



**National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reginald Pyne Lane,
Banjul, The Gambia**

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION – FIRST MEETING

MONDAY 15th MARCH, 2021

SESSION – 2021



**National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul, The
Gambia**

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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VOLUME: I

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First Meeting of the First Session [2021] of the Fifth Assembly
of the Second Republic of The Gambia.

Proceedings of the Sitting of Monday 15th March, 2021

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- I. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of The Gambia and DCAF- Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance for the Establishment of DECAF Field Office in The Gambia.

[By: Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs].

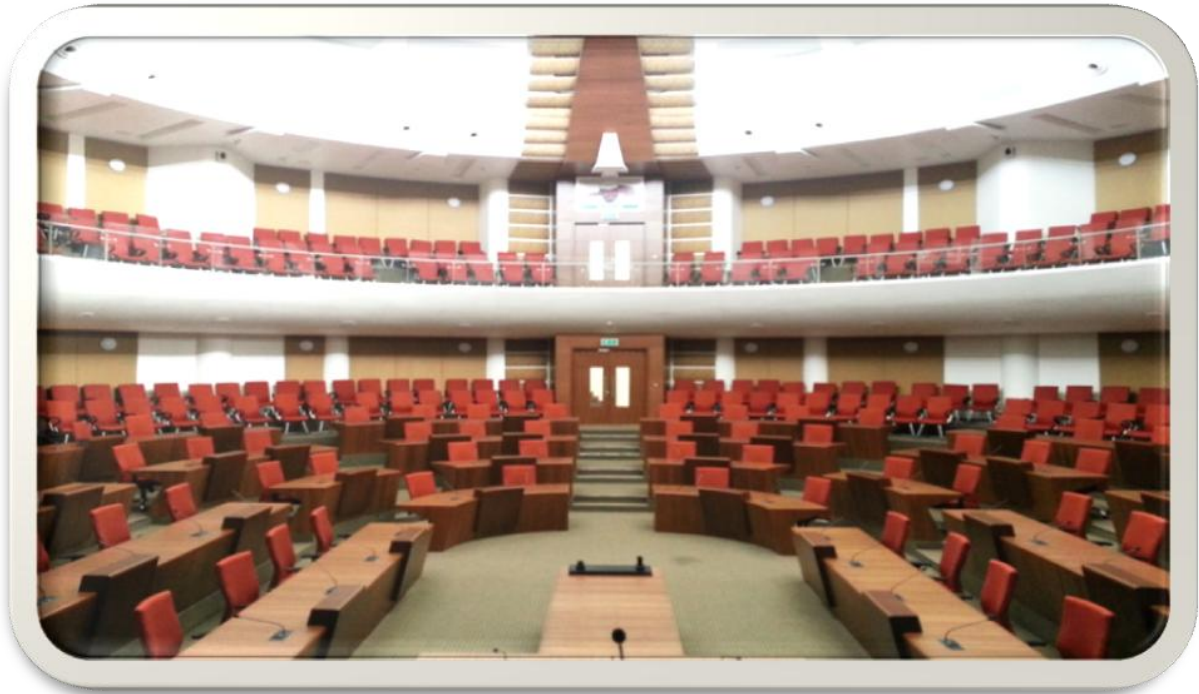
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**THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE**

**FIRST ORDINARY SESSION, 2021
THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

1. PRAYERS

[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, in the Chair]

*[The House met at 10:30 a.m. In the New Parliament Building, Reginald Pye Lane,
Banjul].*

[The Speaker Read the Prayers]

The House was called to Order!

2. Correction and approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday 15th December, 2020.

THE SPEAKER: Any correction on page 1 or 2? Can we confirm the attendance please so that we do not miss any name?

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I was captured under those absent, and I was present.

THE SPEAKER: Table Office please take note.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: I am captured here as being present, but I was absent on that day.

THE SPEAKER: Any more observations?

HON. ALHAJIE SANKUNG JAMMEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and good morning to everyone. I have seen my name under those who were absent, and I stand to be corrected, I think this was the time when there was no adjournment debate.

THE SPEAKER: It will be corrected, just contact Table Office. Any more corrections on the attendance? If not, then we proceed to page 4 if we are satisfied, then to page 5, and 6.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you. Under "Question Put and Agreed to", the second line says, Gambia Anti-Corruption 'Bills', it should be "bill" instead of bills because it is only one bill.

THE SPEAKER: Is it the first "Question Put and Agreed" to or the second one?

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: The first one.

THE SPEAKER: Is the first one, we are together. Thank you. Any more on page 6?

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Please let also check whether it is 2019 or 2020, the Anti-Corruption Bill

THE SPEAKER: Page 7, page 8 any correction? then page 9, page 10 any observation?

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, page 10 the third paragraph, I think the definite article should be indicated there so that it reads thus: "the paragraph clearly stated" that would be better and when you come to the second to the last paragraph*[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: What is the correction on the third paragraph? Are you referring to the one beginning with "In deciding whether...?"

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Second to the last line, where it says, 'paragraph clearly stated', I say you should put the definite article to read "the paragraph clearly stated".

THE SPEAKER: Are you saying we put the definite article "the"?

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, before the paragraph because it says, 'the paragraph clearly stated' and when you come to the second to last paragraph, in the second sentence, you will see that the said article was cancelled.

THE SPEAKER: I have seen that. Table Office check your records properly.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: And in the last paragraph, the first line says based on the aforementioned reason, and Clause 53 [d], again we say 'of' clause 53 instead of "and", we put 'of'.

THE SPEAKER: Clause 53 [d].

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes exactly. Instead of “and” clause 53 [d], we say “of” clause 53 [d].

THE SPEAKER: Any more on page 10, page11, page 12?

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker.

Second paragraph where *the question was put for those in favour to please say 'Aye' instead of "No"*.

THE SPEAKER: Any further observations Honourable Members.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday 15th December, 2020, be approved with Amendments]

3. STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS:

I. Oral Ministerial Statement on the Implementation and Monitoring of the Annual Budget. [By: Hon. Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Members, as earlier communicated under Standing Order 94 (1), the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs will today deliver his oral Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on the Implementation and Monitoring of the 2021 Annual Budget.

May I now invite the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs to make his statement, after which the statement will be distributed to all Honourable Members as required. However, I wish to draw the attention of Honourable Members to Standing Order 48 (6) that after the statement has been delivered, questions will be allowed on

the statement, but the questioning period should not exceed 1 hour and on that note, I now invite the Honourable Minister to make the statement. Honourable Minister, please go ahead with your statement if it is available. Thank you.

[Point of Observation]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, we should have this document 30 minutes before, unless there is explanation.

THE SPEAKER: Just by virtue of some administrative hitches that I had to address before I came in, I realized that it was already on the agenda. So, I do not want to explain to the House but to allow the Honourable Minister himself to explain to the Honourable Members the reason. Thank you.

HON. MAMBURAY NJIE [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Honourable National Assembly Members. Normally, we generate quarterly reports and we always make a comparative analysis at the end of the quarter. So, we have another week or two for the end of March, which will also coincide with the March audit report. When it comes to the debt portfolio, we are respectfully requesting for us to be allowed to report in the first week of April, so that we will provide both the actual for the end of March quarter, and also to do the comparative analysis and report on the country's debt portfolio. So, this is what we are respectfully requesting to enable us to do the reconciliation so that whatever we are reporting will not be half-baked. We want to make sure that, end of the quarterly report can be the actuals, that is what we are respectfully requesting.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I just wanted the Honourable Minister himself to explain but, in any event, the clauses of the Standing Orders are very clear. We still have time, and he has indicated before the end of March that, it will be delaying the session but please, let us comply with the rules and regulations so that all will be together. Are you satisfied? Thank you. Clerk can we proceed with the next agenda item.

4. MOTIONS:

Be it RESOLVED that this august Assembly do consider and ratify:

- I. The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of The Gambia and DCAF-Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance for the Establishment of DCAF Field Office in The Gambia. [By: Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs]**

HON. MOMODOU TANGARA [MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Honourable Speaker, I beg to move that this august Assembly do consider and ratify the Agreement between the Government of The Gambia and DCAF signed by the two parties. The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance herein referred to as [DECAF] is a leading centre of excellence in justice and security sector governance. It is dedicated to improving human and state security through the strengthening of democratic governance, rule of law and respect for human rights by:

- Supporting states and societies to improve security sector governance.
- Assisting international actors that support states to improve their security sector governance.
- Contributing to good security sector governance policy and specialist knowledge.

Honourable Speaker, by ratifying the agreement between the GoTG and DCAF, The Gambia commits to DCAF programme in The Gambia, which seeks to contribute meaningfully to security sector reform and greater accountability leading to improved peace and security for the Gambian population.

The implementation of the project dubbed “support to the Security Sector Reform Process in The Gambia” is organized along two main lines of interventions, interlinked through an inclusive vision of security sector governance/reform. It focuses on:

1. Supporting the government of The Gambia in its efforts to launch a deep and inclusive security sector reform process.
2. To strengthen the civilian oversight of Security Sector Reform through specific support to Parliament, Civil Society Organization [CSOs] and the media.

Following the election of President Barrow in December 2016, the newly elected government launched a series of inclusive reforms as part of the government's wider reform agenda to uphold the highest standards of democracy, good governance, and rule of law. This includes the development of National Development Plan [NDP] 2018-2021, the launch of transitional justice process, and the launch of a security sector reform (SSR) process.

DCAF's work in The Gambia:

Honourable Speaker, the taskforce in The Gambia is armed at:

- Supporting the global architecture of Security Sector Reform [SSR] process led by the Gambian state through enhancing synergies between international stakeholders and national services involved in SSR. The project will, accordingly, support the government in establishing a structure dedicated to fostering information-sharing and coordination among international stakeholders around their respective engagements and interventions.
- Support inclusive SSR process that fully considers the concerns and needs of all people of The Gambia, regardless of gender identity or sex, religion, ethnicity, or age. DCAF will support the government of The Gambia and notably, the office of the National Security Adviser, in designing and implementing activities aimed at informing the population on the SSR process, and providing a forum for dialogue, consultation and information-gathering from diverse stakeholders on the needs, gaps and priorities to be considered while designing and implementing the SSR process.

- Support the legal reform process aimed at developing laws and policies governing the security sector that are fully compliant with the rule of law and human rights principles.
- Support the government of The Gambia in making strategic decisions that are based on evidence, solid analysis, and best practices in SSR to restructure the security and defense apparatus and to adapt its workforce according to the new vision of the security sector.
- Promote and strengthen the democratic participation and oversight of the security sector by the Parliament (Specifically the Defense and Security Committee), civil society, the media, and citizens. The project will further aim to building bridges between civilian oversight actors and security institutions, thereby fostering the exchange of information while building confidence as an essential element to sustainable peace and security.

Honourable Speaker, the Government of the Republic of The Gambia in keeping with its international obligations whilst thriving on the platform of good governance, Democracy and respect for the rule of law is expected to ratify the Agreement between the Government of the Gambia and DCAF with the expectation that, it will contribute towards a participatory and effective security sector reform process.

Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Any seconder?

HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion Madam Speaker, and then briefly, I would like to give my interventions.

Honourable Speaker, you will recall that, everyone would agree with me, that security sector reform has been one of the campaign promises of the government of the day, so bringing it to Parliament is an attempt to fulfil that promise.

Security sector reform has been long overdue, and an attempt to enhance the performance of security sector is very important and in doing this, it must be done effectively, efficiently and should follow the due process. Security is everyone's business so whatever we are doing it in terms of enhancing their performance, I must say it is a move in the right direction.

