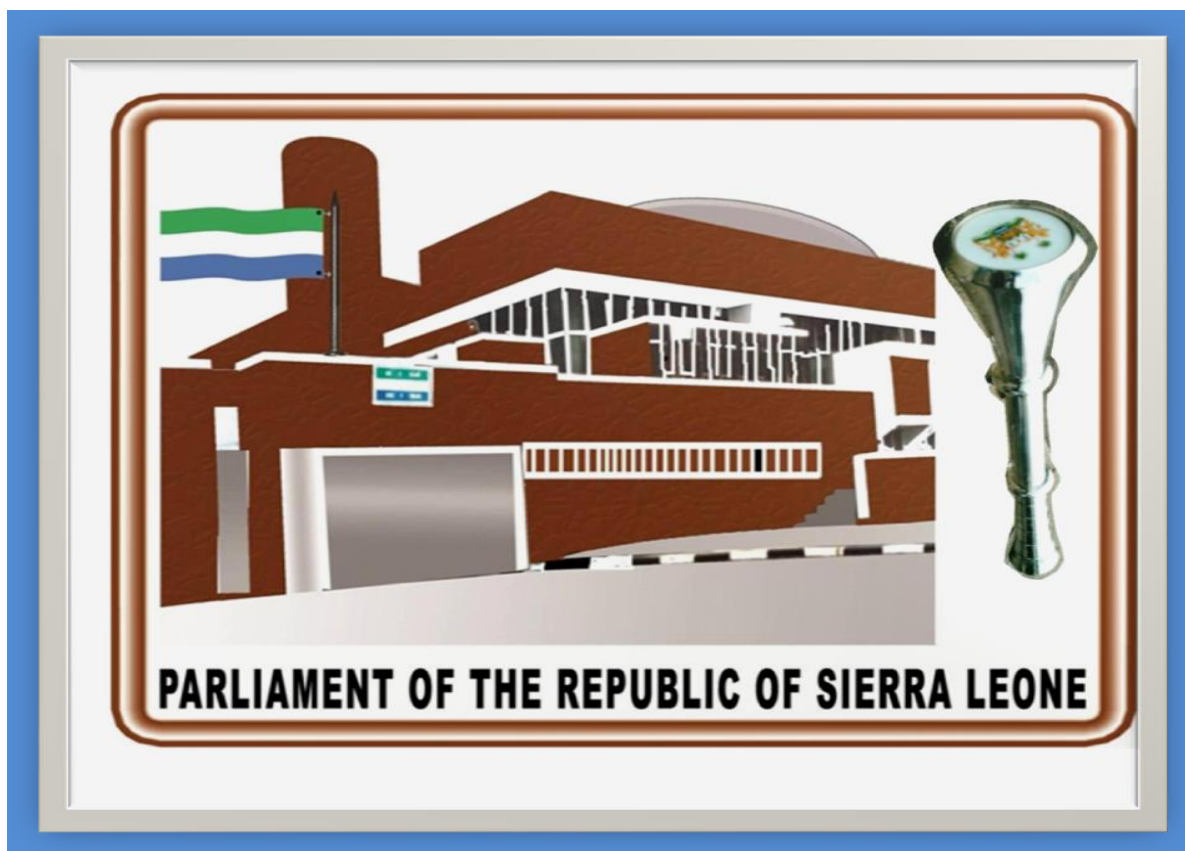


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OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

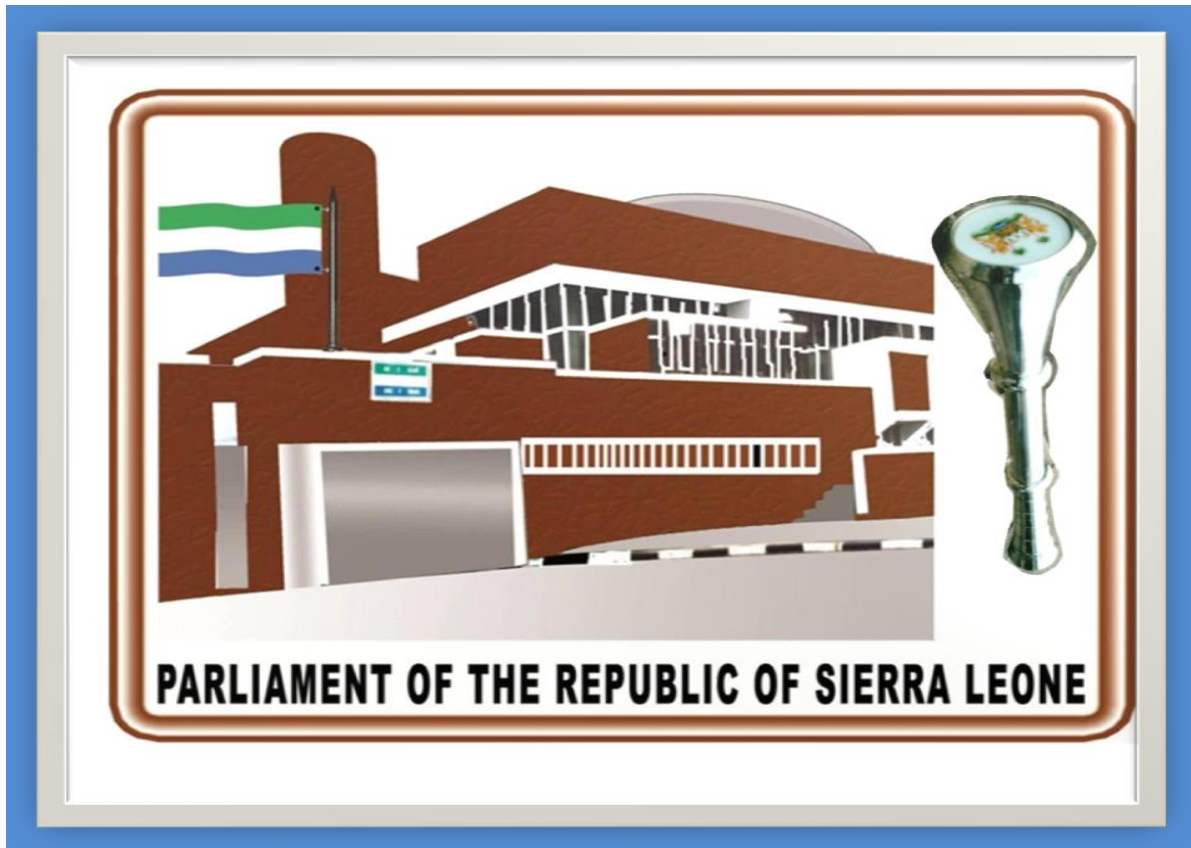
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION –FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY, 25TH MARCH, 2025

SESSION – 2024/2025



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: I

NUMBER: 140

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Tuesday, 25th March, 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

Tuesday, 25th March, 2025.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Alimamy Lincoln Bangura, Read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:15a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

[The Speaker, Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh in the Chair]

The House was called to Order

*Suspension of **S.O** 5[2]*

II. THE RECORDS OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR TUESDAY 18TH MARCH 2025

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we shall take the Records of Votes and Proceedings for Tuesday 18th March 2025. I see we only have one page, is that the case? So I do not know whether that is Page one, is it Page 5? Okay, Page 5? Can a Member move, please?

HON. MOHAMED KANNEH: I so move, Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. FALLAH KENAWAH TENGBEH: I so second, Mr Speaker

[Question Propose, Put and Agreed To]

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings for Tuesday 18th March, 2025 has been adopted]

III. BILL:

THE STATE OWNED ENTERPRISES & GOVERNANCE ACTS, 2025

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE II *[Mr Bockarie Kalokoh]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled; The State Own Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025 be read the first time.

[Question Propose, Put and Agreed to]

[The Bill entitled The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act 2025 has been read the first time].

SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE II*[Mr Bockarie Kalokoh]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members. I move that the Bill entitled; The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025 be read the second time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Government of Sierra Leone owns full or partial ownership of 24 State Owned Enterprises [SOEs], of which four are currently inactive. These enterprises operate in key sector, including Agriculture, Energy, Water, Telecommunications and Financial services. Despite their strategic relevance, many State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] historically fail to deliver economic values, prompting the Government of Sierra Leone to launch a privatization program in the late 1990s, aimed at elevating the fiscal burden they imposed. The focus on privatization however, diverted attention from the need for strong oversight and governance, resulting in continued under performance, fiscal risk and poor service delivery.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, by December 2019, a continued liability of SOEs were estimated at **\$285Mln** or **6.8%** of GDP. Further highlighting governance weaknesses, the 2018 Auditor General's Report, revealed widespread cash irregularities, with a recorded loss of over **Le66Bln** across Public Enterprises and Commissions. While several institutional reforms were introduced to address these challenges, including the creation of the Public Enterprise Reform and Divestiture Commission, and later the National Commission for Privatization [NCP], through the 2002 NCP Act, this effort fell short of improving State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] performance. Notably reformed milestones include the creation of a joint corporation of Sierra Leone State Lottery, the restructuring of the Sierra Leone Ports Authority and Airport Authority through Private Sector Partnership, divestiture of the Forest Industry Corporation, the unbundling of the National Power Authority through National Electricity Act which established the Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority [EDSA], and the Electricity Generation of Transmission Companies [EGTC] and the Electricity and Water Regulation Commission [EWRC].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, despite these efforts, State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] continue to face systematic challenges that hinder performance, including Board Structures dominated by individuals lacking the necessary technical skills, chronic under investment, political interference in operations, inadequate compensation for delivering Public Policy Objectives, lack of clarity around SOE Privatization, Ownership rationale and Governance framework. Poor financial reporting; only six submitted audited reports in 2018 to the Fiscal Risk Department.

