



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

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SECOND SITTING – SECOND SESSION

MONDAY 25th APRIL 2022

SESSION 2022



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

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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Second Sitting – Second Ordinary Session of 2022 Legislative Year
of the Republic of The Gambia

Proceedings of Monday 25th April 2022.

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THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

**REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
[OFFICIAL HANSARD]**

SECOND SESSION – SECOND SITTING

**OF THE SIXTH LEGISLATURE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

MONDAY 25th APRIL 2022

1. PRAYERS

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, read the prayers.]

*[The Assembly met at 10:30 a.m. in the New National Assembly Building,
Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul.]*

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, in the Chair]

The Assembly was called to Order

**2. Corrections and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of
Thursday 14th April 2022 Sitting of the National Assembly**

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of Thursday 14th April 2022 Sitting of the National Assembly is before us for corrections and approval. Please, can any Honourable Member move that the said Record be considered and approved?

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I so move that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of Thursday 14th April 2022 Sitting of the National Assembly be corrected and approved.

HON. SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. SALIFU JAWO [JOKADU]: I so second, Honourable Speaker.

[Question Proposed]

HON. SPEAKER: Any corrections or observations from Honourable Members. I would suggest we look at it, page by page, and make suggestions on each, please. Is that okay for all of us? So, any comments or observations on page 1? Then, we can move to pages 2, the attendance of Members.

HON. SUWAIBOU TORUAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The word 'Wuli' in Number 53 of the page is spelt wrongly, that is "Honourable Suwaibou Touray **Wulli** East" and the same applies to '**Wulli** West' as well. So, the correct spelling is "**Wuli**". Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Any more corrections on pages 3, 4, 5, and 6?

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you. On page 6 under administration of oaths, the second line, I observed the omission of "nominated Members" who were also sworn in. Therefore, their names should be included.

HON. SPEAKER: Absolutely, not only the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and the elected Members were sworn-in but also the nominated Members. Thank you very much for that correction. Any other proposal for correction?

HON. ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I just want to draw us back a little bit. The Honourable Member for Wuli East did remind the Lord Chief Justice to announce the names of the nominated Members first before going any further, but that is not captured on page 3. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Where on page 3?

HON. ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Where you have communication from the Chair.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]: Honourable Speaker, I think that should not be reflected on the communication from the Chair rather under the election of the Speaker. I think the point was raised when the Chief Justice was about to swear in the five nominated members which included the Honourable Speaker. So, it should be under the topic 'Election of the Speaker' and not under 'Communication from the Chair'.

HON. SPEAKER: We all agreed that the Member for Wuli East's proposal for the names of nominated Members be read out to be placed where it is best suited. I think the Clerk will find that out and then insert it in the report appropriately.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, two issues were raised. First, it was not gazetted and that means it was not

legally announced. Second, it should be circulated to Members well before we actually do the election.

HON. SPEAKER: We were told that the issue of gazette was not a criterion for the election. Honourable Members, all the omissions are captured by Table Office and after amending it, the corrected copies will be circulated to you.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of Thursday 14th April 2022 Sitting of the National Assembly be approved with amendments.]

3. Laying of Papers and Reports: Report of the Committee of Selection on the Nomination of Membership to Committees of the National Assembly and International Parliamentary Delegations for the Period 2022 to 2027 to be Moved *[By the Hon. Majority Leader and Member of the Committee].*

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you, Clerk. Honourable Members would recall that after the inauguration of the Sixth Legislature on Thursday 14th April 2022 with guidance from the Office of the Clerk, the Committee of Selection was constituted in accordance with Standing Order 111 of the National Assembly as follows:

1. Honourable Fabakary Tombong Jatta – Chairperson
2. Honourable Billay G. Tunkara - Member
3. Honourable Alhagie S. Darbo - Member
4. Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay - Member
5. Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay - Member

Accordingly, the Committee of Selection met on Wednesday 20th April 2022 to nominate membership to the various committees of the National Assembly and International Parliamentary Delegations for the period 2022 to 2027.