There should be a very good relationship in terms of interaction between the population and security sector. People that are in the security sector must understand the nature of their job and this cannot be done if they are not well trained, well equipped, and informed. So, I think this is a right step in the right direction.

Honourable Speaker, I will urge the Honourable Minister that security sector reform has been a song in the mouth of every one of us. So, I think after having this agreement endorsed by the Parliament, you will speed up the exercise so that we have what we supposed to have in place, to make sure that it is done effectively and efficiently.

On that note Honourable Speaker, I thank you very much for giving me the floor.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any Honourable Member who wishes to take part in the debate may do so by raising his/her constituency tag and will be allowed.

HON. MOMODOU L.K SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the opportunity. Honourable Speaker, regarding the agreement between the Republic of The Gambia and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance [DCAF], I am happy to report to this august Assembly that, this process was on for quite a long time, but lot of efforts have been put in to lay this

agreement to be ratified by the Assembly. Today is the day that the Honourable Minister was able to bring this agreement to the Assembly.

To give you some of the developments within our committee, there were series of meetings, the Honourable Minister and the team were engaged by the Committee of the Defense and Security including the DCAF field officers to discuss the issues pertaining to this very important agreement. And after sometimes Madam Speaker, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and The Gambia DCAF staff, after a lengthy consultation, came together to agree on matters as a matter of principle in the areas concerned. This thing has been agreed upon and the agreement has now been signed by The Gambia Foreign Minister and the DCAF office in The Gambia.

It is long overdue and a very good agreement. Let me thank the Minister for seizing the opportunity to take this matter very seriously and the way the statement was prepared was a straightforward motion.

As a result, Honourable Speaker, I think it is straightforward and by going through the motion really on bullet point (4) where it says.

- Promote and strengthen the democratic principles and oversight of security sector by Parliament.

This is a very important portion in this statement since the Parliament has two roles, the law-making body and oversight function. In this regard, the Committee of Defense and Security has done all what it could to make sure that this agreement comes to the Parliament at this time.

Let me thank the Minister and DCAF Gambia office. I thank you very much and beg to take my seat.

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMABALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Firstly, before I begin my deliberation, I want to thank the office of the Clerk and your noble office for the improvement that we are realizing in Parliament, no more

manual signing but electronically programmed signing in. Obviously, I thank you for that.

Honourable Speaker, I want to refer the National Assembly to the responsibility given to us. This is not the first time we have this agreement laid in the Parliament. It has been laid at plenary and it was referred to us and that, if they could remember, it was laid in the form of MoU and then into agreement.

Now, I just want to tell my colleagues that my committee has done a very good job to make sure that we totally scrutinize it, so that we have a document that will not be a regret to The Gambia.

If you look at DCAF, it is just like any other agency existing in the country, but their case is peculiar, it requires more thorough scrutiny because they are going to deal with our security and that is a problem. We must make sure that, we engage with them, scrutinize them, and talk to them seriously to make sure that we have a document that will not be regrettable.

But what I want to put forward to the Assembly is that, with all these processes that we are doing, they are completely compliant to all the recommendations that the National Assembly and experts put to them, which means that, they do not have any hidden agenda and that they would not hide anything from the public or the Assembly.

They agreed on all the processes, the recommendations from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, DCAF office, they agreed totally in the best interest of the country and we want to tell you that DCAF is already in existence because they have started some activities. So, it is a question of what do we expect from them? What are they going to do? Firstly, I want to put it to the Assembly that our committee members have the knowledge to be able to scrutinize the security because of the capacity building programmes we have with DCAF. So, they are constantly in collaboration with our committee to empower us with the relevant skills to be able to do our job on the security reform.

Honourable Speaker, I want to urge my colleagues to give their blessings to the document because it is long overdue, and we are all yearning and praying for what had happened not to happen again. What had happened in the country for years ago, greater percentage of it was on the security apparatus which was made to abuse their rights against the people they were meant to secure. They used to intimidate people and the cause was that, there was no legal framework that dictates the responsibility and activities of the security by then. But when we came into power within hours, we came to realize that there is a serious gap in the legal framework of our security institutions. So, DCAF is working closely to provide service for the security institutions in order to review their legal documents that is the security Act, to make sure that they are up to standard and every security institution should do what is expected of them.

But more especially and more importantly for that matter is the civil oversight or authority of the security that was lacking throughout the tenure of the previous regime. But DCAF is trying to emphasize the importance of civilian oversight over the security and criminal oversight, and when you talk about that, it is the National Assembly. So National Assembly's role is very key, and we see that this document or agreement is trying to take care of that.

I also want to put it to my colleagues that most of your concerns that are raised here are taken seriously, discussed, and agreed upon to the best interest of the country. So, as a member of the committee, just to add my voice on behalf of my Chairperson to report to you that, we have done this work diligently. The reason for bringing the report is that, after everything, we said that, we want the Minister to come and relay it again to be the first document which will indicate that, we have done the job that we are assigned to do.

I want to urge my colleagues that this is a done deal, the activity of DCAF have been seen and then they are working closely with us and we have seen the importance of working with an institution like DCAF in the country. They work and empower us to do our job, and the security institutions are also complying with the work of DCAF.

Presently as it is now, the Act for the NIA is being reviewed through the effort of DCAF, the police, the army and all those acts to be reviewed and bring them to Parliament so that we can update them to the best standard of the society.

Honourable Speaker, DCAF is a name, it is an international agency, yes! But the head of the institution is a Gambian and all the employees from DCAF. We have conducted scrutiny over them as Gambians, and what that means is, we are hopeful that they will never sacrifice the country for any other benefit. So, they believe that Gambia first, they have that sense of nationalism in the process. On that note, Madam Speaker, I want to urge my colleagues to give their blessings to the document. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Being the Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on Defense and Security, I would confirm what the Chair has said that the relationship between the Ministry and the Standing Committee is deepening as we scrutinized the MoU that was initially presented for adoption.

It was felt that in the past, the government did not take its dutiful position in ensuring that it gives legitimacy to institutions that deserved legitimacy and in a manner that will be in line with their constitutional provisions. Section [79] of the Constitution give the President the mandate.

a) To conduct relations with states and international organizations.

And DCAF is considered to be an international organization, so the status of the organization had to be examined and it was examined thoroughly. The changes ultimately had to be captured in the agreement to be, because it was found that if we did not, then there would be some ambiguities in the substance of the agreement itself.

Honourable Speaker, Section [79] makes it a conditionality that we should not enter into any agreement that does not serve national interest or that is going to create ambiguities to the sovereignty of our land, and that is why it became the cornerstone for reviewing the agreement that was crafted. Honourable Speaker, we are confident

that the Parliament did its works in assisting the Ministry to be looking at such agreements and ultimately come up with something that will serve these two pillars, that is, whatever we sign must be in the national interest and does not derogate from the sovereignty of the land.

Honourable Speaker, the key issue why we have DCAF here is also covered in the agreement itself. One would see that there is the desire for retroactive effect for the agreement because DCAF has been here since 2018. We want its legal status to be recognized by The Gambia government so that it will have greater protection of its staff, office and those who come from other countries to serve it. It is that legal status that gave birth to its negotiation with the Ministry for an agreement that will cover that legal status, which is the real deal.

Apparently, that is the sole objective of DCAF which is to have an agreement that will secure its legal status in The Gambia, so that it will continue to operate as per the purpose. The purpose of DCAF as clearly defined is to support the security sector reform process so that there will be civilian control for the security apparatus but also encourage civil security relationship so that the armed forces will be democratized to serve the democratic end, and that they will be seen not only to be responsible for protecting security of our country but also human security as well.

And in that respect, it is necessary to transform the institution and the mindsets in this process which is not possible unless we come up with a security sector policy and eventually, the policy will guide the creation of the instruments and the institutions necessary to be able to build the new security apparatus that is deemed to be necessary under a new political dispensation.

Honourable Speaker, that is the objective of the institution to accompany the country in mobilizing the expertise from all over the world to engage those who are policy makers, legislatures as well as those who are engaging in operation at the level of the security to be able to learn from best practices and in that sense, to cushion our movement towards security reform. This will enable our troops to learn the necessary skills to

make them not only to protect the country with some degree of professionalism but also to partake in peacekeeping missions, which should be the fundamental function of an army under a stable society. In that regard, our men and women in uniform would be assisted to be able to have not only decent lives but also to safeguard our national interest and the lives and properties of our people.

Honourable Speaker, one thing that the Minister may focus his mind on is about what constitutes the definition of government. We said that the Constitution has already defined that we should take what the Constitution says when it comes to that definition because that is the foundation of all laws. So, when it says, it is defining government, it should take exactly what the Constitution says, that is the executive government of the Gambia. Thank you, very much Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any more interventions?

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. First, I want to seize this opportunity to thank the Standing Committee for Defense and Security for working closely with the Ministry to look at this agreement thoroughly which is very important. I know they have done a good job but still we must go further, the committee still has more responsibility regarding this particular issue.

Looking at Coalition 2016, the government has a moral responsibility which is based on a special reform agenda and notably among them is the security sector reform which is very key. If you talk about security generally, what comes to the minds of every Gambian is that, there is a serious misconception that needs to be clarified. If you talk about security, people think they are brutal institutions, people are not very well confident, so there is this disparity between the security and the civilian which is very key and that needs to be addressed, especially if you talk about the police, the army, and the paramilitary. People are never confident with them, but how do we bridge this disparity? If you look at the security, all of them are recruited among us, they are our brothers, sisters, and uncles, that co-existence must be there, and we should understand that we are two sides of the same coin. So, the committee still have a

responsibility to go further to come up with a clear policy that will make us understand that we can be at the same wavelength in terms of understanding.

The security reform is very key, and this is long overdue but thank God, it is tabled, you still have lot of work to do as far as I am concerned, I am very much happy for this agreement which we are expecting to come on board. We need complete reform in the country and on that note, I am giving my blessing to this agreement and I hope and strongly pray that it will address our problems. Thank you.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I want to give my blessing to this agreement, and I want to thank the Defense Committee for working very closely with the Ministry. I am also happy with the clarifications that were made before me.

Honourable Speaker, we are speaking about security sector governance, and we all know the state of security in our country, anybody who is following the security situation of this country will appreciate reform in that area.

The agreement should include accountability and from what I have heard, if everything goes well, accountability in our security sector will be the order of the day, which will of course create peace not only between Gambia and other countries but also between different communities. And I also believe that this reform will encompass transparency, which is the cornerstone of accountability, and as we know, without transparency there is no accountability.

Honourable Speaker, I believe this agreement will also move us away from just the security for the state, the citizen of the country must also be secured, and when I say that I mean citizens and their properties must be protected. Many a time, you heard people coming from outside rustling cattle from the border areas and taking them because there is no security. We have people as far as Makamasireh, how can we secure that area? And we talk about the need to protect our people and their properties.

Honourable Speaker, I heard you talk about design and taking into consideration many other things, I believe whatever design we have, must include what had already been said.

The collaboration should also include training of our security forces in terms of professionalism, experience, and investigation, I think investigation is something that is lacking, and we must include the process of investigation. The Parliament must not rest on its laurels, we must be fully involved in the oversight during the reform process, especially in budgeting, we must do proper budgeting for the security sector. We must also play our oversight role in the implementation of that budget to ensure that whatever we budget, must not be in secret. It must meet the expectation of the people so, on that note, I thank the committee and the Ministry for all the clarifications and information given, and I am fully in support of the DCAF project. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Do we have anymore interventions?