In response, government has developed a state owned enterprise on Governance Bill to shift the reforms agenda beyond privatization towards robust oversight, transparency and accountability in State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] operations. Central to this Bill is the establishment of a centralized ownership entity that will oversee State Owned Enterprises, separating ownership responsibility from regulatory and policy making function. This policy sets out to:

1. Strengthen SOE governance and accountability.
2. Enhance transparency and financial performance.
3. Ensure State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] deliver value for money and support National Development Goals [NDGs].
4. Clearly define the roles and responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, Line Ministries and Oversight entity, SOE Board, Senior Management and other stakeholders.

Ultimately, the Bill seeks to create a more result oriented or performance oriented SOE sector that contributes to job creation, efficient public service delivery and a positive return in government investment, thereby supporting Sierra Leone's broader economic framework.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that Bill entitled; State Own Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025 be read the second time.

[QUESTION PROPOSED]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before I take the Chairman of the Finance Committee, let me make few comments, one of which is the fact that the Ministry of Finance is also partly responsible for the failures in the performance of State Owned Enterprises [SOEs]. Principally, when the COVID stimulus were disbursed to SOEs; the Postal Service, the Sierra Leone Road Transport Corporation and other State Owned SOEs, the Ministry of Finance did so without recourse to Parliament and without respect of Subsection [3] of Section 118. Those loans are still unpaid as mentioned in the Minister's submission, and they are noted in the Audit Report, and there is no effort by the Ministry of Finance to collect those outstanding loans, and those loans are overdue for repayment.

Secondly, Parliament has been indicted clearly in the submission of the Minister, that SOEs created by Parliament in the Bills or Acts signed by the President, have responsibility to present their financial and other reports to Parliament annually, by his submission, only six have presented such Financial Statements. So as Parliament, our Oversight Committee needs to do more because these are the things that should set the bar on oversight; these are the measures that Oversight Committee should look at; assess the financial credibility of institutions. Further to that, the Bill seeks in Section 49 or Clause 49 to repeal the National Commission for Privatization Act without a single mention of the word 'National Commission for Privatization' [NCP] in the Bill, neither the Short Title nor the Long Title. Are we repealing the NCP Act, and putting in place new structure? That is the question I want Members of Parliament to consider as we debate this particular Bill.

Finally, there is the Public Financial Management Act and the Public Financial Management Regulations, and several sections or several regulations in the Public Financial Management Regulation give powers to the NCP as the body that owns the Single Direct Share right on behalf of government. If you are repealing the NCP Act, who is going to take responsibility of that? Are we also going to consider the repeal of the Public Financial Management Regulation, or are we going to consider an amendment to this provision so as to fit the responsibilities that are going to be given

to the new structure in the State Owned Enterprises and Governance Bill? These are my few comments, and I hope Members would take due consideration of them. I am also not happy with the fact that the Minister mentioned in his submission that the Boards in these State Owned Enterprises lack the skills to manage these State Owned Enterprises. The Minister should note that Members of these Boards are either institutional representation or they are appointed by the President. So, I would consider, and I would want to prevail on Members of Parliament to expunge such statement from the records [*Undertone*]. No, you would debate it but I am just encouraging Members for it to be expunged from the records. So, on that note, Mr Chairman, I give you the Floor.

HON. FRANCIS AMARA KAISAMBA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Deputy Minister of Finance II for the presentation he just did on the Bill entitled; State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025. And like the Speaker rightly mentioned, I am sure this Bill is intended to repeal and replace the National Commission for Privatization Act. If that is so, then there is no mention of that, and as Members of Parliament, we ought to have had that Bill and the National Commission Privatization Act so that we could compare and contrast. So if that is so, like the Minister rightly mentioned, State Owned Enterprises are either wholly or partly owned by the Government, and they normally perform many functions and provide services in very many Sectors. For example, Energy, Water Supply, the Financial Services and Agriculture. Over the years in Sierra Leone, I guess these State Owned Enterprises were doing very, very well. They were providing services, but it reached a point where they began to decline; most of them failed and wind off, and others had to be bailed out by government. The situation reached a particular point where government had to privatize most of them. Then we had the establishment of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] to look at those ones that were at least sustainable. For example, The Banks; the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank and the Rokel Commercial Bank which are still doing very, very well. Some other institutions failed and they became liability to government. So if at this stage the government is bringing in this Bill to solve all the problems enumerated, I think it is a

laudable venture. As we all know, most of these SOEs have become liability to government as they are no longer providing their required services for the people. For example, Lotto was one of them; before now, it was very functional but it came a time when it failed woefully, and nobody could report on even their assets and many other things they owned. The Sierra Leone Postal Services and many other institutions have failed, and government will not continue to endure all of these.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] is trying but definitely, there has to be a prudent institution; another body that will carry all of these burdens from government. So for me, if we have an institution established by the State Owned Enterprise and Governance Act, 2025, that will come to take over and solve the challenges we are having, and to reform the SOEs, I think it is laudable venture. But of course, like the Speaker rightly mentioned, there are a lot of unanswered questions in the minds of Members of Parliament and the Public generally. As the people's representatives, we are bound to be asking those questions and we need answers from the Minister, I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Chairman for his contribution, though brief but succinct to the debate. And I want to state that part of those numerous questions is the fact that we need to confirm whether the Bill is in conformity with **S.O** 18[2]. Let us have the stakeholder's consultation to give us an insight of the level of consultation that was done on this Bill. The point the Honourable Member raised is that the Bill is going to create another super structure. If you had gone through the Bill, you would realize that this body is going to supervise the Board Members of State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] already established by Parliament. And those bodies, in their Act were given independence, so it is a dicey situation. We have to go through it and manage it well. So **S.O** 18[2] should be taken into cognizance, I give the Floor to Honourable Catherine.

HON. CATHERINE ZAINAB TARAWALLY: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is a pleasure again to look into this Bill that we have

looked into thoroughly at Committee Room One. Most of the questions were asked by you, but there are still some other questions to look into. The Chairman of the Finance Committee has made a very good presentation this morning in terms of looking into the nitty-gritties of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] Act which I have here with me, together with the new Bill we are debating this morning.

Mr Speaker, Honuorable Members, I want to say very big thank you to the Minister of Finance for bringing the Bill entitled; The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act of 2025. Thank you for the effort, and thank you for putting together whatever we have suggested.

Nevertheless Mr Speaker, my first question is that what are we repealing? Mr Speaker, what is broken that this particular State Owned Enterprises Act wants to fix? Mr Speaker, remember we are the owners, the mothers of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] Act. A mother or father cannot sit and allow his or her child to just go astray without knowing the reason of going astray. Even though we have Kush that is destroying our kids today, we are still making all efforts to see that we put some modalities in place to stop the issue that is killing our kids. Therefore, the same thing applies to Parliament. We are the mothers and fathers of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] Act, and it was the Act of Parliament that created the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] Act. So what is broken in the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] Act? We actually want to know what has been broken that this particular new Act wants to fix.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] are not seeing us the Parliamentarians as serious people. Mr Speaker, when I was a small girl, I grew up at Villa 18 at the OAU Village. Mr Speaker, in those days you would see the OAU Village as one Villa owned by government. Mr Speaker, what has gone wrong with all those State Owned Enterprises [SOEs]? The Sierra Leone Housing alone for example, can fix whatever the government wants to fix in terms of paying salaries or whatever. Mr Speaker, what has the Minister of Finance done in terms of looking into the Sierra

Leone Housing? If you go down to Wilkinson Road on your right, all of the housings belonging to the Sierra Leone Housing have been sold to private people. We want to know where the money has gone and what was the process in selling those houses? If we are saying we should repeal the Act, are we really serious? Let us look at Sierratel which I would refer to as Anti-Polio Organization of Government. Sierratel alone can also fix all of the issues of our salaries. But today, if government does not take money from its consolidated fund to support Sierratel that enterprise cannot do anything on its own. Companies like Africel, Orange, etc. cannot make name in Sierra Leone if Sierratel was viable.

