. I have not read the Bill in detail, but some issues are not clear in this Bill. Well, I do not know whether it is deliberate, but I would like to raise some of those issues for the attention of the Minister. The Bill is silent on the field calculations matrix. Well, some of us are interested because we deal with mining companies. We want you to include the field calculation matrix in this Bill for transparency and accountability. This is because most mining companies or investors usually complain about this aspect. For instance, they usually give licenses to mining companies, but they classify it as class 'A' and charge huge amount of money carrying the same exploration content and other mining company with class 'B' will be charged

in dollars. They always complain about this issue, Mr Minister. I want to join them to raise their voices here, so that you take note of their concerns. This is not going down well with us, as practicing consultants.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to talk about the ground tooting and the public disclosure that normally compel mining companies to pay for. We see it as very unfair, Mr Minister. If you could justify that in this Bill, it will be fine. We want to know why you ask mining companies or project components to pay for ground tooting and at the same time public disclosure. Sometimes they argue with us and we do not see any sense in that. However, if you could justify that action, it will be good for all of us. We are the people's representatives and we want to do justice to the investors.

With those few comments, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that this Bill will only be seen as non-controversial if the Minister addresses those issues I have highlighted. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMRA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As a Member of the Committee on the Environment, I want to remind Members of Parliament that Sierra Leone, among many other countries, is rated as one of the risk countries in the World when it comes to climate change. I want to disclose here that devastation is eminent in my district at Yeliboyah, where the Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella comes from, in Constituency 062. We are now talking about moving communities around the ocean areas. This is telling us that it is not just what we have heard because we are feeling it in Kambia District.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have some basic concerns I want to bring to the attention of the Minister. Mr Speaker, we have had mining companies going to Tonko for exploration. They usually dig some portions of the land and leave the ditches open, and no reclamation is done. In fact, they usually say that they only come to do exploration. We hope this Bill will address the issue of exploration and this Bill will also address affected areas caused by exploration activities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member from Kono said that this the first time we are having such a Bill before us. In 2008, this same Act was brought here and in 2010, it was amended. You would agree with me that what we have before us is simply an amendment. The only difference is that we are bringing other components of environment together to have a well-structured Act. This time the Agency will be directly supervised by the Ministry of the Environment. In fact, in the extant Act, the Agency was sent under the supervision of the Office of the President.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also want a situation where the EPA is given some prosecutorial powers. Sometimes when environmental issues come up, we have to depend on the Law Officers Department to do the works of the EPA in terms of prosecution. There are bottle necks in the prosecution and we want to see that this Bill addresses that issue. The EPA should be given the necessary powers to speed up their programmes.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank the Minister for involving the local people. This is because we are the direct beneficiaries when the environment is good, but we also feel the pain when the environment is depleted by human activities. So, including the local people is very good. However, it should not just be a matter of including them on the structures, but they need regular education. This is because some of these activities are undertaken for economic reason, not knowing the effect on society. I want to see where Government will reduce some of its own activities on the environment in this Bill. We must not use this as the only means of making money in Sierra Leone. There are other opportunities we should exploit. In the last three or four budgets, we talked about diversification of the economy in the Agricultural sector and fisheries. I am sure this would have reduced timber logging because that also affects our environment.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I must say I have been part of this Committee and we have gone round this country many times. One of the things I am not impressed with is the reforestation process championed by the Ministry. When we went to Kenema, Bo and other areas, we discovered that the entire process was a mess, Mr Minister. It is a total mess and if nothing is done, we will not have anything to point at.

Mr Speaker, we will not over emphasise the need to have this Bill. There are other issues we need to address when this Bill is committed to the Legislation Committee. We will not close our mouths at all; we will ensure that we bring out the issues that are important; issues that will save our environment. However, the good news is that as my Chairman was saying, he was fortunate to attend a conference and I was also fortunate to attend a climate change conference in Kenya. I want to say that in terms of institutional building, we have built more institutions than most other African countries in the area of environment, starting way back in 2010, when we had some of these Bills and the amendments therein. We are doing well in terms of policy formulation. I am sure what perhaps we have not done better is implementing the policies and giving them the required political will to allow the institutions to work. I want to say the essence of having the EPA under the Office of the President was to have a situation in which the President directly monitors issues relating to the environment and have a daily briefing. Well, the Ministry of Environment is now going to supervise the Agency I hope that the required attention is given to it because the environment situation is critical. If we are thinking about taking the Investment Board to the President, I do not know why somebody needs to tell me why we are taking this from the supervision of Office of the President. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I agree with the observation made by Mr Speaker and other Members of Parliament that there is need for us to commit this Bill to the Legislative Committee for proper scrutiny. If for no other reason than the fact that we want to make sure that we do justice to this very historical and important document. A good number of environment issues have been mentioned for this House to address. Mr Speaker, many a time we have always forgotten that we treat flora and fauna together, but sometimes we treat the flora separately from the fauna. In other parts of Africa, wildlife is a very important component for development. So, we have always asked the question how come we cannot develop our wildlife which is very important for the tourism industry. These are