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor to add my voice. As you know that, I am a member of the Standing Committee for Defense and Security, obviously this document cannot be laid in this august Assembly without adding my voice.

As the previous speakers have said before, this committee with DCAF and the Foreign Ministry has tirelessly looked into the MoU which has now been transformed into an agreement. Initially, it was a MoU and as we could all remember, it was referred to the Standing Committee for Defense and Security and through our meetings, we were able to work with the Foreign Ministry to see that instead of the MoU, it has to come in a form of agreement which is now being laid before this august Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, I must thank the Chair of the Committee, the Vice Chair, and all colleague members for the good work that we have done together with the Foreign Ministry, that is why I must rise up to add my voice. This is what is expected from us as a representative of the nation. Considering what the Member for Kombo South has

stated on the security situation in this country, if we happen to have an institution or agency like DCAF to assist in the security sector reform, the public and the Committee will expect them to do their job well to see that the country is on safe hands. The security of the country must not be compromised. The national security should be first and foremost in whatever we do. Whatever we do in this world, if we do not have security, it is meaningless because you cannot succeed when you are not secured.

Honourable Speaker, I am urging all my Honourable colleagues not to waste time in adopting this agreement once and for all. On that note, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Anymore interventions? No. Thank you very much Honourable Members. May I now call upon the mover of the motion, the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs to respond to some of the issues that have been raised.

HON. MOMODOU TANGARA [MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members of this august Assembly, I want to sincerely seize this opportunity to commend all the National Assembly Members for sending us back to the drawing board.

Before we sign any agreement, it goes through a system of scrutiny, Foreign Affairs will not just come and sign it, we send it to the Ministry of Justice to look at it before we bring it to this august Assembly. I must commend you for doing your work by bringing very pertinent observations, especially, when it comes to security issues. I think we should not compromise on standard.

I also want to sincerely congratulate the Standing Committee on Defense and Security for scrutinizing the document in a very meticulous way. Be rest assured that, all your concerns will be taken on board and we also invite all stakeholders to ensure a participatory approach in dealing with the document. I think if we deal with all the agreements like this, we will capture our interest and our sovereignty will be

guaranteed. Once again, I want to congratulate all of you and thank you for a job well done. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Are we all satisfied? I do not think there were any contentious issues, no, okay then.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of The Gambia and DCAF-Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance for the Establishment of DECAF Field Office in The Gambia has been adopted with amendments]

II. The Establishment of The Gambia - Mauritania Parliamentary Friendship Group. [By: Hon. Majority Leader & Member for Kombo South]

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to move that this august Assembly do consider and adopt this motion for the establishment of a Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Honourable Speaker, the setting up of the parliamentary friendship group between the Republic of The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is very important and indeed long overdue. The Republic of The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania are bonded historically and religiously, and further cemented by the common interest of the two peoples through cultural and commercial activities. This is further evidenced by the considerable presence of citizens in both states.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, one could immediately note from the outset, the crucial role the two parliaments could play in strengthening and diversifying these

relations for the mutual benefits of both countries and by extension, overcome the challenges that are faced by the sub-region.

Honourable Speaker, such increased blurring of boundaries between national and foreign affairs means that parliamentarians must consider issues put before them with a global mindset. Not surprising, the dictums of “Parliamentary Diplomacy” are fast taking roots with growing interest among Parliaments to oversee and scrutinize the Foreign policies of the Executive.

Consequently, this motion precisely seeks to place this Parliament in the same trajectory, of global demand. The establishment of the parliamentary friendship group will enhance collaboration and strengthen the already existing cordial bilateral relations between The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Honourable Speaker, considering the profound historic, diplomatic, and cultural relationship between the two countries; recognizing the abilities and crucial roles that the two legislatures could play in maintaining this profound historic, diplomatic and cultural relationship between the two countries; appreciating the irrefutable fact that both parliaments could contribute to the development of the already existing fruitful bilateral relationships; it is important to note that establishing such diplomatic ties between the two countries will further strengthen the political and mutual trust as well as assist in the areas of trade and people-to-people relations.

MANDATE

- To foster inter-parliamentary diplomacy and to further contribute to the development of the bilateral and cooperative relations.
- To foster relations that promote mutual exchange in the areas of development of the two legislatures.
- To serve as the linkage between the two legislatures on all matters of cooperation and support.

MEMBERSHIP

- The Gambia-Mauritania Friendship Group shall consist of a Chairperson and eight other members.
- Membership to the group shall be nominated by the Committee of Selection in accordance with the Standing Orders.
- Membership shall reflect the different political opinions as well as gender.

Honourable Speaker, with these few remarks, I lay that this august Assembly do consider and adopt this motion for the establishment of the Gambia- Mauritanian Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assemblies of the Republic of The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Honourable Speaker I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Any Seconder Honourable Members?

HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion and with your permission, I would like to thank the mover for laying this important motion before us. The Gambia, like any other country cannot be an island, we must learn to live together, and we must learn to establish mutual relations that will be in the best interest of both parties. And as a result, The Gambia and Mauritania had a very long-standing relations and must be in a position to nurture and strengthen that relation. So, this motion could not have come at a better time. I want to thank the mover for bringing this motion before the National Assembly and I fully support the motion, thank you.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any Honourable Member who wishes to take part in the debate may do so by raising his or her constituency tag.

HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Let me commend the mover for bringing this important motion between the Gambia and Mauritania. There is nothing like friendship when you talk about friendship,

obviously nobody will say no to this, we are made to be together, come together, work together especially West African countries and beyond, much more Mauritania and The Gambia. But my issue here is that, let it be reciprocal and mutual relationship, whatever benefit is for The Gambia, let it also be the same thing for Mauritania.

I think what we need here is mutual understanding and mutual respect because looking at the sovereignty of each country, let us not only talk about friendship per se, but let us think of the mutual interest that will be between two of us, as the saying goes, "What is good for the goose is also good for the gander." It is true that we need friendship, but as far as I am concerned, the interest of The Gambia should always be in anything that we agree. Let us not say friendship and then that is all, it is also important to consider what will happen to us if we engage in such friendship, what is the benefit for the Gambians and that of the Mauritians? So, I will not say no, I will support it, but let us also think about all those things that we are talking about. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, it is clearly stipulated in the motion that it is an era of parliamentary diplomacy and that is the cornerstone of the attempt to create this parliamentary friendship. I wish to emphasize Honourable Speaker, that this is the era of parliamentary diplomacy and this is clearly indicated in the motion to create this parliamentary group.

Honourable Speaker, what we are bound to respect is the Constitution and the Standing Orders in entering into any agreement. The principle of building up relationship with states falls under the jurisdiction of the presidency, at the state level and parliaments also have a role, in legislating and cardinal oversight. So, in that respect, best practice could be developed into parliamentary relationship not only that diplomacy requires but also people-to-people relationship because parliaments are put in office by the very people themselves to speak on their behalf. The relationship between parliamentarians will therefore reflect people-to-people relationship that will be peculiar if pursued for its

objectives. It has been made clear that the people of Mauritian and the Gambia have long standing relationship.

Paragraph [2], Honourable Speaker, did indicate how we share historical relationship that is not to mention religion, and this is where the concern is, we must be careful to know who we are speaking for, when we are to enter a relationship. Here we are not talking about Gambia, is it the type of state that is based on certain concepts of religion? No! This is a state which recognizes all religions and protects all religions. So, when we enter into some agreement, the drafter must tell us what is meant when this is mentioned? Is it a specific religion that is being referred to or religion as whole? That is important to note.

Honourable Speaker, it is also significant to look at the establishment of the committees. We will see that when it comes to membership, of course, the paragraphs are not actually numbered, but it should be the last paragraph. The pages are also numbered but it is the paragraph that deals with the membership. It talks about in the last sentence that "membership shall reflect the different political opinions as well as gender".

Well, what is in Standing Order 95[3] is that, "every committee shall be constituted as far as possible to ensure that the balance of parties in the Assembly is reflected". It is better to use "language" rather than political opinions because you can be a party and "still have a different" political opinion. The same political opinion with somebody else, essentially, is really the balance of the parties rather than opinions. In that respect Honourable Speaker, there is no doubt that Africa needs to integrate, and parliament must be found to be at the house of building that integration and the more we build relationship with our colleagues elsewhere, the more we will contribute to that integration. I am, therefore, in full support of the motion.

HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I rise to contribute to the motion for the establishment of Gambia-

Mauritian parliamentary friendship group between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Honourable Speaker, this motion is really timely in the sense that, for the fact that we cannot leave independently of each other, there is need for us to form partnerships and there is need for us to forge relationships. Relationships, and mutual relationship that could be described as symbiotic, relationship that could be described as reciprocal, give and take.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the motion proper, it is clearly stated with your permission, that such increase in the blurring of boundaries between nations, Foreign Affairs Minister and parliamentarians must consider issues put before them with a global mindset. I am not surprised that the details of parliamentary diplomacy are fast to taking rates, with a growing interest among parliaments to oversee and scrutinise the Executive.

Honourable Speaker, this is quite refreshing for the fact that, no nation is an island, we must be each other's keeper, that is a must and with this parliamentary friendship, Honourable Speaker, it will help us to integrate with our brothers and sisters that are beyond our source. It will also help us to have cooperation between our sister Parliaments.

Honourable Speaker, when we have these relationships in place, I think we must all work very seriously to make sure they are fit for propose because having a Parliamentary Friendship group is one thing, but to have it activated is another thing, and I hope this parliamentary friendship will be activated so that it will serve its purpose.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the mandate, with your indulgence, it reads:

1. To foster interparliamentary diplomacy and to further contribute to the development of the bilateral and cooperative relationships.

2. To foster relations that promote mutual exchange in the area of development of the two legislatures,
3. To serve as the linkage between the two legislatures and all matters of cooperation and support.

Honourable Speaker, the mandate is speaking the language of the ECOWAS protocol, that is the sub-regional block, that people are free to move from one country to another. And that it is no longer an ECOWAS of nations but is an ECOWAS of people-to-people as a means of integration. I hope this motion will serve the purpose of promoting the idea of regional integration. Honourable Speaker, on that note I beg to take my seat. Thank you.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I would also like to join my colleagues to add my support to the interparliamentary friendship group between the Republic of The Gambia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Honourable Speaker, going to the document as alluded to by the Honourable Minister, that we share the same historical and religious aspect. Large numbers of Gambians are in Mauritania seeking for Islamic knowledge and equally, there are also large number of Mauritians who are looking for better opportunity in The Gambia. But going to the other part where it is said that, with the parliamentary relationship, we are smoothening people-to-people relationship. I think we need to buttress more on that because our young migrants who passed through Mauritania experienced serious challenges. It is hoped that, the interparliamentary relationship group will help to address some of those issues, so that our young migrants who will travel through Mauritania will not face some of these challenges, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, any more contributions, or interventions? No? May I now call upon the Majority Leader, the mover of the motion to conclude the debate. I think just few issues are raised by members if my memory could serve me right. The member

for Serrekunda and Tallinding also raised the issue of the migrants passing through Mauritania.

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Let me take this opportunity to thank all Honourable colleagues who have also debated, talked, and supported the motion that have been laid before us. I think one key area that has been highlighted is the timeliness of this motion looking at the status of The Gambia, where we situate ourselves as members of the ECOWAS Community, and I think it is important that having this legislation to approve the relationship between the two parliamentary groups, we create the opportunity for both countries to learn more about the cultural wellbeing of the people.