The Ministry of Finance, what are you doing, after leaving all of those Institutions without fixing them? Mr Speaker, are we really serious here in making laws? Sierratel alone can pay all of our salaries for the rest of our five years, but we are here talking about the State Owned Enterprise [SOE].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us talk about the Commercial Banks. The Chairman made mention of the two Commercial Banks [Sierra Leone Commercial Bank and Rokel Commercial Bank]. I think the two Banks are the successful State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] we have in Sierra Leon. Mr Speaker, one would be tempted to ask what is the problem? What went wrong with the other State Owned enterprises like the Housing Corporation and the Postal Services in Sierra Leone?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, other countries are talking about digital postings whiles we are still doing hand to hand delivery of posts in Sierra Leone. Are we really serious? Is the Ministry of Finance really serious in making money for Sierra Leone? Are they serious to repeal the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] Act? We cannot sit here and allow such repeal; it cannot happen. If you want to move my son or daughter off me, you have to give me reasons that are tangible. Tangibility works here, and reality works here. If it is not real, do not make it, and if it is not bad, do not destroy it, if it is bad, come to us and we would make it. So what are we making? Are we making things that are not real?

Mr Speaker, no way; as a Parliament that is very strong and focused, we have our informants. So Mr Speaker, with a young generation Parliament, we cannot allow such a Bill to go through this particular House without us perusing it well. We are not saying the Bill is not good, we are not saying the Bill will not pass, but I want to assure the Minister of Finance that this Bill will only see the light of the day after removing whatever we deem necessary to remove or adjust. What are the citations in repealing this Act? You come here to us that our baby is bad without telling us the sickness of the baby. Tell me my citation; what did you mention in the law that is bad in the National Commission for Privatization [NCP]? Nothing; and you are telling us to make what has not been broken. Nothing has been mentioned in this new law. How far have you gone in terms of fixing the State Lottery? It was in this same House that we privatized the State Lottery, and the private company before taking into cognizance the privatization policy, it first took ownership of everything. When I was a small girl growing up in Freetown, our people used to send us to the State Lottery to make money. Look at what Mercury International is making today. Are we serious to see Mercury owned by private individuals making money and we as Sierra Leoneans just folding hands looking like, **S.O** 2, *'wae Pawpaw don rep we nor able pick am up d tick, den sey na doctor e yone'*. Mr Speaker, this is not *'Paw paw rep'*, this is the reality of life that we are talking about here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am seeing the closure of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] without telling us the reason for closing the NCP. Mr Speaker, we have what we call a Standing Structure of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP]. Do you want to close the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] and say goodbye to all of the staff without fixing the reality? No way, Mr Speaker, no way; Parliament will not take it lightly and allow such to happen. Mr Speaker, I made a statement in Committee Room One and I want to reiterate my statement here; that Parliament would not take it lightly to kill a baby that has been born, doing very well, raising some money for the parents, and all of a sudden we want to kick it out without putting modalities in place. No way, it cannot work.

Mr Speaker, let us be real Sierra Leoneans and check what deserves to be checked. Let us look into what should be looked into for the benefits of every Sierra Leonean. If we are to look into this particular Bill, let us look into our Housing Corporation and fix it. Go now to the Low Cost Housing at Kissy, all of those Houses are now owned by private people. You would see very big houses and shops all over the place. What is the method of the privatization or the selling of government property by both the past and present governments? The Ministry of Finance should be able to tell us the method the various governments [SLPP & APC] used to sell the houses to private people. This is Sierra Leone for goodness sake.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, according to the Bill, the head of the institution should be a Degree holder, and the deputy should be a Master's holder. What a flip-flop way of making law is this? Are you telling us what to do? Do you think we would make the man in charge to be just a Degree holder and give a second in command who is just a messenger to be a Master's holder? I am calling the deputy a Messenger because in Sierra Leone, Deputies have nothing to do- That is just the reality. Our people normally say, **S.O** 2, '*Deputy na han bag; wey ar wan go ar go jus sey bo, han bag, grap mek we go ya, wey e done e don*'. That is how it happens all over the world. So what are you telling us? Putting more academic qualification burdens on the deputy and leaving the person in charge with just First Degree.

Mr Speaker, you have said it all; **S.O** 18[2] needs to be looked into. We need to know how many State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] we have. How viable are these State Owned Enterprises [SOEs]? What do we need to do to fix those that are broken? What do we do to help the ones that have done so great? These are issues we need to know rather than to just come to say, **S.O** 2, '*no, na tyme dis now for mek we broke National Commission for Privatization [NCP] and bring cam new law*'. Mr Speaker, Parliament would not work like that because we are readers, we are researchers, and we are people that you cannot just take with a limp of a hand to go; we are strong and we are energetic.

So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am recommending that we go back to the drawing board for the benefit of every Sierra Leonean because this Bill is good. Whatever that is good in this Bill needs to be looked into thoroughly for the benefit of every child. So I want to say a very big thank you to the Minister of Finance for coming with this Bill to the House. However, the Bill is not yet our property; it is the property of the State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] that are working for the benefit of everybody, I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member for her wonderful contribution. Mr Minister, I hope you are taking note; it shows the level of understanding and the level of details that Members of Parliament have seen and taken on this Bill. So you should take note and whatever the decision of Parliament, whether they are going to be committed, you should be prepared, and I am sure by the time it comes from Legislative Committee it will be a completely different Bill drafted in a way that it could reflect the will, desire and aspirations of the people of this Country. Honourable Fallah Tengbeh, the Floor is yours.

HON. FALLAH K. TENGBEH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am Honorable Engineer Fallah Tengbeh from Kailahun District, Koindu-Yenga, the land that is about to be taken by Guineans.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is risky, because if you sit there and allow them to take that place, it means you are going to lose your seat. Do you want to?

HON. FALLAH K. TENGBEH: I would not, Mr Speaker, and that is why I keep reiterating it here that something needs to be done.

Mr Speaker, let me start by saluting you for allowing me the opportunity to make a contribution to this debate on the topic 'the State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act of 2025'. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, any functioning government would want to see State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] positioned in a way that they are designed to advance Economic Growth, Economic Transformation, Industrialization and Import

Substitution. But Mr Speaker, the sad reality is that this has not been the case; our State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] in Sierra Leone have not been performing. Yes, we know they are our brothers, they are our babies, they are our children, but if you have a child that is not performing, something needs to be done; that child or baby definitely needs to be examined.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it was against the backdrop of the inefficiency of our SOEs that led to the establishment of the National Commission for Privatization [NCP]. Mr Speaker, Honorable Members, the question is, has the NCP been functional? The truth is that it is not, or one could say partially yes. Mr Speaker, as a nation, we need to empower the NCP to be able to perform; we need to provide timely disbursement of funds for the day to day running of that Commission, and we need to provide them with competent staff. Worst of it Mr Speaker, it is sad to let you and my Colleague Honourable Members know that we actually need Transformation in Sierra Leone; where we cannot hire people that are average, and leaving those that are competent out. This has been an old practice that has created a huge gap, and if we are not careful, it will take us time, maybe another hundred years for us to catch up. And remember that the catch up theory will come at a time when we would have covered the same distance, and trying to reach that distance Mr Speaker, it will not be easy for us as a Nation. So, it is therefore my recommendation that we start thinking smart as how we can move this Nation forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me use the Kikuyu word '*Wendō*', a Kenyan language to express love for Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, our country needs to be transformed exponentially so that we can catch up. Mr Speaker, here in Sierra Leone, I hate to say this but I have to say it for the records and for the edification of the Public, maybe for my children that will one watch the video. Mr Speaker, we waste time on unnecessary things. Let me single out the Energy Sector: it is only in Sierra Leone that you will go to the Energy Sector for an interview and you are asked- what is the S.I Unit of Energy, instead of you being asked what will you bring differently with a view of upgrading the Energy Sector? Mr Speaker it is further

sad to explain to this Honourable House that here in Sierra Leone, we are not making use of our useful time. The most useful time in my view starts around 7am to 12noon. But those are the hours when Sierra Leoneans, especially us living here in Freetown will start thinking about the traffic at Lumley road, traffic around Kissy Road, and by the time you reach to your Office, the useful time may have already been eaten into, and we can no longer be efficient because after 12 noon, you have little or nothing else to do. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that being said, I now take my stand on the debate.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, taking the SOEs under the Ministry of Finance, as mentioned by our Deputy Finance Minister, is a good way to go but in my view, there has to be a caveat; that only SOEs that are in comatose that should be taken under the Ministry of Finance. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if the Ministry of Finance are introducing a new Bill to repeal the 2022 Act, to me, I see it going in the wrong direction. I want to suggest here that the Ministry of Finance make use of those institutions that are struggling, those that are not breakeven, for example, I will use Sierratel as a case study.

As Ministry of Finance, take Sierratel under the new Bill and revitalize it to a breakeven position, and then you can transfer Sierratel to NCP for privatization. Mr Speaker, for the edification of all, breakeven simply means you are not making a profit nor making a loss. So when you now transfer that particular system under the NCP for privatization, then the private owned companies automatically get full control of what they are doing. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in terms of losses, let me also single out Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority [EDSA]. At EDSA, we are currently experiencing something like **60%** losses in transmission and distribution; both technical and commercial losses. This is not good for us as a Nation, and to me as an engineer, if we are faced with that kind of lacuna, it is but fitting that we shut down and go home.