some of the questions we will ask when the Bill is committed to the Legislative Committee.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, somebody asked why the EPA was under the supervision of the Office of the President. Mr Speaker, at that time, I was in Cabinet and it became very clear that there were many institutions that were involved in environmental issues and the President wanted to know who would be in charge of A, B, C, D or E. So, we decided to bring that sector under the supervision of the Office of the President in order to avoid confusion. I think that has been well until now that we are trying to delink it from the Office of the President.

Mr Speaker, the conference that just ended in Scotland on climate change is an eye opener and is a clear indication that the whole World is interested in issues that have to do with the environment. If you do not take part in it as a Nation, you will be left behind. We all saw how a whole President of a powerful country, the United States of America was almost marginalised internationally because he did not believe in environmental issues. Therefore, we as a country must be seen as participants in this whole process. Therefore, we congratulate the Minister for encouraging the Government of Sierra Leone to participate in that conference.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I asked if we would benefit anything from this. Well, I am sure we would benefit a lot from this, but we are not going to receive money just like. The Minister must be very certain that we have a policy framework that is acceptable by the donors. If we do not have an acceptable framework, then we may not be considered for the funding we are talking about.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have already raised the issue of depletion of the forest cover with the Minister at one time and what has happened to some parts of my constituency and other parts of the Bombali and Tonkolili districts, where people from other parts of the World have simply invaded and depleted those areas. The fact of the matter is that a good number of our people have no access to their lands anymore. So, when we discuss these issues, I am very certain that the Minister will be conversant with the information that is relating to the destruction of our environment. We will

make sure we improve this Bill. It is a good Bill as someone remarked earlier. It is a well-researched document, but because of the implications surrounding it, we may be compelled to take it more vigorously to our people in the rural areas, so that they too can understand the implications of environmental depletion.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, during the last Committee hearing on this Bill, somebody said that some parts of this country were covered with forests, but those places do not have forests anymore. What has happened to the forests? It has been depleted and destroyed. How do we make sure that we bring back the forests to those areas? That is a very important question the Minister should answer. We are going to be very certain that we bring back the forest cover to our country. The destructive nature of some people has to do with the fact that even the green belt in the Western Area which was marked very clearly has been destroyed. There is no green belt anymore. So, just behind my house at Regent, you will see what happened as a result of the depletion of the green belt.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I agree with the suggestion made by Honourable Members that we commit this Bill to the Legislative Committee. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I thank colleagues for their contributions to this debate. Of course, it has been highlighted by all speakers that this Bill is non-controversial and I am sure that after it would have gone through the Committee Stage, we would have a Bill that will stand the test of time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, environmental issues and climate change have become the order of the day around the World. Few days ago, the Minister, his team and the President attended the Climate Change Conference where issues relating to climate change were discussed. This Bill is very important because the level of deforestation in this country has increased and we need systems in place to tackle this menace. The environment has been depleted, especially in mining communities. I come from Baoma Chieftdom and we have instances wherein people failed to rehabilitate the

land after it had been depleted. Sometimes it is very difficult for people to repossess or reclaim their lands. With this Bill, I believe it will correct all of these abnormalities that are taking place in our communities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Member of Parliament from Bombali who has just spoken said that the green belt has been tempered with in the Western Area. If you pass through the Peninsular, you will see massive construction going on in the forest reserved. I believe the Ministry of Environment should work collaboratively with the Ministry of Lands to ensure that the reserved areas are protected. There are lots of structures being erected around Regent and Jui Road. They are advancing towards the reserved areas. These are issues we should be looking at with all seriousness. There must be a synergy between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Lands. Thankfully, the President has decided to give the responsibility to the Ministry of Environment. Owing to the fact that the Office of the President is very busy, he has decided to bring that sector under the Ministry of Environment.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you go through the Bill, you will see that the stakeholders have been involved but I do not see any provision where Members of Parliament are involved. There are provisions for Councillors, Paramount Chiefs, the Section and Town Chiefs, but there is no provision for Members of Parliament. We are the principal stakeholders in our constituencies. So, when you try to decentralise some of these activities to these chiefdoms, you should not forget to involve Members of Parliament because we also have a stake in those communities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to join my colleagues who have supported this Bill and definitely when this Bill go through the Committee Stage, I believe it will stand the test of time. I thank the Honourable Members and the Minister for pioneering this Bill. We have spent some time on this Bill, but we hope the Minister will bear with us, so that we enact a law that will protect lives and the environment.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Acting Leader of Government Business for his contribution. I now ask the Minister to respond.