The Nominated Member did talk about the importance of working together as people within the sub-region which will build more mutual understanding and economic values to the citizens of our communities. She also highlighted that, one needs to be very careful in ensuring that the interest of The Gambia is always at the back of our minds.

The Honourable Member for Serrekunda did talk about parliamentary democracy which is very important and pertinent in the work that we are going to do, and the outcome of this friendship group will also give parliamentarians the chance to speak to their colleagues in all the regions. He also looked at the constitutionality of the relationship and its corresponding provisions in the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, which we also have to bear in mind to ensure that, we adhere to the languages that are stated in the Standing Orders. The section on mandate will be looked at and it will be couched to speak the language of the Standing Orders and the Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia. I think those are very important when we have to do things. We have to make sure that what we are saying is in line with the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

The Honourable Member for Jarra East also talked about the importance of this motion, which has to be a two-way thing, it should not just have to be there and when they are

done, we need to ensure that it is activated, so that the principles, mandates and objectives of the relationship are also enhanced to ensure that, we work according to what is stated on this thing. He went further to talk about the cooperation between the two countries and looking at the situation of The Gambia and the ECOWAS Protocol for the free movement of people as well as their goods within the sub-region, is indeed very key.

Honourable Member for Tallinding spoke about the ECOWAS protocol and its importance. The issue is, how do we strengthen it to ensure that our young people who are crossing the Sahara Desert to other destinations are protected under this protocol? So, we need to see to it that, these protocols are enhanced and implemented to the letter. These treaties that are signed give us the opportunity to be able to work as a people of community in the sub-region. I think those are very key things.

Honourable Speaker, I want to thank all the Honourable Members for their contributions and the selection committee will look at how best to couch some of the sections to ensure that they are speaking the language of the Constitution and our Standing Orders. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Majority Leader, and the Honourable Members for your contributions.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[This august Assembly do consider and approved the Motion for the establishment of The Gambia-Mauritania Parliamentary Friendship Group with Amendments]

III. Establishment of The Gambia-Serbia Parliamentary Friendship Group. [By: Hon. Majority Leader & Member for Kombo South]

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I rise to move that this august

Assembly do consider and adopt the motion for the establishment of a parliamentary friendship group between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and Serbia.

Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Aboard, Dr Momodou Tanagra on Tuesday 9th February 2021 received a letter of credence from the Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to The Gambia. This is the first time ever that a Serbian Ambassador is accredited to the Republic of the Gambia. The Republic of The Gambia has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Serbia to foster Parliamentary Diplomacy, Social and Economic Development between the two Countries. Notwithstanding, both countries have been supporting each other's welfare. As third world countries, the Republic of Serbia in particular, recognises the tremendous support the government of The Gambia has offered them especially on the candidature to the position of Executive Council at UNESCO.

Honourable Speaker, this motion seeks to establish and strengthen the already bilateral relations that exists between the two sister countries. Honourable Speaker, noticing that the establishment of such diplomatic ties between the two Countries will further strengthen the political and mutual economic and trade cooperation as well as people to people relations and the possibility of exchange programs.

Recognising the great importance Serbia attaches to the relationship with The Gambia and it is about committing itself to providing the necessary support to The Gambia development agenda, and by extension to increase the welfare of the people and promote sustainable development; *recognising* that the relationship between the two legislatures constitutes an integral part of the bilateral ties between the two countries; also, *realising* that the National Assembly of Serbia has already established a Parliamentary Friendship Group between Serbia and The Gambia; *appreciating* that the National Assembly of Serbia is willing to work with the National Assembly of The

Gambia to contribute to the development of The Gambia and further cement the already existing fruitful bilateral relations.

MANDATE

- To foster inter Parliamentary Diplomacy, and to further contribute to the development of the bilateral and cooperative relations.
- To foster relations that promote mutual exchange in the areas of Development of the two legislatures.
- To serve as a linkage between the two legislatures on all cooperation and support.

MEMBERSHIP

- The Gambia-Serbia Friendship Group shall consist of a Chairperson and eight other members.
- Membership to the group shall be nominated by the Committee of Selection in accordance with the Standing Orders,
- Membership shall reflect the different political opinions as well as gender.

Honourable Speaker, with these few remarks, I move that this august Assembly do consider and adopt the motion for the establishment of The Gambia-Serbia Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assembly of The Gambia and Serbia. I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Ma. I rise to second the motion for the establishment of a parliamentary friendship between The Gambia and Serbia. I think Serbia and The Gambia, looking at the two countries, I think they are the same given that they are small countries. But if you look at it closely, that is something that I just want to dispute because I do not regard any country as small or

big country. I think being big or small, it is the development that we need and that is what matters to me. When we talk about relationship, we are not saying anything but mutual relationship with other countries, that is what matters. So, if we are talking about the relationship between The Gambia and Serbia, I do not think there is any issue. Just as I mentioned earlier, let us look at the benefits of the country in the relationship. I am not saying that we should not establish any relationship with any other country, but as far as I am concerned, The Gambia matters and what we need is mutually inclusive and reciprocal relationship. I think we should nurture the cordial relationship amongst us to make sure that, we the National Assembly Members here, know what we want for The Gambia, likewise the Serbian Parliament. It is up to us to look at what we want, so that we can tell them. With these few remarks, I want to thank the mover and express my full support to the motion.

[Question proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any Honourable member who wishes to take part in the debate may do so now. I already recognised the Honourable Member for Jarra East, but we may still take some.

HON. SAINEY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I rise to contribute my quota to the motion for the establishment of Gambia -Serbia Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assemblies of the Republic of The Gambia and Serbia.

Honourable Speaker, I will be very brief, in as much as what we are doing today is very important in the sense that, it is good and will help to enhance our polity as a country. Honourable Speaker, Serbia is in the Eastern part of Europe and its capital is Belgrade. If you look at the distance between Serbia and The Gambia, and you think of The Gambia establishing a relationship with quite a distant country, it shows that our doors are open. It also shows that we have a liberal mindset and are ready to entertain and accommodate our friends that are further afield. It is very healthy for our country and I

hope all the good things that are embedded in this motion will be implemented. I want to thank the mover for a job well done, thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, the objective is to expand the relationship of this Parliament with other parliaments all over the world. We are just gathering information about developments that have taken place between The Gambia and Serbia as indicated in the motion itself. This mandates us to develop parliamentary democracy, so that country will not be judged by the Executive or seen to be owned by the Executive. The state will be broadened and would not only be seen to be represented by the Executive but also to constitute its parliamentary arm, and the more we strengthen such diplomacy, the more we will be able to scrutinise international agreements and international relations.

Honourable Speaker, Serbia is not an ordinary country, Serbia has a history, it was not Serbia before it was Yugoslavia. And we know the war that took place between Russia, Bosnia as a governor and Serbia. These were all integrated and fought together to liberate themselves from international domination. They both became the centre of the Non-Alliant Movement [N.A.M] when the world was turned into a Cold War between the Soviet Union [USSR] and the United States affecting the liberation struggle in all parts of the world. They decided to become independent of those two forces and formed a united front in order to promote the liberation of many countries, that eventually led to Yugoslavia being turned apart by the ravage of war, where you still have war criminals being sought after because of the atrocities that were committed against human beings.

So, if Serbia is now here, knowing where it came from, this is a country that we can build a relationship with because it will learn from us and we will learn from them and together, we can learn from history that we need to converge as economies that have always been under subjugation, and to see how we can empower each other to show our collective liberation. In essence, what this Parliament is seeking to do is timely, as it is expanding relationship where we will be respected and we will also respect them, so that collectively, we can create the architecture of a new international, political, and

economic order where we matter rather than be seen as strictly dependent. Honourable Speaker, just as I have said, before the membership, we should also couch what is in the Standing Orders and I believe that the document will be fit for purpose. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, any more interventions Honourable Members? When I saw the motion, what came to mind was the last IPU Assembly in Serbia and Honourable Members nearly had issues with their visas and the Serbia Embassy in Nigeria, Abuja, communicated to our Embassy there and they got in touch with us and I think those Honourable Members who went to Serbia via Abuja can vouch to the fact that they were very helpful in facilitating their travel. So, if we have this friendship group, it will further facilitate anything that the parliamentarians may need.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. you are quite right Honourable Speaker. We are the Committee that went to Serbia. The Standing Committee attended IPU conference which took place in Serbia and we were also opportuned with our Chair, the Deputy Speaker, to have a tete-a-tete with the government upon their invitation to meet the Gambian community. In that meeting, the members raised the issue of building parliamentary friendship between the two Assemblies and they also showed interest to have a relationship with The Gambia. It is really timely as said by the Honourable Member for Serrekunda because they also want to go out, they want to have International Relationship with countries, particularly a country like The Gambia which is so peaceful that having relationship with us will yield something in the near future. Thank you.

HON. MOMODOU L.K. SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER & NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for the opportunity. It is true that IPU meeting was held in Serbia sometime last year, and the IPU delegation headed by myself were in Serbia, it was a very interesting and important international meeting. We made some visits, we were invited by the Speaker of the Serbian Parliament, myself and the delegation had a very interesting interactions with the members and this idea of forming an international parliamentary body was discussed. The Speaker and the

team were very happy to come up with suggestions and ideas with a country like The Gambia far away from their own country. This is where the whole thing started and I am happy that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was contacted about the issue and today, the motion is before us as Parliament to approve a parliamentary friendship association. I think if this motion is ratified by this august Assembly, will certainly yield dividend for our Parliament and the country at large. Serbia is very far away, but with the establishment of this parliamentary relationship will bring Gambia and Serbia together and that needs an urgent support from the Honourable Members, I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, anymore interventions? No? Ok, then we can proceed. May I now call upon the mover to respond to the various issues raised and to conclude the debate. Honourable Majority Leader, the floor is yours.

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Again, I am very much appreciative of the comments and the encouragement that had come from members who have participated in the debate and gave their support to the adoption of the motion.

Starting with the member who seconded the motion, Honourable Nominated Ndey Yassin Secka who has stressed the need to adopt the policy of "Gambia first" in whatever we want to do, and also to ensure that, whatever we do is in the best interest of the Gambian people. She also went further to talk about the need to ensure that, we should not see ourselves as small country in the world but what is more important is our role, what we can do and the mutual relationship that we can have. As members of this National Assembly, we need to nurture the relationship between the two parliaments when it is finally set up.

The Honourable Member for Jarra East did talk about the importance of the relationship that will enhance our policies in the country and abroad. He further explained how extraordinary the capital city of great Serbia is. The capital of Serbia is one of the most sophisticated and well-constructed cities in the world. If you just click and look at the

capital city, look at the architectural work that has taken place in that country, you will see that the country has come a long way and the people are very much committed and creative in the work that they do. So, this relationship will also help Gambians to learn about the importance of exchange visit, you learn about yourself and about other people's culture which will enable you to make informed decisions in your undertakings and that will put you in a right footing to ensure that whatever is to be done, is done in the best interest of the country.