So, if you want to take that particular condition off the shelf, I would suggest for us to ensure that we privatize. If you privatize EDSA today, they will put measures in place

whereby they will automatically start from day one to transform the **60%** losses to profit because, the first thing EDSA will do is to fire all the incompetent staff and retain the competent ones; they will put systems in place to be able to monitor the theft of light, and all those conditions we see as precarious will be eliminated automatically. Mr Speaker and Honourable Members, the Minister did mention that we have four inactive State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] for which Energy, Water, Telecom etc are all struggling.

So Mr Speaker, in conclusion, it is therefore my submission as stated earlier that:

- We get all comatose State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] under the Ministry of Finance
- We make sure that the SOEs under the Ministry of Finance that are already considered at breakeven position be transferred to the National Commission for Privatization [NCP]
- The Government of Sierra Leone now put modalities in place as to how it would be collecting the taxes to develop our country.

Mr Speaker, further to my submissions in my debate for today, I would want to also suggest that going forward, we start thinking about a functioning Stock Exchange where we can have the Abacha Women, the Okada Riders, and the commoners to buy shares or invest in that Stock Exchange. When these set of people make profit in that Stock Exchange Market, then we can share the profit or the proceeds. Mr Speaker, through that means, we can automatically help create incentive for our market and our economy, and within the shortest possible time, we will start experiencing expansion in our market size.

Lastly Mr Speaker, it would catapult or sensibly provoke us to embark on research and development. And remember, it is only when this country would have reached that climax of us thinking smart into research; where we would develop our own technology and sell it to the market, then we can start saying that we have a correct Sierra Leone, I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I notice that engineers always have big jargons. Where is the other engineer that sits in front? I now give the Floor to the Honourable Whip of the Opposition.

HON. ABDUL KARIM KAMARA: Mr Speaker, today I have listened to very good debates, and I must say I listened to the submission of the Kailahun/Guinea Member of Parliament, and he was making some serious points today.

Mr Speaker, you know sometimes we ask ourselves very important questions; what do these institutions we want to privatize lack? Why are they not generating the most needed revenue for the state? And why are they not contributing to the National Growth? Is there anything we can do as a country to ensure we make them viable? Is privatizing them the only option we have? Do we want to take responsibility as a Nation to fix them so we can get them running and provide more income for the state?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, interestingly, when you do a matrix of the institutions we have privatized and those we have not privatized, you would realize that we have privatized those institutions that have been giving income to the country, and fail to privatize those that are below the standards of providing a single cent to the country; SALCAB is an example. So basically, when people talk about privatization, I ask myself the question; are we privatizing because the institutions are below the standard of adding income to the state, or are we privatizing the ones that are making profit so that we would give more money to our friends and our families? What are we privatizing, and why are we privatizing? How important are institutions like Guma Valley to us? When you look at the budget allocation to Guma Valley and the water sector in Sierra Leone every year, you do not need to ask why they are not performing well. The answer is in our hands and we see it every day. We allocate pittance to Guma Valley and we expect Guma Valley to provide water and raise revenue for the state; impossible, it cannot happen that way. Do we have the network capacity? In fact, it will interest Sierra Leoneans to note that most of these Private Companies have mounted their Towers on the facilities of Sierratel. But we always continue to make Sierratel look

bad, we continue to deprive them of the much needed revenue, experience and manpower, and at the end of the day we hand over those facilities to the Private Sector people. Well, I will not say what I think, but maybe I would borrow the words of 'Di Mamie', **S.O2**, *'for Brown Envelope'*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, why can't we build up those institutions that we think are below the standard, instead of privatizing them? Why can't we use the example of Rokel Commercial Bank? That Bank was almost dying, but was bailed out and today it is doing well. So as a Nation, let us look at these institutions. One thing I have always said in this Well, and also to the Ministry of Finance is that we are struggling to generate revenues to develop our Nation simply because the institutions that are meant to bring income are today struggling to survive.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you cannot talk about Manpower when people who have been working in those institutions for several years have been booted out and replaced with inexperienced people who need almost five years to match up to the standard of those whom they have replaced. With such arrangement, how do you expect those institutions to continue growing? No, they will not grow. So Mr Speaker, we cannot stagnate the institutions and expect them to do well. And interestingly, most of these State Owned Enterprises are well positioned in a way that when it comes to customer base, they have it. Do you want to tell me that Guma Valley does not have customer base? No. Do you want to tell me that the people cannot pay for water? No, they can. Even where there are no taps, homes spend a minimum between **NLe40** to **NLe100** a day for water. So, if government is going to create the same facility for less cost, can you tell me that the people cannot afford to pay for it? They will.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the truth is that we give those Institutions pittance, and we look for our best friends who would come around to privatize them. It is a shame on us as a nation. Go to the Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority [EDSA], can you tell me that EDSA does not have what it takes to function well? As a nation, can't we build the infrastructure we need? We shut down all the big generators and

push ourselves to Karpower as the only source for electricity so that **S.O2**, *'som man go get kick bak'*, and they said we should not say it, we would say it because that is the problem.

So Mr Speaker, no matter what you do; whether you change the names or you metamorphose those institutions, as long as we continue doing the same things-stagnating them of resources, change personnel, sack people because they are not loyal to us as politicians, party in party out, those institutions will never do well. As long as we are not willing as a nation to build the infrastructures of those institutions, they can never do well. Are you telling me that SalPost cannot do well, when they have offices in almost every big town in this country? You go to Kambia, you have a SalPost in Kambia, you have in Rokupru, you have in Mambolo, you have in Kashiri, and all the infrastructures are up and running. So you ask yourself the question, what is faulty?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my appeal to the Ministry of Finance is that in as much as we say we want to continue privatizing those institutions because we cannot run them, and because we want to get more funds, let us not stagnate them just because we want to privatize them; let us give them the resources so they will breathe and live. Let the institutions exist because they are important to us. And Mr Speaker, I do not know why Parliamentarians are comfortable. We sit here every other day and privatize institutions that are profit making institutions, and we still beat the Tables and say we are doing well as a nation. I would not forgive ourselves for sitting down as a nation and privatized SALCAB. That deal itself is bad, and would ever remain to be bad. We are not supposed to do this to a nation that is fighting to gain income.

Today, what we have done is that we have shifted...[Undertone] **S.O 2**, *' U forget? Na ya u de wey den privatize am. Nor to in mek Tawa resign?* Mr Speaker, please tell the Leader not to disturb me this morning. I am sick, but I am tired of these issues, so I need to speak them up [laughter]. Mr Speaker, we must not continue doing this. As we speak today, even the almighty Standards Bureau is in a state where it cannot survive by itself. They do not have the instruments they need to run the institution, and yet, we

eat foods that have been imported into this country without being tested. And we would wait for a time to come and say, let us privatize Standards Bureau. No, we must provide the resources for the institutions. If you ask today which institution is testing the drugs we use when people import them to Sierra Leone, **S.O 2**, '*udat de test dem?*' By the time you find the answer, you would even be afraid to drink simple Panadol. But everybody keeps quiet as if everything is okay as a nation. It is one thing to privatize in order to get income, and it is another thing to privatize because the institutions are a burden on the State. But again, how important are these institutions we privatize? How do we sit as a nation and we talk about privatizing Guma? Are we saying we are so inefficient as a country that we cannot operate basic institutions that run the daily activities of our State? No, we must not do this to our people; we must not. And interestingly, most of these State Owned Enterprises [SOEs] that are finding it difficult to exist will tell you that government institutions also owed them.

As for Water Resources, thank God I am the Chairman of that Committee. I would make Institutions that have to pay Guma are called to Parliament to tell us why they have not been paying Guma, because moneys are being allocated to your Ministries. MDAs come here every year in November and tell us they have paid this amount of money for water rate, fuel, etc., but yet still Guma is saying you have not been paying your Bills, and Guma is struggling to survive. So it is government killing government institutions, and yet still they privatize them; saying they do not make profit. No, we must not continue like this, we must not. It is just basic things; let us invest money in those institutions, build the infrastructures of those institutions, and bring in sober manpower without Political bias.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is not difficult to do because we know the problem. One thing I have always said in Sierra Leone is that all of us here know the problem and we know how to fix the problem. That is why when I go to the Media and somebody asks me about the alternative, I will respond by asking the person again whether he or she does not know the alternative. We all know the problem; it is just

how we use our ego and our political mindset to deprive the nation, and it is bad, thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I am sure he could not finish, because he has so much in his mind, and there is so much thought process going around the Well, and the Ministry of Finance should take note of the fact that they control the powers that we give them; the powers of the purse, and if such powers are not used in the best interest for the furtherance of these SOEs, it will be of no use that we legislate them when they do not have finances to operate.