Pursuance to Standing Order 111[2], the Committee of Selection is scheduled to table its report for consideration and approval by this august Assembly. Therefore, I will now invite the Honourable Majority Leader and member of the Committee to table the report.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I rise to move a motion for the consideration and approval of this august Assembly, the nomination of membership to the undermentioned Standing and Select Committees of the National Assembly, International Parliamentary Delegations and Parliamentary Friendship Groups as proposed in Appendix [1].

Members of the Committee of Selection:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Honourable Fabakary Tombong Jatta | - Chairperson |
| 2. Honourable Billay G. Tunkara | - Member |
| 3. Honourable Alhagie S. Darbo | - Member |
| 4. Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay | - Member |
| 5. Honourable Salifu Jawo | - Member |
| 6. Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay | - Member |

Support Staff of the Committee:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. Momodou A. Sise | - Clerk of the National Assembly |
| 2. Mr. Daniel Cardos | - Deputy Clerk, L.B.P. |

3. Mr. Buba M.E. Jatta – Deputy Clerk, Finance & Admin.
4. Mr. Kalipha M.M. Mbye – Deputy Clerk, L.P.M.
5. Mr. Sainey Konteh – Principal Table Office
6. Mr. Marabi S. Hydera – Director of Committee Secretariat

List of Standing Committees:

- National Assembly Authority
- Committee of Selection
- Assembly Business Committee
- Public Appointments Standing Committee
- Standing Orders Committee
- Standing Committee on Privileges and Ethics
- Finance and Public Accounts Committee
- Standing Committee on Defence and Security
- Foreign Affairs Standing Committee
- Public Enterprises Committee
- Assembly Standing Committee
- Standing Committee on Human Rights and Constitutional Matters
- Public Petitions Committee
- Subsidiary Legislation Committee

These above listed committees require no parliamentary approval:

List of Select Committees:

- Select Committee on Health, Refugees, Disaster and Humanitarian Relief
- Select Committee on Education, Training, and ICT

- Select Committee on Regional Government & Lands, Ombudsman, and IEC
- Select Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
- Select Committee on Environment Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs
- Select Committee on Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youths and Sports
- Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects
- Select Committee on Trade and Regional Integration
- Select Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare

List of International Parliamentary Delegations:

- The ACP/ EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU JPA)
- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
- The Pan African Parliament (PAP)
- The ECOWAS Parliament
- The Parliamentary Union of the OIC (PUOIC)
- The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
- The African Parliamentary Union (APU)
- The West Africa Association of Public Accounts Committee (WAAPAC)

List of Parliamentary Friendship Groups:

- The Gambia-China Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Turkey Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Franco Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Serbia Friendship Group

- The Gambia-Saudi Arabia Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Venezuela Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Senegal Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Mauritania Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Morocco Friendship Group
- The Gambia-Cuba Friendship Group

Honourable Speaker, the Committee of Selection is mandated by the Standing Orders to nominate members to various committees of the National Assembly. Accordingly, following the inaugural sitting of the Sixth Legislature on Thursday 14th April 2022, the Committee met on Wednesday 20th April 2022 to nominate Honourable Members to various committees of the National Assembly and International Parliamentary Delegations for the period 2022 to 2027.

Honourable Speaker, the nominations were made in accordance with Standing Order 96 of the National Assembly.

Composition:

Order 111[1] of the Standing Orders provides that the Committee of Selection shall consist of Speaker as Chairperson and five members of the National Assembly whom three shall be nominated by the Majority Leader and two by the Minority Leader in consultation with their respective groups. Accordingly, the Majority and Minority Leaders have made their respective nominations to the Committee, thus the composition indicated above.

- 1. Procedure of the Committee:** The procedure of the Committee was guided by Standing Order 96.

2. Membership of the Committee: The Committee was in the process guided by the Office of the Clerk and other parliamentary good practices and conventions for the nomination of the membership of the various committees.