PROF FODAY JAWARD [The Minister of Environment]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I must state here that I am the happiest man today because most people now know a lot about the environment. This has made my job a bit easier because when I go out to talk to people and they have knowledge of what I am talking about, then it become easier for them to understand what I will be saying.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we just came from COP 26 Climate Change Summit, where our presence was felt. The Honourable Kandeh K. Yumkella visited our pavilion; and in the whole of West Africa, only three countries were able to get a pavilion: Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ghana. It would not have happened under the Office of the President because the presidency is very busy. It was a good decision for the EPA to be placed under the Office of the President, but as other issues are emerging, there is need for EPA to be under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment. If you do some research, you will find out that most countries that have EPA and Ministry of Environment place the EPA under the Ministry of Environment. There are few countries where the EPA is not placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment because they do not have such Ministry. I believe the decision by the President to establish the Ministry of Environment is one of the best decisions a leader can make for this country, taking into cognisance the environmental issues affecting our societies. This is November, but according to forecast, we are going to have more rains until December. We have seen sporadic rainfall and rising sea level. I felt for Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella and others as they keep telling me that the Plantain Island is sinking and these are the consequences of climate change. As a Nation, we must address these issues, otherwise we will have ourselves to blame.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me talk about the Nationally Determined Contribution [NDC] as it was mentioned. The NDC is a document that the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with its agencies, presented to the UNFCCC. Mr Speaker, that was the first time Sierra Leone has submitted such a robust, holistic and integrated document and it was well received. When we were at COP 26 Climate Change Summit, our pavilion was like the centre for Africa. Our President went there twice and a lot of

other presidents and ministers went to our pavilion because of the message we carried. In fact, we took along eight written projects. As Honourable Ibrahim B. Kargbo was saying, you cannot go to UNEP and they give you money just like that because you have to show something for it and we did that. We had eight projects ranging from charcoal, plastics, hill valley swamps and renewable energy. This was only possible because we have a structure; the Ministry of Environment which is coordinating six agencies dealing with the environment in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, something came out clearly at COP 26 Climate Change Summit. I have been saying that the illiteracy rate in Sierra Leone is very high; and in this country, we have four issues we need to address. This is why I will address the issue of forestry, but we have a Bill on forestry that will hopefully come under our supervision. Deforestation is key, but solid wastes management, education or creating awareness and sensitisation are other important areas of concern. So, we were able to meet with people who have experienced or included climate change and environmental issues in their schools curriculum. This is what we are going to move towards because I believe that whatever kids learn in school, it will become a gospel truth and they take it home to educate their own siblings, parents and uncles who might not know about environmental issues.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, someone talked about the National Climate Change Policy which is another milestone in this country. We now have a National Climate Change Policy that was approved by Cabinet. It is a robust and extremely bulky document, but we have provided an executive summary about 15 to 20 pages. I know that it difficult for you to read a document that is over 200 pages due to your busy schedules. Those documents are available and I will give them to you.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, people have been talking about the Environmental Social Health Impact Assessment [ESHIA]. I happened to be the head of EPA before I became a Minister. Therefore, I have a complete knowledge of what was going on. Mr Speaker, when I took over as head of EPA, ESHIA fee was no longer called Environment Impact Assessment [EIA], but Environmental Social Health Impact Assessment because