Further to that, some of these SOEs are revenue generating SOEs. If you take the SLPMC for example, you would realize that most of their assets have been rented out, and they do not receive revenues out of those assets. This is primarily the reason why government should have, in the course of giving the stimulus package, given sufficient funds to SLPMC so that they could be in the position to import rice and compete with Rice Importers, so that governments will be in the position to also dictate the pricing formula in the market. Like the Honourable Member said, there are lots of problems with State Owned Enterprises that are man-made. And you must take note that if this Bill is just a governance structure, then we should take our minds off the fact that this Bill does not seek to address the problems of the SOEs, because already, the SOEs do have Boards, and it is the responsibility of those Boards to monitor the performance of those SOEs because they have Board Meetings four times in a year. They are responsible to receive their financial statement, examine them, and they are responsible to make sure that they supervise the SOEs [*Undertone*], I am not debating; I am just guiding the process. So it is important that we take our minds off the fact that this Bill seeks to address the problems of the State Owned Enterprises [SOEs]. What I see that the Bill wants to do is to close the National Commission for Privatization [NCP] and set up a structure that is going to give additional powers to the Ministry of Finance.

Honourable Members, I see that no Member wants to attract my attention. If that is the case, I think we would wrap up with the Leaders. I would take the Acting Leader of the Opposition first because I see that Members do not even want to contribute anymore.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my opening statement in respect of this Bill before this House is that the issue of SOEs of which this Bill seeks to address is a public interest issue, and as you rightly said, it is a governance structure. SOEs are the deliverables for political mandate of every government; they are institutions for delivery of every government in power, and they are the gear system of government engine. For instance, if Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority [EDSA] fails, what will be the outcome politically? The government will be rated as a failed government because it cannot deliver. If Guma cannot provide basic water facility under a particular government, how will that government be rated? The government will be rated as a failure.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I continue, I want to make this humble suggestion; that since your good office has established the Public Interest Committee in this House, I am suggesting that as a way forward in looking into this Bill, that the Public Interest Committee [PIC] summons every State Owned Enterprises to present at least five page document about their challenges or reasons for their failure. I believe they can speak for themselves better. Let them tell us their problems and reasons for their poor performances.

Mr Speaker Honourable Members, during the pre-legislative hearing, the Minister of Finance and his team made some presentations which have some genuine concerns regarding political interference, corruption and mismanagement of public funds. But in my opinion, these SOEs can speak for themselves better. So let them give us five page presentations on their challenges and recommendations regarding the way forward; what do they expect this government to do for them so that they can succeed. Sierra Leone Housing Corporation, what are your challenges? You are supposed to create more affordable houses to be rented out to citizens and non-citizens.

However, on the contrary, instead of the Sierra Leone Housing Corporation providing more housing, the existing housings have been sold to private people under their watch. That is unacceptable, Mr Speaker. Well, they have their story; let them tell us why the OAU village is almost **60%** gone. Let them tell us why Government Quarters...

[Interruption]

THE SPEAKER: Leader, can I hold you there for a minute? I heard the undertones from Honourable Members, and I want to say, like you prefaced your opening, this is a Public Interest issue; if we treat it as a Political issue then we would continue to miss the point of fixing the SOEs. Leader, you can continue.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, we have been together in this Well for about six years plus. You know that I am not political on issues like this, and that is why you would be shocked if only you adhere to my suggestion for SOEs to speak for themselves. For example, let the Sierra Leone Housing Cooperation to tell us where the OAU village has gone, what is stopping them from creating or generating more housing facilities, and suggest how Parliament could help them. The Public Interest Committee [PIC] in turn can see those recommendations and decide what to do through our various Committees- the other sub-committees.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also have success stories. The National Petroleum [NP] for instance, is a success story; it is also a State Owned Enterprise, as prefaced by the Finance Chairman. The Sierra Leone Commercial Bank and the Rokel Commercial Bank are also success stories; they are all State Owned Enterprises [SOEs]. They too should tell us, in their opinion, why they success so that others can learn from their best practices. Sierra Leone Commercial Bank, what is the reason for your success? How did you manage? The same questions can apply to the National Petroleum [NP].

Mr Speaker, Hnourable Members, if I have my way I will change the name of National Petroleum [NP] to International Petroleum because NP is now International; we have National Petroleum [NP] in Liberia, we have National Petroleum [NP] in Guinea. NP has

grown beyond Sierra Leone. Let the National Petroleum [NP] tell us their success story, and then we can do comparative analysis as a Public Interest Committee [PIC]. Mr Speaker, with effective State Owned Enterprises [SOEs], government will never struggle to pay salaries.

I used to be a solicitor for Ambitel which has metamorphosed now to Qcell. I prepared Eighty-Five Lease Agreement for Ambitel when Gaddafi was alive. If Gaddafi was still alive, through Ambitel, Sierra Leone would have got communication coverage with just a press of a button- that was the plan of late Gaddafi. But to your greatest amazement, Mr Speaker, when I was moving with the engineer to determine areas that are suitable for the erecting of those communication poles; areas that can better attract the communication waves, we discovered that every area we earmarked was owned by Sierratel. In fact that made it simple for us; just follow Sierratel, because Sierratel was the way. Sierratel said they had the answer because everywhere we went, there was Sierratel facility, and those were the correct points throughout the country. So with Sierratel, we were assured of 100% coverage with all the correct locations where communication poles ought to be located. That is why if you observe, especially in the provinces, you would notice that communication poles are clustered in some forest because Sierratel pole is there to be used to locate their own coverage. Sierratel used to have its own phones that could function only through Sierratel to Sierratel calls. And just recently, about six to eight years, that facility has died down. I was really impressed when Sierratel had its own phones numbers to make Sierratel to Sierratel calls.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the best way forward is for Sierratel to be given the opportunity to tell us why they dropped. Sierratel, what is your problem? Tell us, the Public Interest Committee [PIC]. We, together with the Committee on Communication, will tell them what to do, and that will inform this Bill. Mr Speaker, as you rightly said, this Bill does not really address the real issues; it is just to repeal one and replace with another. And you have to convince us before we can repeal any law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the challenges of State Owned Enterprises are caused by themselves, including government. Sierra Leoneans generally, we are not ready to go forward. In fact, what pains me the most is the fact that we are lack of initiatives. For example, we have Guma Valley in charge of water system, but we are seeing Grafton and other water companies coming to make Billions of Leones out of our water, using the very Guma Valley. What is stopping Guma Valley from making Bottle Water? You have the source, you are in charge, you are the custodian, and you are the owner. What really stops you from manufacturing bottle water or packet water? What is the problem? If Guma Valley says, in addition to selling my water to other companies, I am also producing bottle water for sale, is that wrong? Is it too much or too difficult for Gums Valley? The bottle water we are drinking is from Guma; they are not 'heaven on earth water'; it is not special water, we get it from our pipes. They harvest our pipe-bone water from Guma Valley and manufacture their so called packet water. The water is not even purified by the companies; it is Guma Valley that purifies the pipe-bone water. So Goma Valley, what is stopping you when you are in custody of the water?

So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my opinion, this is our headache. I told them the last time during the Pre-legislative hearing that this is the headache for Parliament and it is our business to sort these things out. I do not have the powers of **S.O** 42 but my suggestion is that we need to summon them. All I have is to convince you, and I am hoping that you would rule in my favor. As an Opposition Member, and because I want the system to succeed through suggestions for national growth, I am saying, as a Public Interest Committee [PIC] established by your own good office, let us summon each of those SOEs to explain their story.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am being persuaded by my colleagues to move a motion *[interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I would encourage you to reserve your motion and let us discuss it after the sitting.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Thank you sir. So on that note, I also got some discussions with the Chairman of Legislative Committee during the Pre-legislation, and I have also got some discussions with the Leader of Government Business and the atmosphere was rough on that day, anyway. So we almost decided that we have to approach you for this Bill to be further looked into, and it is our hope that you use your **S.O** 43 in our favor; that this Bill needs to have a second look under **S.O** 51[1]. So thank you very much, and God bless you.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member for his wonderful contribution as always to national issues and issues of Public Interest. I now give the Floor to..., I see he is drinking water, but please, I know you are a man of God, and this is Lent, and at this time of the day, you should not be drinking water. I do not know why you are drinking water.

HON. EMERSON SAA LAMINA: I am a Pentecostal Christian; I fast as I am led

The Speaker: Oh, so you are not led for this fasting *[Laughter]*? I give you the Floor

HON. EMERSON SAA LAMINA: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I should, and I must thank Members from both aisles for their very serious contributions to this very important Bill. President Madaa Bio is on record to have brought moribund or obsolete Bills that did not fit to see the light of the day and made them to be very progressive. I was privileged to be in the 5th Parliament, during which we enacted Eighty-four Legislations *[some old, some new and some repealed]*. In this 6th Parliament, we are also progressing; a Bill in which Members of Parliament are giving their candid opinion is also before Parliament at the moment. We are aware that since we attained independence in this country, we have gone through several sojourns. Mr Speaker, the awareness I have is that nothing can be perfected overnight; Government in, and Government out, we need to trace our history. I am aware that we have gone through coups and counter-coups in the country. I am aware that we have gone through a very brutal civil war which might have distorted the functioning of SOE or the other. I am also aware that we have gone through diseases

called Ebola and COVID 19. Yet, our Democracy is becoming stronger and stronger. As Members of Parliament, Section **105** of the Constitution gives us power that we are the Supreme Legislative Authorities; we should not even cry foul. The moment this document is handed over to us by the Deputy Minister of Finance, it becomes our property, so why do we cry foul? When it subsequently becomes our property, it is our right to do whatever we want to do with it because Section **105** gives Parliament the power as the Supreme Legislative Authority. By the time we invoke **S.O** 51[1] we would do whatever we want to make it work, so why do we cry foul? Section **107** Sub-section [2] gives us Members of Parliament the authority to summon Ministers to the House, but Ministers do not have the power to command us to go to their offices. As Members of Parliament, we have the powers to command a Minister to come and tell us about a government policy or respond to our inquiries. Such is the power we have as Members of Parliament in this Constitution.