The Honourable Member for Serrekunda also went on to elaborate on the need for expansion of the relationship between the two countries. He gave a brief history of what the people of Serbia achieved, looking at the struggle that they did to liberate themselves from internal aggression and that led to the establishment of the country. It is very important that as National Assembly Members to look and consider some of these historic aspects that took place in Serbia which brought them to where they are today. It will also help us as a country to take stock of all the things that happened in the past, learn from that to ensure that best practices are taken to help us in our undertakings as a country. He went further again to remind the selection committee to look at the wordings and couch them to be in line with the language of the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

Honourable Nominated Member, Majanko Samusa, was also a member of the delegation that went to the International Parliamentary Union meeting in Serbia. He highlighted the importance of the visit and some of the key things that they had learned from the visit. More importantly, the visit did help promote and strengthen the cultural ties between the two countries. The Honourable Deputy Speaker, who headed the delegation to the International Parliamentary meeting in Serbia shared glad tidings and goodwill gestures with the Speaker of the Serbian Parliament as colleague parliamentarians, and both of them suggested the need for this friendship group to be established between the Republic of The Gambia and the Republic of Serbia. Thanks to the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that this thing has come into fruition. It is a pleasure that we are now here ratifying the motion to have a friendship between

the Republic of The Gambia and the Republic of Serbia. On that note Honourable Speaker, I want to take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members for your contributions.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Establishment of The Gambia-Serbia Parliamentary Friendship Group was considered and adopted with amendments]

THE SPEAKER: We can now proceed, just make sure that the amendments are reflected.

IV. The Establishment of Gambia-Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Parliamentary Friendship Group [By: Hon. Kebba K. Barrow Majority Leader & Member for Kombo South]

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to move that this august Assembly do consider and adopt the motion for the establishment of a Parliamentary Group between the National Assemblies of the Republic of The Gambia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Honourable Speaker, the friendship between The Gambia and the revolutionary and social government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela led by the late Hugo Chávez was established during the African Union Summit held in The Gambia in 2006. The friendship was formed within the framework of the seventh African Union Summit held in The Gambia in 2006. Over the years, both countries have witnessed fruitful bilateral ties in the areas of Education, Health, Agriculture, Tourism, Culture, and others. This was further manifested during the celebrations marking Venezuela's 200 years of independence held in The Gambia in 2010.

Honourable Speaker, this motion seeks to strengthen the already bilateral relations that exist between the two sister countries, noting that the establishment of such diplomatic

ties between the two countries will further strengthen the political and mutual trust as well as help in the areas of trade and people-to-people relation.

Recognizing the great importance Venezuela attaches to its relations with The Gambia by providing the Venezuela's international scholarship programme to needy Gambian students to pursue various degree programmes and disciplines such as Civil Engineering, Science and Technology, Computer Science; *considering* that the relationship between the two legislatures is an important part of the bilateral ties between the two countries; *appreciating* that the National Assembly of Venezuela is willing to work with the National Assembly of The Gambia to contribute to the development of the already fruitful bilateral relation.

MANDATE

- To foster inter parliamentary diplomacy, and to further contribute to the development of the bilateral and cooperative relations.
- To foster relations that promote mutual exchange in areas of development of the two legislatures.
- To serve as the linkage between the two legislatures on all cooperation and support.

MEMBERSHIP

- The Gambia-Venezuela Friendship Group shall consist of a Chairperson and eight other members.
- Members to the group shall be nominated by the Committee of Selection in accordance with the Standing Orders.
- Membership shall reflect the different political opinions as well as gender.

Honourable Speaker, with these few remarks, I move that this august Assembly do consider and adopt the motion for the establishment of Gambia-Venezuela

Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assembly of The Gambia and Venezuela. I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Honourable Member for Foni Bintang.

HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, I rise to second the motion and I would like to talk briefly about the relationship.

Honourable Speaker, as the previous speakers said, to have relationship with any parliament is very important because we have known the cordial relationship between the government of the Republic of The Gambia and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. As the mover rightly said, they are helping us in Education, Health, Agriculture and Tourism and so many things. So, to have a relationship between the two parliaments, I think it is very important, as it will further cement the cordial relationship that has been existing between the two countries.

I think I will give my blessing to this relationship, but may I further emphasise that the selection committee should make sure that the selection is done according to what is stated in the selection procedures, that is according to political and gender lines, because what happened here during the last selection to other international friendship committees, we do not want such a thing to happen again. I am strictly advising the selection team to go by the criteria. Thank you very much.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members who wish to take part in the debate may do so by raising their constituency tags.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to lend my support to the motion for the establishment of parliamentary friendship group between Venezuela and The Gambia.

Honourable Speaker, friendship between the Parliaments of Venezuela and The Gambia can go a long way in building our capacity, not only in our role as parliamentarians but also will enable us learn resilience against abnormal circumstances.

Honourable Speaker, Venezuela is known for its capacity to resist attempts to trample its sovereignty and independence. They have 200 years of experience as an independent state and a developing country. So, I believe we can learn a lot from this country. The friendship will also help to build on the south-south cooperation which cements partnership in our development endeavours. It has already been said that the areas we are involved in terms of development are Education, Health, Agriculture, Tourism, as well as culture. There is a lot we can learn from this country and moreover, it can help us to nurture the people-to-people relationship as well, which is also very important in relationship. This will help us to contribute our quota in the areas of peace building in the world. I, therefore, want to register my support for this motion. Thank you very much Honourable Speaker.

HON. MUHAMMED NDOW [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I would also like to give my support to the establishment of relationship that we want to make between the government of The Gambia and the Republic of Venezuela. We all know that Venezuela, during the last regime has been very helpful because within a short period of time, they did a lot for the Republic of The Gambia in different sectors of the government, among them, Education. They were able to donate or fund the construction of the University of The Gambia at a tune of 12 Million Dollars which was very helpful.

Venezuela also helped The Gambia in Agriculture, if we can also recall, they have donated so many brand-new tractors to the Agriculture Sector in The Gambia which was a very good gesture that had been able to help the country to improve in Agriculture. They have also helped in Education given that, the Republic of Venezuela has been able to sponsor more than 200 Gambians to have degrees in different fields, among which 60 of them are now qualified medical doctors which is a very good thing

for The Gambia. We all know that we are still in need of medical doctors and Venezuela was able to help in this area to a large extent.

The government of Venezuela also financed the survey for children with heart problems or heart complications, which more often than not required the evacuation of such patients abroad for treatment which is very expensive, and Venezuela did help in that area too.

Coming to energy, they have donated 20 million dollars for the expansion and upgrading of electricity in the Greater Banjul area. So, it is a country that has been helping The Gambia a lot, and building a relationship between the two parliaments, I believe that, this Parliament will benefit more than they will benefit from us. Relationship is all about benefits, so we have to look at our interest and to see that we can have a lot from this parliament in terms of capacity. This parliament can go to Venezuela to benefit from the intensive Spanish program so that some of the members will be fluent in other official languages. I will, therefore, give my support to this proposed friendship. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. The objective is to pursue a relationship that will not derogate from our sovereignty and that, we establish relationship to show solidarity that will enable us to mutually benefit each other and collectively build the architecture of a new international order of justice and mutual benefit.

Honourable Speaker, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has established relationship with The Gambia under the foundation that had benefited the country. I am sure if you look at our appropriation, this is where you will see in some instances, the payment that is necessary for loans taken from Venezuela as well as grants that have been given by the state. So, the relationship has benefited Gambia but that is not the objective. The objective is really to build Gambia in such a way that, we can mutually benefit each other, the country has taken the track of a new democratic dispensation, and in terms of elections, we can see the crises that had engulfed the nation, as it attempts to build

up a democratic foundation. These are all lessons that we can teach each other to know how we build countries to be states, countries that are people-centred, countries that serve their people, empower their people so that they can be sovereign and can take charge.

There is a lot that we can share in helping them and helping ourselves, so that ultimately, we build countries that can continue to serve the interest of their people. There is absolutely no doubt that building a parliamentary network would serve that end. Democracy calls for governments to come and go and ensure the improvement of the lives of their people, and we believe that such countries develop relationships with colleagues that can enhance their development in terms of perception, development in terms of planning, development in terms of conception of a new world order. I am sure that the relationship will endure, so in that respect, I support that we build this parliamentary friendship so that we serve each other and serve all our peoples collectively. Thank you.

HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I also rise to support the motion for the establishment of Gambia-Venezuela Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assemblies of the Republic of The Gambia and the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela.

Honourable Speaker, it is not bad to make friendship, but we make friendship where we will have our interest, the interest of the country. When we look at this relationship, we can easily identify whether this is going to benefit The Gambia or not, because the areas that the previous speakers touched which include Agriculture, Education, Health, Tourism and Culture, these are very important social sectors. If you want to develop any country, if you have these things, your country will develop because Education is the key for success in anything and the only thing that I like about this agreement is the issue of scholarship for needy students, as we know, there are students who want to further their education but cannot go simply because of finance. I believe, when this

agreement is in place, it is going to help those people. This is why, I support this agreement. I thank you for the opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: Any more intervention from Honourable Members? Ok then, thank you very much. May I now call upon the mover of the Motion to respond to issues and conclude the debate?

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. The motion came in the right time and then the contribution of the members of the National Assembly is a clear indication that the move is timely and is going to help us strengthen our diplomacy and one-to-one relationship with other countries and parliaments in the world. This bill was also seconded by the Honourable Member for Bintang, who stressed the importance of this relationship and indicated scholarship as one key area which he is very much appreciative of, especially to the needy students of this country. This can go a long way in helping and building the capacity and foundation for students in the country. He tasked the selection committee to really adhere to the language of the Constitution especially in conducting selection of members where we need to look at the various political parties and the gender aspect, which is very key, as it helps us not to go against the words of our own Standing Order.

The Honourable Member for Wuli East also went further to say that, this friendship can go a long way in building the capacities of the peoples in the respective countries and which is very important because this relationship with Venezuela will help us to learn about how best we can be resilient, given that they have been a very resilient country for 200 years of their independence. There are a lot that we can learn from them, which will also improve the relationship between the South-South friendship, and by extension, consolidate our already existing relationship with the Venezuelan People and the government.

The Honourable Member for Banjul Central also talked a lot about Education which the Venezuelan government has provided assistance. They have given us grants that

helped in the construction work at the University of The Gambia. They also provided tractors for the development of Agriculture in the country as indicated by the previous speakers. The students that have benefitted from their scholarships have now graduated as medical doctors and are now serving this country.

And one key important thing that he is so passionate about is the expansion of electricity in Banjul. Another thing he anticipated from the relationship is the opportunity for National Assembly Members to learn about other languages, especially the Spanish language.

The Honourable Member for Serrekunda has also stressed the importance of this friendship citing the improvement of the international order and to ensure that justice prevails in these two countries. He also highlighted the democratic foundation that the relationship can help build. Apart from helping the two peoples collectively, it can also ensure their sovereignty.

The Honourable Member for Sami also said that, this partnership is very key because it can help in the social sectors of the country that is, Education, Health and Agriculture, which are very key in any meaningful development. He also underlined the provision of scholarship for the needy students as impressive.

Honourable Speaker, once again, I want to thank the members for their contributions. Thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Majority Leader and Honourable Members for your interventions.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Gambia- Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Parliamentary Friendship Group was adopted with amendments to comply with the Standing Orders and the Constitutional provisions.]

V. The Establishment of Gambia-Senegal Parliamentary Friendship Group [By: Hon Majority Leader & Member for Kombo South]

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I rise to move that this august Assembly do consider and adopt this motion for the establishment of a Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and Senegal.

Honourable Speaker, the two countries share a common heritage, geography, and people. Senegal and The Gambia are one people, sharing the same languages, religion, and ethnic background. The people of both countries marry each other and trade among themselves.

This Motion seeks to establish and strengthen the already existing cordial relationship between the two countries.