we believe that it affects the social, health and the environment. EIA fees were very high, but they were reduced by 30% and have been reduced by 50% to 60%.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have gone sectorial. What does this mean? It means that somebody investing in Agriculture on one thousand acres of land is actually too small for the investor, but if you are mining on one thousand acres of land, the environmental degradation you will leave will be huge. This is why we have decided to go sectorial, so that all those applying to embark on Agriculture are separated from those doing mining. This means that the EIA fees are going to be tailored depending on where you are or what you are planning to do. So, if investors are still complaining, please direct them to my office or to the EPA. The EIA fees have been reduced and we have even put in place a payment plan. Owing to COVID-19, a lot of investments were affected because COVID-19 impacted negatively on the economy. So, we told them to have a payment plan.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, somebody mentioned ground tooting and public disclosure. Of course investors would have to pay for these because when you do ground tooting, you are going to make sure that the concession belongs to you. Again, when I was appointed as Minister, I experienced some issues. Investors came with big concessions for exploration and others were entering with those concessions. This is why we are now doing ground tooting to make sure they are within the concession.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, public disclosure is very important because we take the community very important. You cannot just go and start mining in a community without involving that the community. The community would have to approve the project and that is why we do a public disclosure. The investors would have to pay for that and not the EPA. As soon as that is done, you are at liberty to start operations. If you pay the EISHA fee, 20% of it is used for monitoring and auditing purposes. You will not pay any more money. The EPA will go and monitor whether you are actually doing what you are supposed to do on a quarterly basis; and at the end of the year, we do auditing. I usually tell people that when an investor comes, he/she would want to maximise profits and an environmentalist would want to take care of the environment.

So, we must create a balance and I want to state here there is no development without a mitigating effect on the environment. What you do is how you can minimise it and how are you going to rehabilitate the land you have depleted. We want to ensure that after mining, people can farm on the land again.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella for visiting our pavilion during the COP 26 Climate Change Summit. We have a Forestry Division we want to bring under the Ministry of Environment. A lot of the issues Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella was talking about will come under the Forestry Bill. So, I want him to take note of this information. I also want to remind that in terms of mining, we are not only taking moneys from people. You were correct when you said that after mining, moneys were given to state functionaries to rehabilitate the lands, but that had not been done. A progressive rehabilitation mechanism is now in place to ensure that you cover the holes alongside mining. If you fail to do that, you will pay. In fact, we are now compelling mining companies to buy bonds from any insurance company. The funds from these bonds will be used to rehabilitate the land if mining companies fail to do so. The money is not going to Government; it will in the bank. These are the measures we have put in this Bill and I believe if we adhere to these them, we will have a better place to live.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Hassan A. Sesay spoke about pollution and other issues. We all know that some rivers, such as Taia River, River Jong, River Sewa, etc. were badly polluted. This was because people were mining upstream and a lot of them are not Sierra Leoneans; they are aliens. The President has formed a taskforce and we got the Presidential Order to go and destroy those dredges that were in those rivers. We went there and destroyed them and the rivers are gradually recovering. Those at the down streams were no longer having fish, but things are back to normal. I must say that when you take proactive measures, it goes a long way to solve problems. Also, Honourable Member talked about compliance. Well, if for instance the EPA suspension your operations for not complying, but you go and resume operation, the original fine was **Le50mln.**

[Suspension of S.O. 5[2] being 12:00 noon]

THE SPEAKER: You can continue, Mr Minister.

PROF FODAY JAWARD: Mr Speaker, Honourable Nenneh Lebbie spoke about land degradation, referencing charcoal burning and other activities. We now have the project on charcoal and Mano Dase Chiefdom in this country is an example. I always make reference to Haja Meama Kajue because nobody dares to cut tress in Mano Dase Chiefdom for the purpose of burning charcoal. How did that happen? When I took over as head of EPA, we presented a small budget and engaged her. She agreed and we provided the resources; i.e. money, seedlings and tools. People are now engaging more in Agriculture instead of burning charcoal. Nobody burns charcoal in Mano Dase Chiefdom and I am very proud of her. This is what we want to do in other parts of the country and it will be done.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Honourable Nenneh Lebbie also spoke about animal becoming extinct. It will interest you to know that Sierra Leone ranks 5th in terms of animals biodiversity and 8th in plants biodiversity in the World. This is very good for us as a Nation. So, we are working very hard and hopefully wildlife will come under the Office of the Minister of Environment because we need to engage the people. The Honourable Member expressed happiness for the involvement of the local communities. I grew up in the rural community where bush fallow system was practiced. Our people would farm on a certain land this year and after harvest they would leave that one to fallow and go and farm on another land the following year. We are now encouraging people to go to the Inland Valley Swamps [IVS], which can be cultivated twice or thrice in a year. We have to leave the forests in order to save trees and by so doing we are reducing the carbon in the environment because the trees are absorbing the carbon. The second thing is that this country imports about **\$200mln** of rice every year; therefore, we want to improve on those two things.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, somebody talked about toxic chemicals polluting the rivers. Yes, that is true because artisanal miners are using mercury to extract their gold. We went after them and we had to destroy the dredges. There is one thing you did not