So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we should not even cry foul as whether these Law works or not, because I have the power to command Ministers. I will not even cry foul because the moment this Bill comes to our House, I will shout-Hallelujah because that is my turn. When I watched at the Bill, I realized that there is weak corporate governance through and through. It can be seen in Clauses 29 and 30; weak corporate governance is very clear in those Clauses. Let me ask such a question: Where were we when overnight a single man [*Jamil Sahid Mohamad*] got monopoly over Gold and Diamond? I came from a diamondiferous District, so I know what I am talking about regarding the government in and the government out. The policy of a particular President at a particular time is also hanging today on the State. We were all here when Jamil Sahid Mohamad was declared overnight by Dr Siaka P. Stevens as the sole owner or dealer of all our Gold and Diamond. Where were we when Jamil Sahid Moohamad was the sole man in charge of our Fisheries in this Country? Where were we when Jamil Sahid Mohamad was in charge of the Low-cost Housing? Today they are crying stinking fish of Housing not sufficient for the people, ignoring the fact that overnight a single man, Jamil Sahid Mohamad was once made the sole owner of the Low-cost Housing. Mr

Speaker, Honourable Members, where were we when Jamil Sahid Mohamad was in charge of Leocem? So, when you cry stinking fish, go back to History lane where overnight a single man was declared to be in charge of all the above mentioned.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if I tell you the agonizing pain the people of Kono and Sierra Leone faced at the time you would not believe. Can you imagine that before this time, **60%** of our Gross Domestic Product [**GDP**] used to come from Kono? So you see why I said the moment this Bill comes before this Parliament we should be happy? We should be happy because we are going to do justice to the Bill. Mr Speaker, I would volunteer this week to be in the Legislative Committee to do justice to this Bill. I have seen several gaps or lacuna in this Bill but I will not cry them here in this General Committee. I will go to Committee Room One and do justice to the Legislative Committee because I have read the Bill and I have seen financial instability clearly spelt out in Sections 43 and 44. I have seen that the Bill clearly has limited operational efficiency and effectiveness, and that is clearly spelt out in Clause 27 of the Bill. I have also seen that this Bill lacks competitive neutrality. I have further seen that this Bill also has poor performance monitoring system.

But that notwithstanding, I still commend the drafters for being so wise. Is anyone of them here? I am not seeing one. What did the Drafters do that made me referred to them as very wise? We have seen in Clause 13, Sub-section 2 [c] of the Bill that Performance Contract will be signed by the Board- that is a good idea; Performance trackers will be put in place by the Board. Do we have Board Members here? Yes, I can see the Chairman of Housing here. I want to inform you that this Bill gives you the power to set up performance trackers for those that will do the day to day administration of those SOEs. For example, you can indicate that between months January to June this is what the Board expects of you, and between the month of July to December this is what the Board expect from you; whether in the form of finances or performance. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, do you see how wise the Drafters were? If you have read this Bill very well, you would see the powers that are given to the Board; signed Performance trackers. Many of our Universities are fading away

today like morning dew because of the standard the Universities sets on the performance of students, the performances of lectures and their power to research. How many of the University Professors we have today that can write towards standards? These are the things that come to mind when you think of performance.

Therefore, I commend the drafters very well because they create a rule. If you say this State Owned Enterprise is not performing, where is the rule? Why is it that Mercury can overnight over-ride Lotto? Even though they are twin institutions, how is it that Lotto has been dwarfed so much by Mercury? There is a skill; whiles they were not potent, today, this Bill gives power for Performance Trackers or performance contracts to be given to them. If anyone cannot perform, the Board has the right to review or can recommend for the person to be fired because Section **61** lies in the hands of the President who creates, hires and fires. The Board can recommend for a person to be fire if that person is not productive; that is what this Bill has done. So Mr Speaker, I am courageous because I will focus not only on the drawbacks, but also on the vantages in this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, We also see that Clause 14 of this Bill talks about 15 years' experience for one to be graduated to the position of Director General. When we go to the Legislative, I will surely criticize that. Talking about 15 years' experience, what room are you creating for the youth? So even if the youth has the tactfulness, multitask, can perform and bring result, he or she still needs to fulfill the 15 years criteria to be qualified for the position? Why not 5 years at least or 10 years at most? If you go to the Nigeria General Assembly, there is a Bill passed; *'not too young to run'* which gives opportunities to young people. Senegal has their President at age 44, what are we doing? Mr Speaker, 15 years is not pleasing at all because the youths will cry foul for indicating 15 years' experience to be qualified for a particular job even though they are graduates. I am highlighting all of these for colleague Legislators to take note, especially those in the Legislative Committee. Clause 29 of the Bill also gives the power to the Minister to create regulations. Mr Minister, you have heard most of the MPs cried stinking fish; they have criticized certain things about the SOEs. So this Bill is now

giving you the power to make regulations that will give effect to this Bill. So do all the regulations that will make your Bill very powerful, smooth and riding.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Clause 30 of this Bill also talks about general oversight. This means that not only the Members of Parliament would have an oversight function as spelt out in Section **93**[3] and [6], which give Members of Parliament the powers of a High Court Judge to decide their fate and to also command them to produce witnesses or evidences. This Bill on the other hand gives the Minister the power to play proper oversight. I also read Clause 43[a] in this Bill which talks about Parliament scrutinizing funds of SOEs. As Parliament, our job is not only to make good and workable laws, play oversight and represent the people. Under the PR System, I represent the people of central Koidu City. As Members of Parliament we are not only here to strengthen the peace and National Cohesion the country has, we are here also to scrutinize Annual Budget in the months of November and December every year. Our job also includes scrutinizing budget given to State Owned Enterprises. Take note, the Bill is now giving us the power in Clause 43 to fund SOEs. If for example monies given to certain SOEs are considered by Parliament to be small, MPs may appeal to other Members of a particular Sub-Committee to advocate for an increment on behalf of those SOEs, vice vasa. Parliament has the power of the purse, and therefore we can advocate for an increase or we reject certain allocations. So this is the power the Bill gives us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in Clause 41 of the Bill, it is stated that government may change its ownership, and I consider that as very brilliant. And for that, Mr Minister, I commend and salute you. Clause 41 is simply saying if an SOE is not performing, government may decide to change its ownership through Privatization; Public Private Partnership [PPP]. The Bill is saying if an SOE is not performing, give it away, and that is the power, and I commend you for that, even though I would have loved you to use the word '**shall**' instead of '**may**', in that expression. '**Shall**' would have made it very stronger, that notwithstanding, I still commend you for the use of '**May**'. That is to say, if a particular SOE; be it Lotto, be it Guma Valley, be it Rokel

Commercial Bank, is not performing, you will now recommend to Cabinet for that SOE to be privatized. Why is it that people would not steal top-up cards but they will steal energy through illegal connection? What is the technology? Mr Minister, I commend you because if there is no hard and fast rules regarding the performance of these SOEs, they will continue to exist even though they are not performing. The Bill is now saying that government has power to privatize any underperforming SOE. When you go to America today, it is a litigious country that relies on privatization. Most of the revenue the US Government generates does not come from typical government entities but the Private Sector. My short stay in America made me to know that the Americans care less about government and value the private sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Clause 41 also tells us about Change of Ownership and ensures Competitive Neutrality. This Bill also gives the power and robust performance management framework. Under Audit Disclosure, the Act is saying that at the end of the financial year, State Owned Enterprises would be commanded to disclose the findings from the Audit; did you steal money? Did you misappropriate money? What has been your financial status? Is your financial report qualified or unqualified? All of these will be disclosed. So, Honourable Members of Parliament, especially Finance Committee, it is high time you began to look at the Banks. I am not accusing them of treacherous Treasury Bearer Bond bills that generate money, yet you will not see the profit, I am not accusing them of giving loans to capitalist and yet the profit is not seen Honourable Members of Finance Committee, it is high time you began to look at those State Owned Enterprises that are not performing and bring them out.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I should commend the Chairman for Public Account Committee [PAC] for doing a laudable job, thereby bringing a lot of many monies to the government purse. I am also calling on Members paying supervision over those SOEs to be bringing us results. This Act is enough to give Ministers power, as well as we the Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I take into good consideration the contributions of colleague Members, but I also commend His Excellency President Maada Bio, before whose watch this particular Bill was passed at Cabinet level. He took notes of the drawbacks, yet he strengthens and empowers the Minister, as well as we the Members of Parliament to bring all the goodies for the Government of Sierra Leone. I Thank you very much, and I appeal to Members across the aisle for the speedy ratification of this Bill after its committal under **S.O** 51[1], I thank you all for your contributions.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honorable Acting Leader of Government Business for his contribution to the debate. Before I give the Floor to the Minister to respond to concerns, suggestions and recommendations made by Honourable Members, let me also draw his attention and the attention of Dr Mansaray, that in the course of looking and examining the 2022 Audit Reports, we realized as Public Account Committee [PAC] that the receivables of EDSA, EGTC Guma Valley and RMFA is insurmountable. We summoned the meeting here in Parliament and we invited the Ministry of Finance. We started the process, and we later handed it over to you so as to effectively use Section **54** of the Public Financial Management [PFM] Act of 2016 in order to deduct and setoff these receivables and payables of Ministries, and then do the needful in term of debt settlement. But since you left us, you have not given us a report. Hence is the reason why I said the Ministry of Finance is telling us to dismantle SOEs or to create a superstructure over SOEs, but they are not playing their part. This is a fair conversation, and you have to play your part so that we can arm you the more if you need more arms. I see the Honorable Leader was also making reference to the regulations. Go to the Public Financial Management Act, there are more than 10 provisions for the Minister to make regulations; regulations for the formation of Cash Management Committee [CMC], regulation for the formation of Tariff Committee in the Finance Act of 2019, there are lots of provisions for the Ministry of Finance to make regulations. But if those regulations do not come and you now tend to blame the State Owned Enterprises for non-performance, you should also take responsibility for that, because at the height of the performance of National Commission for Privatization