Honourable Speaker, *recognising* that forming a friendship group between the two countries will further strengthen the already existing bilateral relation and enhance the people-to-people contacts and relations at sectoral levels; *appreciating* that the shared heritage and history will further cement relations between the two countries; *acknowledging* that forming a relation between the two parliaments will be an important part of the bilateral relations; *recognizing* that the National Assembly of the Republic of Senegal is willing to work with the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia to further cement the existing cordial relationship; *realizing* the consolidation of ties between the two countries thereby easing the free movement of person and goods is a step towards ECOWAS integration as enshrined in the ECOWAS Article.

MANDATE

- To foster Inter Parliamentary diplomacy, and to contribute to the development of the bilateral and cooperative relations.
- To foster relations that promote mutual exchange in the areas of development of the two legislatures.
- To serve as a linkage between the two legislatures on all matters of cooperation and support.

MEMBERSHIP

- The Gambia-Senegal Friendship group shall consist of a Chairperson and eight other members.
- Membership to the group shall be nominated by the Committee of Selection in accordance with the Standing Orders.
- Membership shall reflect the different political opinion as well as gender.

Honourable Speaker, with these few remarks, I move that this august Assembly do consider and adopt this motion for the establishment of Gambia-Senegal Parliamentary Friendship Group between the National Assemblies of the Republics of The Gambia and Senegal. I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member, any seconder?

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion and wish to talk a little about it.

Thank you very much Honourable Majority Leader for the motion. I think this should have been the starting point because, as we all know, Senegal and The Gambia, it is just because of colonialism that is why we are two different countries, but we all share the same. You can roam through The Gambia and eventually land into Senegal without realising that you have entered another country. So, establishing this relationship is very important.

Honourable Speaker, I just wish to report that sometime in early 2020, the Joint Committee on Monitoring and Trade went on a study tour to Senegal and we were fortunate to have a meeting with our counterparts in their parliament. They told us that we are the first Gambian parliamentarians to go to the Parliament of Senegal, and I think that was a good starting and then, from there, that we started the negotiation. We relayed the message to the office of the Speaker, for us to establish such parliamentary friendship group, given that, we had it with other countries why not our immediate borders here. And just to inform this august Assembly that Senegal has a diaspora parliamentarian who is based in The Gambia to serve as their representative. I think, he even visited the parliament here with some few members with whom he established contacts with. So, it is very important that we start from here to strengthen the already existing relationship between the two countries, especially with regards to their respective parliaments because we represent the peoples of our countries. We cannot separate. I have families in Senegal, they have families in The Gambia. I think it is very important.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any Honourable Member who wishes to contribute to the debate may raise his/her Constituency tag.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I have decided to speak particularly on this one for very important reasons. Parliamentary Friendship Groups are not just for fanfare or for tourism. They are meant for something more serious, particularly in the case of Gambia and Senegal. The objective fundamentally is to share experience, expertise, and to learn from each other because these parliaments have different institutions, they belong to different jurisdictions, and they have different parliamentary experiences. So, it is an occasion to learn from each other, since we are moving towards integration, towards unity and eventually harmonizing our institutions, coordinating into a continental parliament. In the case of Senegal, we have a lot to learn from them. I have always been speaking about the

need to use our languages in this institution, Senegal is already doing that, so we have a lot to learn from them in that regard. Therefore, creating this friendship group with Senegal will facilitate our learning from the experiences they are already making in the use of their languages in the National Assembly and in the summit, because they have two chambers.

Madam Speaker, I am fully in support of this, because I know we can make good use of it to help take up the use of our languages here to better represent our people. I always say it and I will always emphasize it. To better represent our people, we must speak the language they speak otherwise we are not representing them. And Senegal is ahead of us in that regard. So Madam Speaker, I support the motion and I thank the mover for having come up with it. Thank you very much.

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. First of all, I want to give my blessing to this agreement that is before us, and again, I want to encourage the members of this committee to be completely proactive. It should not be a dormant committee because if you look at the report, it is talking about very sensitive areas that Senegal is our next country and if you look at it, if I may read: "the two countries share a common heritage, geography and people. Senegal and The Gambia are one people sharing the same language, religion, and ethnic background. The people of both countries intermarry and trade among themselves." So, this friendship is here to strengthen the already bilateral relationship that is existing. I think the committee should have further work to do because if you look at it right now, there are lot of issues surrounding Gambia and Senegal especially in our border areas. We have lot of issues there that need to be corrected. This bilateral relationship can go further to make sure that, the border issues are resolved once and for all. We have lot of outcry in these areas especially the area of trade which is very key in the border areas.

We have lot of issues that need to be addressed. So, I want to appeal to members of this committee to be more proactive than any other committee so that, we have lot of

things in common and that co-existence must prevail, if we want to live as a sovereign country of our own. Therefore, I give my blessings to the motion. It is the right time for this to come on board, but we have lot of numerous challenges. Since parliaments are the legislative arms of every country, there are already identified issues that are affecting our countries in the area of demarcation of land borders and even trade. So, this parliamentary friendship can facilitate that. On that note, I want to thank and give my blessings to this agreement, I thank you.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Chair, and Honourable Speaker. After hearing from my Honourable colleague from Wuli West, I thought I would not even say anything because he said exactly what I was going to say. We are here to develop the nation and we have lot to learn from Senegal. Firstly, he mentioned about the local language that they speak in their Parliament which I think, we can learn a lot from. Secondly, as one of the few elected female MPs, there is a lot we can also learn from Senegal. At present, they have forty-four percent female representation in their Parliament. We need to learn and know the reasons why they have such high numbers, and I think parliament is the best to do so especially when we are in the friendship group.

As a member of the ECOWAS parliament, knowing the trouble that Gambians faced while crossing the Senegalese borders, I will applaud one of the reasons why we are also looking forward into this friendship, that is to “realize the consolidation of ties between the two countries thereby easing the free movement of persons and goods in a step towards ECOWAS integration as enshrined in ECOWAS Article.” I think, if we embark on this friendship group, it will greatly benefit us and we can also learn a lot. It is against this reason that, I will give it my full blessing. We need to make sure that, this friendship is not only established but also fully implemented and strengthened to the best interest of both countries. I think for us Gambians, we have a lot to learn from and a lot to gain, particularly to ease the burden of our citizens, especially, traders and petty traders. Women suffer a lot, almost every week, there is a woman that will call

me and tell me the hassle that they are going through while crossing the borders of Senegal. Sometimes, they lose their goods along the way for not knowing their rights.

Madam Speaker, I think if we get closer to Senegal through this Parliament, we can ease all border restrictions. I thank you very much.

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for the opportunity. I also want to thank the mover for bringing this motion, but I just want to refer him to his second paragraph which says, and I read Honourable Speaker with your permission “the two countries share the same common heritage, geography and people. Senegal and Gambia are one people sharing the same language, religion, and ethnic background. The people of both countries intermarry and trade among themselves.” Madam Speaker, I think it is only The Gambia and Senegal in the whole world that have these commonalities. Then, it is obvious that Gambia and Senegal have a natural bonding and a natural relationship. Going through the history of the two countries, one could realise that, it has been put into practice in 1981, when they said Senegambia Confederation which successfully came into effect, but later broke out.

Today the closest neighbour to The Gambia is Senegal. That being the case, this motion is long overdue. It should have been in existence because I heard parliamentary friendship being alluded to by Honourable Member for Wuli West that, it is not a fanfare. If it is not going to be a fanfare, then this committee should be the most important committee in the relationship between Gambia and the people of Senegal. We all agree that the Gambia has a natural relationship with Senegal but there are some other constraints when you come to people-to-people movement and movement of goods. So, on that note, this motion to establish this friendship is in a right direction. I could remember when I travelled with my committee members to Djibouti on African Parliamentary Union [APU], we had a group work where we discussed the role of Parliament in integrating cross-border crimes and fortunately, the group where we were, Senegal was also part of that group. So, we all had to raise our issues regarding cross border, but we did not have the opportunity to sit and discuss it. That is why, I am

saying that, this proposed relationship is long overdue. We should have this committee so that we can be collaborating with our partners in Senegal to discuss anything that will affect us because any law that we bring into effect in the country affects Senegal and any law that Senegal promulgates affects The Gambia. So, if Parliamentary bodies that are responsible for passing laws, do not have that close relationship to consider those laws by themselves and make a comprehensive study as to how laws affect us and our neighbours, could sometimes lead to wars. Today Gambians travel frequently to Senegal and they go through lot of hassle along the border while crossing. If at all this natural relationship with Senegal is real, yes! It could be real, but there is no better understanding between the two institutions to be able to give recognitions. I came from Senegal yesterday evening, but it is sometimes pathetic if an MP is travelling, but I know if this relationship is established, such issues will be discussed. There are some processes and procedures that MPs go through when you go to Senegal or coming from Senegal to The Gambia, such issues should be discussed to ensure free movement of people. There are so many ECOWAS protocols talking about free movement of people and goods, and the border we have for our movement of goods and services is Senegal, therefore, it is so important that we need to have this relationship with them.

As alluded to by the Honourable Member for Brikama South, that any member opportuned to be part of this committee, obviously your membership in that committee should not be for the sake of fanfare or just to exchange visits. We want to see proactive engagements so that there could be a very perfect mutual relationship. I was going through a research, which says "for the world to have absolute peace there should not be any war and people should share a lot in common". I want to use Senegal and Gambia as an example because they have everything in common. If there could be hundred percent peace between the two countries, it is obvious that, there is no war between the Gambia and Senegal, but you can all see the troubles we are going through with Senegal. These issues can be tabled and resolved definitively so that our people can live in perfect peace.

So that means the ball is in our court because we are opportuned to be the parliament that is going into this relationship. Let us make it a relationship that is going to be long standing and fulfilling. Let it also be a relationship that is going to pay a positive dividend to the lives of the people of The Gambia and Senegal.

On that note, Madam Speaker I give my support to the relationship. I would also like to draw the attention of the selection committee to the criteria for selection. There is need to consider political dimensions and gender in order to be fair enough. It is also important to know that, there are some members in different committees making them unproductive because of their attention being divided. Let us not only look at the individuals but also the capability of the individual. So, let us be mindful of one individual enjoying multiple membership in different committees, especially in international committees. On that note Madam Speaker, I beg to take my seat. Thank you.

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I will give my blessings to this proposed bilateral relationship. As alluded to by the previous speakers that Senegambia Confederation was signed in Kaur and it was in 1981 that was the first establishment of the Senegal-Gambia federation signed by Abdou Joof and my Grandpa Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. So, the people are speaking the same language saying that Senegal and Gambia are the same people, one family and are inseparable entities is basically the reality. I, therefore, personally support the Senegal and Gambia relationship which we are trying to form. It could be recalled that the confederation which was formed between the two countries in 1981 was the most effective confederation because it was formed basically for peace building and good governance, although it ended prematurely. I am urging my colleagues to give approval to the relationship because it is long overdue. We share religious beliefs and intermarry among ourselves. On that note Honourable Speaker, I beg to take my seat.

HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I also rise to support this important motion. Honourable Speaker, many speakers made mention that the relationship is long overdue. However, I will say better late than never.

Honourable Speaker, The Gambia and Senegal share a lot in common. If you look at the landscape of the two countries, they are all the same, if you look at our cultural heritage, they are also the same. Honourable Speaker, you have Gambians that are residing in Senegal and likewise the Senegalese in The Gambia. So, that is indicative of our oneness. Gambia and Senegal, we are much of a muchness, that is, we are all the same. I do not think that there exists a distinction between Gambia and Senegal, we share a lot in common and that is what brings us together as close nations.