talk about; i.e., the old chemicals we have in this country. Sometimes when people apply for chemicals, they will supply the ones that almost near expiration. When they are supplied, not all of them are used at the time and unutilised ones become expired. We have a stockpile of them. Recently, we went to Ivory Coast to attend a meeting on how we can we store those chemicals? It is one of the issues embedded in this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, at COP 26 Climate Change Summit, I represented this country at the highest political level and this had never happened. When I was at EPA, it was not possible, but now as a Government Minister of the Environment, a lot of funding is being discussed in this high level meeting. So, it is good for the establishment of this Ministry. I will soon bring another Bill to this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to assure the Honourable Chair of the Committee on Climate Change that my team and I are ready to work with her. I want to applaud Parliament for thinking ahead in terms of establishing a Committee on Climate Change in Parliament. It is indeed a good innovation. Well, the Honourable Chair of this Committee said that climate change is not exhaustively treated in this Bill. I think we did justice to that, but we can also revisit it.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, somebody said that the tree planting exercise was a mess. I would like to see the report on your oversight visits because we have got reports from NAMED, Ministry of Finance and the Forestry Division that we did a good job. You would agree with me that this is the first time in the history of this country to plant 1,200,000 trees last year. Currently, we are monitoring those trees. So, for you to say that the tree planting exercise was a mess, I beg to defer on that sir. However, everyone has the right to his or her opinion. We are not only planting trees, but we also monitor them. People are being paid for that and it has created over 7,000 jobs.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, a lot has been said about timber logging and that is why the transportation of timber was actually banned in June. Presently, they are only transporting those that have already been logged. This aspect is also included in the Forestry Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Abdul Kargbo for his concerns. I want to believe that at the time the EPA was established, it was a right decision. I have to be fair with you that it is good for the Agency to be under the precedency, but due to the emerging issues and the busy nature of the President, I think is the right decision for the Ministry to oversee the EPA. In other countries, the EPA is under the Ministry of the Environment and not under Office of the President.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Honourable Bashiru Silikie mentioned that we should ensure progressive rehabilitation. I am sure there will be funds for that purpose, but we will go after those who will default. People are building in the forest and they do not even know where the green belt is. You would agree with me those who are building along the roads are not poor at all; they are rich people and that is why we are going after them. However, the President has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee, comprising eight ministries and I am the Chairman of that Committee. The Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defence are involved. What is affecting this country is compliance and that is why we have involved the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is in charge of the police. We are working as a team.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I usually tell people that environmental issues we are facing in this country did not start overnight; they started long time ago. So, in addressing them, we have to be very conscious. What we are trying to do is to build giant pillars, about fifteen meters and intersperse them with trees to form the Green Belt. You would agree with me that if anyone goes beyond that Green Belt to build a house, trust me that house will be demolished. People usually say that they do not know where the Green Belt is. It is on paper, but it is not physically seen and that is why we want to ensure that it is conspicuously seen. People normally call it 'Santigie Line,' and anyone that crosses it, we will fight very seriously.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I must state here that we held consultative meetings across the country, but due to COVID-19, we were only restricted to regional headquarter towns. We tried to involve all stakeholders because we did not want it to

be a top to bottom, but a bottom to top issue. So, we included lots of people like the Paramount Chiefs, women, children and even the disabled.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Environment Protection Agency Act, 2021 be read the second time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed]

[The Bill entitled the Environment Protection Agency Act, 2021 being an Act to provide for the continuation of the Sierra Leone Environment Protection Agency to provide for more effective and efficient protection and management of the environment and to provide for other related matters has been read the second time]

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O [51]. Owing to the seriousness and sensitive nature of this Bill, I move that this Bill be committed to the Legislative Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: I so second, Mr Speaker

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed]

[The Bill entitled the Environment Protection Agency Act, 2021 has been committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny]

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, before the adjournment based on the Order Paper, I think this is the last item on the Order Paper.

THE SPEAKER: No, we will come back.

[The House was stood down at 12:20 and resumed at 4:00 p.m.]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand to amend the Order Paper; item VI [A] is:

VI. BILL

[A] THE MINES AND MINERALS DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2021

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

The Minister of Mines and Minerals Resources
Second Reading, Committee stage and Third Reading

[B] THE NATIONAL MINERALS AGENCY ACT 2021,
INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

The Minister of Mines and Minerals Resources
Second Reading, Committee Stage and Third Reading

The Minister of Mines and Minerals Resources

I so move that the Order Paper is amended as read.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I so second.