[NCP], you yanked away the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank [SLCB] and Rokel Commercial Bank [RCB] and them under the Ministry of Finance, leaving the non-performing SOEs in the hands of National Commission for Privatization [NCP]. So the point is, if we want to transform or create a superstructure of the SOEs, we must ensure that we first of all give capacity and potency to the NCP to work. If the NCP fails to work, now we can create a structure that will provide general oversight. If you are going to do that, you would have to amend regulation 174 of the Public Financial Management Regulations of 2018, 251, and 260; there is a lot of amendments that you have to do because you have to completely remove NCP from the Books where they are the Principal Shareholding Exercising Authority on behalf of Government. On that note, I give the Floor to the Honourable Minister.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE II *[Mr Bockarie Kalokoh]* : Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and Honourable Members of the House. I am excited today because I can see across the aisle that there are different views, but all of the views go around public interest issues; we are thinking like true Sierra Leoneans and I am excited about that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, firstly, I want to make the point clear that definitely we would repeal the NCP Act, but the people in the NCP will still have a job; nothing will happen with that. But principally, I want to note that this Act is coming at a point whereby we have seen SOEs not performing very well, and see issues around the Sierra Leone Commercial Banks [SLCB] and Rokel Commercial Bank [RCB] being brought into this.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was in Sierra Leone Commercial Banks [SLCB]. What is clear about the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank [SLCB] is that we had finance from government, and with those finances, we changed the governance structure which was the reason why SLCB became profitable.

As for the issues around privatization, we have a lot of issues highlighted here that would let us maintain some of these SOEs instead of privatizing them, and I think that

is the spirit of this particular Bill because we want to see these SOEs being owned and managed by Sierra Leoneans. But what is key in any situation is that if you look at Section **28** which talks about Corporate Governance, you would realize that without an effective Corporate Governance, no institution in the world will succeed. This Bill is a Bill that was prepared together with the IMF and World Bank, and we had consultations with NCP and various other institutions. We went to places like Rwanda, Seychelles for us to develop a Bill that can stand the test of time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we believe that for a Corporate Governance to come into play, if you have an existing profile of NCP it will not work. So it is in the spirit of that that the Honourable Minister of Finance and Cabinet prepared this Bill. Mr Speaker, I was excited by the comment of the Acting Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Daniel B. Koroma. You know, the problems of SOEs lie in themselves. *[interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, when you come to Parliament, you should also take cognizance of Parliamentary procedures. In **S.O** 32 [16], you do not refer to Members here by their names.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE II: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker for that correction. Mr Speaker Honourable Members, the Honourable Daniel Koroma spoke about the reason for the success of Sierra Leone Commercial Bank and Rokel Commercial Bank. He also spoke about the Public Interest issue which I think is very important. Mr Speaker, we have a Committee of which most Members here are part of. I would prefer they raise some of these issues at that Committee level. Since most of these Members visit these Banks or some of these institutions, it is very important that you look into those delivery issues.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what we did for Electricity and Water is very important because you cannot privatize all your institutions. That is why we are saying it is important to have effective State Owned Enterprises. Honourable Saa Emerson Lamina from Kono also spoke about effective governance. So, if you look at all the issues, we believe that this Act will play a major role by helping to simplify, streamline

and clarify the roles and responsibilities of SOEs. It will also bring up to date laws because we are going to make a lot of laws around the governance framework of SOEs because governance framework is the architecture for performance.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as for the issues around the qualification criteria, both the Commissioner General and the Chairman would be appointed by the president but the Deputy would be appointed by the Board. So that is why the issue around qualification was restricted, but we would still look at the recommendations and consider those issues at other level. We also want to professionalize the SOE Boards. Issues were raised that some of these people are appointed, but we believe that if we have professionals in these institutes, it will help to improve the performances of these Boards. In recent times, you can see that some of the appointments that have been made in some SOEs are not professionals.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also want to operate as far as possible on a commercially viable basis because without that it is going to be difficult for these institutions to thrive very well. Also, SOEs will be required to operate on a level competitive playing field, which I think was noted by the Honourable Member of Parliament from Kono [*Honourable Saa Emerson Lamina*]. On the issue of capital, Section **26** [b], when you have these companies in a Corporate Governance Structure, they attract capital. Government is tight in terms of fiscal; so we believe that with the enactment of this Bill, we will have capital for most of these institutions because the present state of these institutions will be difficult to attract Capital.

*Suspension of **S.O** 5 [2]*

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, you can continue.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE II: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I said, you can see the positivity from various Members of Parliament across the aisle in this particular debate. We have seen that both sides are supporting the Bill although some of them are criticizing it. So we are happy that we are having a balanced level. Mr

Speaker, I am also excited by the contribution of Honourable Fallah Tengbeh from Kailahun. Honourable Tengbeh, SOEs are established for economic growth. What we have looked at in the Ministry of Finance is that with an effective SOE governance structure, the performance of these institutions will improve. I know there are few flaws here and there, but on the whole, the Bill tell us that its effectiveness will go a long way in transforming SOEs from a loss making institutions to profit making institutions. I would therefore request this House to reconsider the good side of this Bill. When you look at the Bill itself, it was well crafted; we took a lot from Seychelles and other institutions. As I said earlier, most of the issues were reviewed with the World Bank, and we are quite sure that if this Bill is passed into law, it will go a long way in changing most of these losses making SOEs to profit making SOEs.

On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled; State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025 be read the second time.

THE SPEAKER: Before I put the question, I would want to draw the attention of Members and the Minister to the composition of just one Board of one SOE; Guma Valley to show that the Boards that are set up by this Parliament are not incompetent. For Guma Valley, they have representative from Freetown City Council, they have a Chartered Accountant and an experienced Administrator or a Legal Practitioner nominated by the Commission, and they have the Head or Senior representative of the Institute of Chartered Engineers. So, like the Honourable Daniel B. Koroma said, there is a fundamental issue that we should examine because that is the structure in most of the Boards that we set for SOEs. But I would reserve that and let me put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[The Bill entitled; The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025, being an Act to establish The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act; to provide a framework for effective ownership and governance of State Owned Enterprises; to provide for a prudent shareholder of State Owned Enterprises on behalf of government; to provide clear guidelines and standards to ensure transparency, accountability and good

governance in the operations of State Own Enterprises; to provide for better economic management, promoting fair competition and improving public trust in the government ability to manage public resources; and to provide for other related matters has been read the second time]

HON. EMERSON SAA LAMINA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, taking cognizance of the concerns of Colleague Members of Parliament during the debate of this Bill, I stand under **S.O** 51[1] for the committal of the Bill; The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025 to the Legislative Committee

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I so second, Mr Speaker

[Question Propose, Put and Agreed To]

*[Pursuant to **S.O** 51[1], the Bill entitled; The State Owned Enterprises and Governance Act, 2025 has been committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny]*

ANNOUCEMENTS:

THE SPEAKER: I am not going to take a debate on **S.O** 23

HON. ABDUL KARIM KAMARA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, just some few days ago, whiles we were in the Public Account Committee [PAC], and I know you have made series of follow-ups on this issue, but it is sad to say that the fear we had is now catching up with us because it has reached a final point where the West African Examination Council [WAEC] is saying they cannot prepare our kids with the new syllabus for which they had been taught in the last three years, and now they are going to Senior Secondary School [SSS 3] next year. Our kids are going to take the West African Senior School Certificate Examination [WESSCE] next year on the old syllabus for which they were not prepared. And this is sad because it creates a situation in which the kids were not prepared; they were only prepared for the New Syllabus. I am saying this because we brought this issue up almost five months ago so that we

would have prevented ourselves from being in this state. Around November 12 last year, I was in this Well and I said the portal was closed just in September. From that November to now that we are in March, schools are suffering, and for the third time in a year our kids would not take WESSCE. And the painful thing is that government has to go back and pay for those kids; it is a painful situation every year, Mr Speaker. And these are things we can actually work on as a nation.