Honourable Speaker, what we have to do now, is to see how best to cement this cordial relationship that happily exist between The Gambia and Senegal. Honourable Speaker, we are all one but when it comes to movement of goods, people, and services, we have issues, and that will go on to defeat this motion. Honourable Speaker, at times, we are in contravention of the ECOWAS protocol, we are in fact in violation of the ECOWAS protocol. I am much intelligent to see the way and manner in which Senegalese are treated in The Gambia and the way and manner Gambians are also treated in Senegal. You will see Senegalese being chased and taken to the police station for lack of alien's card. Honourable Speaker, if you look at these things and look at what is in this document, it is quite countering. So, we have a great work to do and if we do not put a stop to the way and manner, we treat Senegalese citizens in this country, and the way and manner Senegalese also treat Gambian citizens in Senegal, it will result to a frontal chase. We should, therefore, change our attitudes because when you have these beautiful things in this document and our actions are not corresponding to that mentioned in the document, that would be counterproductive. Unless and until our ideas are aligned with the aims and objectives that are embedded in this document, it is only going to be a futile chase. if we consider our relationship and the way and manner in which we treat each other, Honourable Speaker, it is at variance with what is

contained here. Unless we change our attitudes, which is long overdue, but better late than never, and it is never late for a reason to prevent. So, when we have this today is a move in the right direction, but Madam Speaker, the crux of the matter is that, the way and manner we treat Senegalese nationals and the way and manner Senegalese treat Gambian nationals, leave much to be desired. I think we must change that trend that is the alpha and omega of this nation, it has called for attitudinal change and I fervently believe that when attitudes are transformed into altitudes, the sky will be the limit, thank you Honourable Speaker. *[poor audio]*

HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Although much has been said, I just want to highlight only two things on the motion that is the relationship among ourselves or between Gambia and Senegal, and the integration of the ECOWAS protocols. Honourable Speaker, Gambia is well known for trade that is export and import. As a country, we have sparse natural resources, but what we depend more on for our economy is these 2 aspects. Statistics have shown that from 2005 to 2010, the re-export value is around 80% and The Gambia cannot achieve those objectives without the transit trade and as you know that, goods leaving The Gambia cannot reach their destinations without passing through Senegal, so as a result, there should be sound policies governing the terms and conditions of the friendship group that will convert the restrictions into a blessings for the actors in the trade.

Honourable Speaker, our Committee just concluded a six-day tour, but I do not want to pre-empt the findings on the implementation of the commitment to Ecowas protocols on our borders because it will make us to go back to plenary and decide.

Honourable Speaker, this relationship can be used effectively to make sure that all obstacles that we are facing on these areas will be history. It will also boost the political commitments between actors. Another issue of concern is that, when you ratify and endorse this friendship group, after the endorsement, Honourable Speaker, the follow-up process also is another thing. There are a lot at stake, but the political will is not

there. Honourable Speaker, what I will urge the Parliament to do is that, not only Senegal should we have relationship with, other nations that can also represent our strategic interest should be part of the friendship groups. Gambia should establish relationships because our economy largely depends on trade and this trade is between countries. I am happy to see that Mauritania is part of the parliamentary friendship groups we proposed to build.

Honourable Speaker, Mali should also not be an exception, Guinea Conakry, and Guinea Bissau. [Poor Audio]

HON. ALHAGIE S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I also want to add my voice to the motion for the establishment of the friendship community between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and Senegal. Madam Speaker, the two countries share a common heritage and people in Senegal and The Gambia are one people sharing the same language and cultural background. The people of these two countries intermarry among themselves. Madam Speaker, I think this motion of friendship is just to formalize it because Senegal and The Gambia do have everything in common. I think the only thing which they do not share is the official language of which The Gambia is English, and Senegal is French but other than that, all the things they do, we equally do them, and it is often said that, where two countries share the same surnames, more often than not, they are the same family. I think all surnames we have in The Gambia, most of them are in Senegal. There are instances of intermarry among the peoples of the two countries, a typical example is myself whose biological sister is married in Senegal and she has now established family there. Whatever happens in Senegal is always my concern, not least the last demonstration that took place there. I even intended to go and see whether my relatives are affected or not. So, I think this thing is very important and not just to build friendship, but the most important thing is communication. When two people meet and happen to speak the same language, they start to build relationship. A typical example is when I went to Egypt and met with a Burkina lady who was also a Mandinka but she speaks French and I speak English. Initially, our communication was difficult, but when

we visited one of the African universities, where they had to call the students to come and receive us, a Gambian student came and started speaking to me in Mandinka, then the lady from Burkina said ah! You are a Mandinka on the whole, I said yes, I am, and that is where the friendship started. I think this proposed relationship is very important and timely, most of the villages in my constituency are around the borders and are shared with the Senegalese people. I have a village which you cannot even identify as to whether, it is in The Gambia or Senegal or whether those people also are Senegalese or Gambian. It is important to note that both the dalasi and the CFA currencies are in use in those communities. So, it is very important that we came up with this motion because, basically, Senegal and Gambia cannot be separated. We do everything in common, when we travel either by air or land, we must pass through Senegal. I am urging all my colleagues to give their blessings to the motion, so that it can be adopted. On that note Madam Speaker, I beg to take my seat.

HON. ALFUASINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I do not want to speak but when I saw this motion, it reminded me of our trip to Dakar. So, it is something that should have been established since. I think we can make best use of the opportunity now, hence we want to establish it. As it is stated in the motion, we are one people sharing the same thing, but Madam Speaker, this committee charged with the establishment of this relationship should be proactive and functional at all times, so that some of the issues concerning the relationship will be resolved before the establishment of the friendship group.

Madam Speaker, when we went to Dakar to visit our colleague parliamentarians, as my colleague could bear me witness, we were not speaking English neither French, some did speak local languages, and those who cannot speak wolof, interpretation was done for them. Madam Speaker, I think when we engage in this friendship, it is going to help us a lot. So, I am definitely in support of this motion. On that note, I thank you very much.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. If the parliamentary friendship functions good is to the benefit of the people we represent. We do have our technical committee whose responsibility is to take care of other instruments. Parliamentary friendship group goes beyond what is stipulated in the bill, such relationship could have both positive and negative effects on our peoples, and that is why this is so significant because such association will enable the Parliament of The Gambia to engage the Senegalese parliamentarians to discuss pertinent matters and to look at the issues affecting our two peoples.

Honourable Speaker, the issue of the border which has already been indicated that the movement of our people and business dealings have been greatly affected by the border restrictions, but it is important to look at our interest objectively to see why that is the case. You can involve the population, the parliamentarians and even traders in a more informal discussion than state to state which is within the confines of the second rules and regulations. The relationship will become more informal and therefore, you can engage all populations and get certain facts that may inform policy, legislations, and even the relationship.

Honourable Speaker, as has been clearly stated, we discovered that relationships were built between the two peoples. They trade and exchange currencies without any formal structure. Some Gambians even get more from Senegal and so also do the Senegalese from the Gambia without state intervention. It is therefore important that, we have such committees that will do more in those areas, get verbal information about the people in relation to what is affecting them and what we can do. Some will talk about lot of issues relating to the border which sometimes conflict with the security of the other country. So, it is important to know that these problems are general problems, and you should not have any expectation that they will be easily solved. The only thing we can do is to have a discussion between the parliamentarians of the two countries on those fundamental issues.

Honourable Speaker, regarding the Senegambia Confederation, clearly, I cannot sit down without making clarification because that was not the type of relationship that Gambia should have with Senegal. It was a relationship that emerged from the crises and intervention. The documentation was ignored but many people die during the 1981 conflict. But there emerged a confederation that was not ritual in any way and that was why it collapsed in 1989 because it has no foundation on a state-to-state relationship that was equal. It was a foundation imposed by virtue of the conflict itself. And out of the 78 million, Gambia was contributing 26 million and Senegal 52 combined together 78, and most of it was spent on confederal security forces and intelligence. Essentially, there was duplication of responsibilities of parliamentarians, but nothing was really done to build a Senegambia corridor of development for the Senegalese and the Gambian people. So, in that regard, the Confederation did not serve the purpose of development for the people and it was just a political machinery and when the Senegalese realized that there was no benefit for them in the existence of that confederation, they just walk out overnight, and the Confederation collapsed. So, that should really be quoted as an example. We want a relationship where parliaments will be able to make and harmonize oversight legislation methodologies in so many activities that are taking place, so that we learn from each other. This Parliament is developing capacity and I am sure, other parliaments would be able to learn from exactly what they are doing because I have heard a Minister saying that, the way you scrutinize is unique in terms of legislative building. So, in essence, we are building competencies and I am sure, through this relationship, the way we scrutinize policies, the way we perform oversight on our governments could all be shared. So, there is always benefit in building relationship between two parliaments, thank you very much.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I have the belief that, this is one of the most important motion that we are dealing with, and all those members whose constituencies are close to the border should speak and support this motion. Honourable Speaker, I raised a question to the Interior Minister in 2017 on whether there was possibility to dialogue with Senegal in

relation to the attack and killing of Gambian citizens there. He told me that the following week he was going to Dakar to discuss with the government precisely on that matter. How to enforce peace and security at our borders, Honourable Speaker, is something that the Executive alone is not sufficient. I think they have the channel to deal with all issues that we have with Senegal across our borders, but it was also important to involve other actors in the dialogue.

Honourable Speaker, one important thing about this motion is that, the people-to-people relationship is enhanced. I believe that people-to-people relations is the most crucial part of this friendship. The cooperation and understanding among our people will also be improved. This relationship will enhance trade links by ensuring easy access of goods and services across the border. The common culture could be further strengthened by the relationship. The two parliaments should work together as a matter of urgency to fast track this relationship.

Honourable Speaker, a lot of things are happening between Gambia and Senegal. If you come to agriculture, Gambian farmers are going to Senegal to do farming because they lack farmlands in their areas, and Senegalese farmers are also coming to The Gambia to do farming and other work. If you go to the health sector, how many Gambians are going to Senegal to seek for medical care? Right now, the MRI lab test is not available here and many Gambians are going to Senegal paying lot of money amounting to D15, 000 Dalasi just to have a lab test. Similarly, how many Senegalese from Tamba Kunda are coming to The Gambia to seek for medical help? So, there are so many issues that need to be looked at to make life easy for each other. If you look at trade, Honourable Member for Sandu was talking about our groundnuts that we produce, being taken to Senegal because Senegalese come and buy it. So, there are lot of issues between us which need to be addressed. This relationship should have come earlier, and I think from now on, this friendship bill will take up all the issues through the two parliaments to ensure that all problems between us can be solved. On that note, Honourable Speaker, I thank you.

HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I want to add my voice to thank the mover of the motion, and I would also like to express support for the motion. Lot of facts and issues have been raised between The Gambia and Senegal, and I think that both countries share the same home. As a Gambian, you are at home when you are in Senegal and the same applies to the Senegalese when they are in The Gambia. These are two countries, at the time of acquiring independence, were two separate countries colonially, but I still believe, and I stand to be corrected, that they can amalgamate. This could have given us easy ride to establish the proposed friendship between our legislatures. We are now living in a globalized world where nations and entities are increasingly coming together. As have been mentioned by the first speakers that, no country can stand alone both economically and politically, we must establish relationship with other countries, and when it comes to international affairs, the size and the distance of the country is not important anymore, what is important is the relationship that you are going to establish with that very country. I think any establishment of any agreement should be based on set objectives in relation to economy, politics, and foreign policy. Our friendship with other countries including Senegal is important. I do want to take too much of your time because already, so many things have been said, but Senegal and The Gambia, their case is special, and it is very important to have this type of committee between the two nations and legislatures.