HON. BAI KURR KANAGBARO SANKA III: Mr Speaker, can you give us item IV or V[A]?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I think we have done with that. We have to proceed because we have done the amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Paramount Chief, we now have a new item VI.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: We now have a new item VI [A&B].

[Question Proposed, Put and agreed to]

[Motion moved by Honourable S. Nyuma to amend the Order Paper has been carried]

BILLS

THE MINES AND MINERALS DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2021

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

THE MINISTER OF MINES AND MINERALS RESOURCES

MR TIMOTHY KABBA *[Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Mines and Minerals Development Act, 2021 be read the first time.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Mines and Minerals Development Act 2021 be read the first time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill entitled Mines and Minerals Development Act, 2021 has been read the first time]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O. 37 for a dilatory motion.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Leader, we have agreed not to do the Second Reading today.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: I am not saying the Second Reading.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Therefore, we cannot use S.O. 37.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Why?

HON. CHERNOR R. M BAH: Please, let us avoid S.O. 37].

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: No problem, Mr Speaker.

HON. CHERNOR R. M BAH: Thank you very much, Mr Leader.

[B] BILL

THE NATIONAL MINERALS AGENCY ACT, 2021

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

THE MINISTER OF MINES AND MINERAL RESOURCES

MR TIMOTHY KABBA [*Minister of Mines and Minerals*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the National Minerals Agency Act, 2021 be read the first time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill entitled the National Minerals Agency Act, 2021 has been read the first time]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that we suspend the debate on the Bill entitled the National Minerals Agency Act, 2021.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, no suspension of debate. It is different from the provision in S.O. 47. In other words, S.O. 47 is different from suspending a debate. The provision in S.O. 47 is required in this case than suspension of the debate. With your leave, Mr Speaker, it reads: **"A pre-legislative scrutiny and discussion of a Bill in camera maybe be arranged where necessary between Members and the Minister or Member in charge of a Bill, such an encounter may be open to the participation of stakeholders if their participation at this stage is considered necessary."**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I submit that a pre-legislative hearing on both Bills is absolutely necessary. Again, the participation of stakeholders is also necessary which means that we cannot continue with the debate of these Bills without a pre-legislative hearing. We have to better understand all provisions in these Bills. I suggest that all stakeholders are invited. Members of the Legislative Committee have resolved during our last sitting that every Bill is committed to the Legislative Committee for pre-legislative hearing and the legal draftsman must be present, otherwise we cannot proceed. We have said this many times here and this time round we are not bending backwards. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, and Agreed to]

[The Motion to commit the Bills to the Legislative Committee has been carried]

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I want to remind the Minister that one of the Bills before us today has to do with the NMA.

THE SPEAKER: I think he understands and in fact there is a Motion to the effect. I just want to remind the House about it that we have to debate the report of the Committee on Mines and Minerals Resources.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I just want to assure my colleagues that we will ensure extensive consultations on these two Bills as stated by Honourable Daniel B. Koroma. We will pay attention to the Bill and do proper scrutiny. We are going to involve the relevant stakeholders from all sectors of this Nation. I want to assure you that when the Bill is captured on the Order Paper, we will make sure that the announcement is aired on all media outlets, so that the people are adequately informed. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I will now recognise the Honourable Member from Koinadugu.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, I stand on S.O. 23. As a Member of the Agriculture Committee, we undertook an oversight visit on some projects under SLARI. Mr Speaker, SLARI is dying slowly and it is very pathetic. We do not value research in this country, but research is very important for the onward development of any country. As we speak, the research station at Rokuprr had suffered strike action by the junior staff for the past seven months and nothing has been done. I have forwarded some pictorial evidence on your phone. As we speak, the entire offices at Rokuprr have been covered by tall grasses. The people are stealing expensive laboratory equipment from those buildings. In fact, some of the buildings are being vandalised. Most of the doors and windows have been removed.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, in the interest of speed to avert further damage, what would you recommend?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, to avert further damage, I recommend that the Committees on Agriculture and Labour engage SLARI and other stakeholders on this issue with immediate effect.

THE SPEAKER: It is so decided, Honourable Member.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENT

[The House rose at 4:45 p.m. and was adjourned to Wednesday, the 17th of November, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.]