Mr Speaker, I also want to applaud you for the steps you took. Had the Ministry listened to all the suggestions you brought to the table, I am sure we would have mitigated this problem. But see where we are today, and people are saying 'oh the kids are going to take Private WESSCE'. We would have mitigated this problem way back in November.

So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my appeal to this House is, yes I believe there is a Committee, but Mr Speaker, I also want us to exercise the powers of this House in inviting the Ministers to come to the Well and explain to us; or else it seems as a Parliament we do not listen to the cries of the people, and we do not care. If such a thing happens just once, we can understand; but this is three times in a row. And when the issues are brought forward, we prefer to argue as Members of Parliament and leave the kids to continue to suffer.

Mr Speaker, I therefore call on your office to invite the Minister of Education to come to this Well and tell us what actually are the problems. What he told us in your office, I cannot narrate; let him come himself and explain to this Nation. Mr Speaker, in fact it is interesting when I read the list of schools that are not taking this year's exam, I found out that Services is number one in Western Area, and most of the schools are in Western Area, and about five hundred kids from Services are going to be affected. So you ask yourself what is wrong. Let the Minister come to explain to us in this Well. I beg we do not go to Committee Room One or any other office this time around; let him come to the Well and address Sierra Leoneans, thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member, and I will give opportunity to...*[Undertone]*, I would not take a debate out of **S.O** [23]; it is against the spirit and

intent of **S.O**[23]. The Honourable Member has made his point, and the Committee of Basic Education is going to meet; I have just heard the announcement *[Interruption]*. Honourable Members, can you please resume your seats? As I was saying, I have heard him, I have also heard an announcement made for a meeting scheduled for the Committee on Basic Education, and I hope they would take this into their stride; they would discuss it and revert to the Speakership for us to consider the request made by the Honourable Abdul Karim Kamara.

I would want to welcome the Honourable P.C Fatmata Bintu Meama Kajua Koroma II. Honourable PC, you see, every day you come to this House, we should welcome you because you are the only Female Paramount Chief in this Parliament. So I will make it a point of duty whenever I sit, if you are in the Chamber I will recognize you.

THE SPEAKER: I will take Honourable Kanneh

HON. MOHAMED KANNEH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I represent two Chiefdoms in the Kailahun District; Dea and Malema Chiefdoms, and I have a message from the people in Dea Chiefdom to this House. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Dea Chiefdom lost their Paramount Chief about four years ago and since then we have never been informed whatsoever as to when *[interruption]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would stop you there because that is controversial

HON. MOHAMED KANNEH: But you have not heard the story I am presenting, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I am not going to allow your story; your story cannot be told here because I deem it controversial and I take it as a controversial situation.

HON. MOHAMED KANNEH: If you say so Mr Speaker, I bow.

THE SPEAKER: Very well, thank you. I will take Honourable Tengbeh. I hope you are not going to talk about the Hospital? Go ahead, Honourable Tengbeh.

HON. FALLAH K. TENGBEH: Mr Speaker, I rise on **S.O** 23 to inform this House that two days ago, I was informed by the Office of National Security [**ONS**] representative in my Constituency that an individual named Amirr- a kind of Paramount Chief on the other side of River Nongohwa called him to say the Guineans want to cross the River into Yenga to supply tents. And Mr Speaker, the way things are going, it seems that the provocation has been heightened to a point that *[interruption]*

THE SPEAKER: I would also rule that it is a security matter, and that you take that conversation to the **ONS** and let them discuss it there because it is strategic and it is a very thorny issue. I am sorry, but that is the best way to deal with that issue.

HON. MAHMOUD KAMARA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on **S.O** 23 to bring to the attention of the House a shock I encountered two days ago. I was coming from Jui junction to Lumley, somewhere around Morthem-Grafton, I stopped at a Fuel Station to fill my tank. After I pumped in 20 liters of Fuel, I was asked to pay **NLe520**, which is below the government announced price. At first, I thought they made a mistake, so I had to ask the cost per liter, and to my greatest surprise, they are selling at **NLe26** per Liter, and that brought so many questions to my mind. To be specific, I am referring to Zala Fuel Station. I had to say to myself that if Zala Fuel Station is selling at **NLe26** per Liter and still making profit, that means all other Fuel Stations in this country can sell below what they are currently selling; **NLe27.3**.

So, that brings to mind that we can evoke **S.O** 19 and bring the Trade Minister here to tell this House the current market price for fuel. Probably there is a possibility of us buying way below what we are currently buying. Mr Speaker, I call on your good Office to evoke **S.O** 19 to bring the Minister before us.

THE SPEAKER: The Chairman for the Trade Committee is in the Chamber, I am sure she may have heard your comment and she would talk to the authorities. But there are few controversial issues around it; the OMCs are claiming that Zala has a License as an OMC and not as a retailer. So, according to them, they have their own explanation but however, if you have travelled to first world countries, you would realize that the price

for fuel product is not the same; it varies from station to station. In the United State of America [USA] in particular, and even in the United Kingdom [UK], you would see at a particular pump station that they are selling at **\$1.40**, and if you go to the next station just 10 meters off, they may be selling at **\$1.20**. So the point is that you should not go above the fixed price but you can come as low as you think the quality of your fuel is. On that note, I see Honourable Hawa Siafa, you are going to be the last. Honourable Billoh Shaw, I am sorry.

HON. HAWA R. SIAFA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is an issue that I want to bring to the attention of this House. Recently I travelled through Gendema to Liberia and I noticed that for the past one month the cost of Laissez Passé which used to be **NLe100** is now **NLe550**, and our business women are really suffering from that. Mr Speaker we need to do something for these young business people to develop. When I arrived there, the moment they saw my Vehicle Registration, they called and pleaded with me to appeal for them in this House so that the Government can reduce that amount because even the ECOWAS License which you can use to travel all over the Region is about **NLe240**. Now they are using Laissez Passé to go to Guinea and Liberia that costs **NLe550**. Mr Speaker, I hope this House will help the business people, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I would like to say two things before we rise. The first is that I am pretty sure it is part of the price schedule in the 2025, Acts. Secondly, I think the reason for it being raised to that point is to encourage ECOWAS Country Members to take the ECOWAS Identity Cards which is way cheaper. So, if you have an ECOWAS Identity Card you can access ECOWAS Countries without obtaining Laissez Passé. So I am sure ECOWAS Commission is trying to discourage the use of Laissez Passé, and the only way to do that is to increase the price. So I would say let us advice our business people to take the ECOWAS Identity Card so that they can enjoy the benefits of free movement across ECOWAS Countries.

HON. ABDUL KARIM KAMARA: Mr Speaker, in as much as what you are saying makes the biggest sense, because the ECOWAS Identity Card costs something like One **NLe150**, which is far cheaper than the Laissez Passé. But this boils down to the same thing we asked here the other day. Mr Speaker, we are talking about people coming from Gendema all the way to either Bo or Freetown. Mr Speaker, the inconvenience of having a National Identity Card and this ECOWAS Identification Card is too much on our people. We have said over and again here that; let us decentralize this one at least to the Chiefdom levels. If not, these are the embarrassments our people are going to naturally face. That is why we always say let us bring in the Ministers to this House so they will explain to us and they will understand. What we normally speak is the minds of the people. I went to Kenema the last time and discovered that some people leaving their villages to come for their National ID Cards would stay for something like two weeks after paying their monies before they could get their Identification Cards. So, to get your National ID Card in some parts of this country involves your transportation to the District Headquarters, your lodging plus a two weeks feeding if you are going to feed yourself. This is just embarrassing for our people.

Mr Speaker, interestingly, the same machines we use to print Voter Identification Cards are the same machines they are using to print National ID Cards. Which means, we have enough of those machines in our stores; all we need to do is just for us to have permanent resident Registration Centers in our Chiefdoms. It is only when we do we can now mount Checkpoints because we know our people have the facilities. I am sure even if there is a Center in Tonko-Limba the people will still ask you to send in money to pay for their Identification Cards, but this time the cost on you will be reduced. But if they have to beg you to send in transport for them to come to Kambia, which is **NLe100** one way, then they come to lodge, and unfortunately the only house in Kambia from Tonko-Limba is that of Honourable Kontor, and it is a small house. Imagine the embarrassment our people are going to suffer. So we need to call the Minister, and it should be part of our laws that we have permanent Registration Centers at Chiefdom levels or else, we will not solve their problems.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Whip, and on this note, I would want to state that your concerns are taken, and the Chairman or Members of the Committee on Internal Affairs should look into it as a serious issue and get back to us as a House on the outcome of their engagement, particularly with Decentralization of these Identification Cards Offices.

ADJOURNMENT

The House rose at 12:30pm and was adjourned to Thursday 27th March, 2025 at 10am prompt.