The two countries share borders in such a way that citizenship sometimes becomes a problem. You go to certain communities where you find a village, one part is in Senegal and the other part is in The Gambia, such communities do have two village heads [alkalis], and as a result, citizenship normally becomes a problem because you cannot apply both citizenships. So, in some instances, crimes that are committed from one side will spill over to the other side, which is sometimes blamed wrongly on one side. Villages in Jarra Central District sometimes experience such problems. Not so long ago, the timber dealers brought their timbers from Senegal across the border and parked them in one of the villages, because the Senegalese authorities will not come there and

cease their timbers. So, stealing from one country and hiding in another country is a common phenomenon. I know, like I said before, we are not the Minister responsible for foreign policies, but we can play our part by influencing some of those policies. This is also another reason why it is very important to establish this friendship between our parliaments and that of Senegal. I could remember there was a time when a committee was formed including the members from these three countries; Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Conakry, which are directly affected by border issues, cross-border crimes, and citizenship. To find a definitive solution to such problems, makes it more important for us to establish this kind of relationship with our neighbours, especially Senegal.

Madam Speaker, I think we virtually share everything with Senegal, socially, politically, and economically, we are just separated by the colonial masters.

There is only one suggestion I want to make for the Committee of Selection. I know there are criteria that are clearly stated in the Standing Orders. One of the members mentioned here that, there are respective areas or constituencies in the country that are very critical in the relationship between Senegal and Gambia. Whenever there are border issues in a particular constituency, the parliamentary representative is always contacted first, so if we have to select a committee, we have to consider certain members based on their constituencies, so that communication between them and their colleagues in Senegal could be easy. With these remarks, I want to thank the Honourable Members for the motion which I will really give my support.

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the opportunity. I rise to support the motion for the establishment of a parliamentary friendship group between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and that of Senegal. Honourable Speaker, the motion seeks to establish and strengthen the existing cordial relationship between the two countries.

Honourable Speaker, in February 2020, the joint committee of Trade and Monitoring conducted a tour to Senegal which I was opportuned to serve the joint committee as the rapporteur. It was a six-day tour, and it was during this tour that, we met our sister

Parliament in Senegal whose Majority Leader appeared so humble to us. During our engagement with them in Senegal, the Member from Nianija said that we were the first parliamentarians of The Gambia to visit and dialogue with the Senegal Parliament. If you could remember then, there was a small misunderstanding at Amdalai, the border between Senegal and The Gambia, where vehicles entering The Gambia and those leaving The Gambia and entering Senegal. This was in fact, part of the main purpose of our trip, to see how best this misunderstanding on the conventional borders between Senegal and The Gambia can be resolved.

The Majority Leader then indicated that, it would be very important to establish the friendship group between the Parliament of Senegal and that of The Gambia. It was in fact captured in our report because the report was laid here in this august Assembly, that is the reason why we are talking about establishing this parliamentary friendship group today, which is definitely a right move in the right direction.

Honourable Speaker, on the last paragraph of the motion, if you allow me just to quote, he said, "the two countries thereby easing the free movement of persons and goods in a step towards ECOWAS integration as enshrined in the ECOWAS articles", on quote.

Honourable Speaker, the free movement of people, goods and services across The Gambia and Senegal or ECOWAS states is something which is enshrined in the ECOWAS article, but when we talk about the free movement of goods and services, Honourable Speaker, it is a nightmare as at now. The Chair of the Trade Committee and the Member for Sandu has just mentioned it here. We have just concluded a six-day tour of all the entry points and the conventional borders between Gambia and Senegal, but when it comes to the movement of goods and services, it is still a nightmare between these two countries. Honourable Speaker, it was because of colonialism that we were separated between French and British colonies, but previously, there was no conventional borders to differentiate the two countries. The mover of the motion has made it very clear to justify the statement I have just mentioned here. The mover further said in the first or second paragraph of his speech that, Senegal and The

Gambia are one people sharing the same language, religion, and ethnic background. This is obvious Honourable Speaker. Therefore, coming up with a motion like this, as the Member for Jarra East has mentioned that "better late than never" it is definitely very important that your office and the mover of the motion came up with this laudable idea. With these remarks Honourable Speaker, I beg to take my seat.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I want to seize this opportunity as a Member of Parliament residing in a constituency that is sharing borders with Senegal. I would not do justice to the people I represent here, if I do not give my support and blessings to this motion. I would also like to make few observations to the selection committee and also try to throw some lights to this august Assembly as to what brought the relationship between Gambia and Senegal and its importance, particularly at the grass root level.

If you could recall, I did send a parliamentary question to the Minister of Water Resources complaining about a particular blockage of water at the Casamance region. The communities of Tumana, Kantora and Cassamace socially and collectively come together to remove blocked waterway reserve as a livelihood to our people in URR, and I was advised by the Minister and the mover of the interstate issues to withdraw the parliamentary question as they will take it up at the level of the Executive, which I have humbly declined. Since that particular occasion up to now, nothing has been done. Similarly, there was also shouting by the community at the intervention of the Senegalese forces who came into The Gambia to pursue a particular young man in the country. The reason why I am trying to share these issues with you is to tell you that, it is very important for two the nations to establish parliamentary friendship group.

I am just coming back from a tour of the select committee on Trade and Integration to look at the issues governing trade between the two countries, because Senegal and The Gambia have so many protocols and conventions but then in our research, I would not want to pre-empt the report, but I am trying to create a discussion centre around the nightmare experienced by both countries. It is important that countries respect

protocols at all cost. Politically, there is no problem for Gambia and Senegal in certain areas, especially, when it comes to religion. You can even see it when one of the religious heads passes away in Senegal or The Gambia, a huge delegation is dispatched to Senegal, so also do the Senegalese. When December comes marking the celebration of Christmas and New Year, you see so many Senegalese artists coming into the country entertaining the masses culturally. It is when you come to the political and economic issues, that is where we experience nightmare. The political as well as the economic interaction is very key because The Gambia as a country stands to benefit a lot from the transit business because of the nature of our port, Gambia could really gain a lot in terms of the re-export trade.[*poor audio*]

It is indeed important that the two countries try to establish good relationship through this friendship group. So, if any member is to be selected in the delegation or in the friendship group, I should be the first person because of the proximity of my constituency to the border with Senegal. It is also important to pay a visit to Senegal as soon as the friendship group is established, so as to see how best they could really engage their counterpart country to address issues affecting them. I would not want to take much of the Assembly's time, but I would not be just if I do not draw the concern of our people to the attention of the Assembly regarding the serious challenges they are facing. As a friendship group to be established, we should really endeavour to make sure that we address perennial issues affecting the two countries. Of course, we are not the primary custodian of the foreign policies, however, we can really use our political influence to solve issues. On that note, I thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members. Any further interventions? Okay, I would now call the mover that is Honourable Majority Leader to respond to issues raised and then conclude the debate.

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I think I should thank members for their contributions, and I would like to start with the mover, Honourable Member for

Nianija who seconded the motion. He highlighted that the Trade Committee and the Project Monitoring visited Senegal and engaged their counterparts in a plenary discussion for the establishment of this parliamentary friendship group which was a highly welcomed move by the partners in Senegal.

This friendship to be, is a move in the right direction. Members are also urged not to regard this friendship as a tourism venture where parties visit each other for pleasure. We need to make sure that both parliaments learn key important areas from each other, especially the use of national languages in Parliament as the Senegalese are doing, which could be a case in point.

Honourable Member for Brikama South also talked about the encouragement that they received from their colleagues and the keen participation of the members. He also stressed the point that, when this committee is instituted and accepted by the plenary, it should not be a dormant committee. He further underlined the important role that this committee can play in ensuring that, the relationship between the Parliaments of The Gambia and Senegal go a long way in helping us learn experiences from each other. He urged the selection committee to look at the selection criteria in selecting members into the committee, because members of this committee should be instrumental in reducing border problems relating to demarcation, given that, some of the constituencies in The Gambia are along the border lines.

Honourable Member for Banjul South also was in line with other members and supported the idea of having this friendship, the introduction of our National languages in Parliament, and the need to take cue from Senegal as a country that has a very high female representatives in the National Assembly. The importance of free movement of people and their goods where the female members of both communities are directly involved was also highlighted by the Honourable Member.

The Member for Busumbala also hailed the relationship as being very important to both parliaments, as it enables them to work on issues that will be in the best interest of both peoples. He also reiterated the words of the Member for Wuli West that, members

to be selected into this committee should not be there by name, they should be action-oriented and ready to engage in dialogue in ensuring that, the ECOWAS protocols are fully implemented in both countries. That is the reason why, only people who are committed should be considered for the membership of the committee to ensure that all the objectives that are enshrined in the motion are met.

Member for Lower Saloum also gave historical background information on the Senegambia Confederation and indicated that, one of the key things of this friendship committee is to look at the issue of good governance and people-to-people relationship.

Honourable Member for Jarra East also said that better late than never for the establishment of such relationship. He also applauded the idea of coming up with this motion and urged members to look at the cultural heritage that are deeply rooted in our communities because it will help us deal with some of the problems and issues of discriminations that we face as we go along. He also commented on the cordial relationship between the two countries and called for more attitudinal change among actors that would help us perform better to meet the objectives that we set for ourselves.

Honourable Member for Sandu, who is also the Chair of the Trade Committee also emphasized the need for re-export trade which is very important and needs to be looked at.

Honourable Member for Niani also talked about the relationship between the two countries and the existence of intermarriage among the peoples of the two nations. He further emphasized the importance of communication which will help us understand one another.

Honourable Member for Serrekunda, in his contribution, talked about the advocacy work that the parliamentarians are supposed to do to further strengthen the relationship. He stressed the importance of looking at the negative and positive essence

of the relationship and to make historical reference in order to establish what constitutes The Gambia and Senegal.

Member for Wuli East also urged all the members to look at the border lines and support people to be able to learn and come to terms with all the other issues that are affecting them. He emphasized the importance of people-to-people communication which can foster understanding and build relationship among societies.

Honourable Member for Jarra West also expressed the importance of collaboration among the actors and the need to adhere to diplomatic principles to ensure that, the objectives of the motion are achieved.

Honourable Speaker, this is a summary of what members said in their contributions, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: What I just wanted to add to that was, if you summarized their concerns, who do you expect to respond to their issues.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: I just want to point to somebody who said that the mathematics was wrong and that was right, I said 26 million spent by Gambia and Senegal spent 52 million, which should be 78 million instead of 72.

THE SPEAKER: Do I take it that you want to correct the records? Okay, very well. I am sure it is captured in the Hansard records. Thank you very much Honourable Members and the mover of the motion.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this august Assembly do consider and adopt the motion for the establishment of Gambia-Senegal Parliamentary Friendship Group with amendments]

VI. The Establishment of Gambia-Kingdom of Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group. [By: Hon. Majority Leader & Member for Kombo South]

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER AND MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to table this Motion in accordance with Section 60 of the Standing Orders. There are lot of technicalities in this write-up, and I want to sit with the secretariat to work on it further. So, on that note, I want to withdraw this motion.

THE SPEAKER: I withdraw them at the request of the mover. May I now thank all Honourable members for their contributions to this session.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Withdraw the motion on the establishment of Gambia-Kingdom of Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group]

Adjournment

[The House stands Adjourned until Tuesday 16th March, 2021]