3. Methodology: The Committee adopted the following criteria:

- The background of members,
- Political pluralism, and
- Gender representation.

On that note Honourable Speaker, I wish to kindly refer the Honourable Members to Appendix 1 which listed the nomination of membership to the various committees of the National Assembly, International Parliamentary Delegations and Parliamentary Friendship Groups. I, therefore, respectfully submit the said nominations by the Committee of Selection for the kind consideration and approval of this august Assembly. I beg to move the motion.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. Any seconder?

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

Hon. Speaker, I have been fortunate to be here since 2017, what is before us definitely reflects true parliamentary democracy, efficiency, effectiveness and it will enable us to perform oversight effectively and efficiently. Considering the outlined criteria used and the report of the

Committee of Selection, I think we need to thank them because, in my view, they have done justice to the assigned task.

Hon. Speaker, the National Assembly consist of different political parties likewise Independent, it is unfortunate that it is not gender balanced in terms of representation. Notwithstanding, I wish to thank the Committee for ably distributing the limited female representatives into the various committees and parliamentary delegations. It has not been easy sorting out 58 NAMs who are of different calibres, backgrounds, political affiliations, and gender. I commend them for a job well done compared to what we experienced in 2017 as everything was kind of imposed on us. 'Alhamdulillah', this time around all parties have done justice in our various caucuses and I think most of the Members were consulted. I think this is a step in the right direction.

I must admit that the National Assembly is advancing because we are focusing on competence, effectiveness, and efficiency in performing our oversight function which is the most important tool of the Assembly.

Hon. Speaker, it is not easy, so I want to sincerely thank the Committee of Selection again. I know, no work can be perfect 100% but they deserve a tap at the back so as to continue the good work because I know this is not the end. The Assembly can always establish committees, and joint committees before the end of our term. Therefore, I urge the Committee to continue the good work they have started. On that note, I thank you.

[Question Proposed]

HON. SPAEKER: Any Honourable Member who wishes to take part in the debate may now do so.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the Committee of Selection because it was not an easy task, but then they have done their best. Having gone through the list, I have some observations of which I would like to comment.

I have observed that Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie is nominated as Chairperson of Standing Committee on Defence and Security.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you please tell us the page you are referring to?

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: I am referring to page 3. I have observed that Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie is nominated as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Defence and Security, so I wonder, and I would like some clarifications from the mover of the motion regarding the criteria that qualify him to lead the Committee. I have made my research and realised that he is without security background. So, if that is the case, I felt he is not qualified to become Chairperson of the said Committee.

I was made to understand that Honourable Muhammed Kanteh was one time a security personnel, and I would propose him to be the Chair of the Committee.

Under the Foreign Affairs Standing Committee, Honourable Billay G. Tunkara is nominated as Chairperson and Honourable Sainey Jawara as Vice Chair ... [*interrupted*]

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have told you as you go through the various committees refer to the number of the committee, please.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: [Number 9] please. Honourable Billay G. Tunkara is nominated as Chairperson and Honourable Sainey Jawara Vice Chair of the Foreign Affairs Standing Committee both of whom are from the same party. So, when it comes to political pluralism, I think we need to change one, i.e., either the nominated Chairperson or Vice Chair.

[Point of Observation]

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker and Member for Bakau. With reference to [Number 9 page 3 of 4], the Member for Kantora & Majority Leader is from NPP, and I, Honourable Sainey Jawara, come from NRP.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much for your observation. That was an oversight.

HON. SPEAKER: Ok, you have withdrawn your observations under the Foreign Affairs Standing Committee. You may go ahead.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: I, Honourable Assan Touray has been nominated as Chairperson of Subsidiary Legislation Committee [Number 14], but I want to decline for the position because I have no law background, so I want to give chance to Honourable Members with such background. With your permission, I would like to nominate Honourable Yaya Sanyang as Chairperson of the said committee.

On page 6, No.16, I have observed that Honourable Yaya Gassama is not nominated to be part of the Select Committee on Education Training, and ICT, and I believe he is very much qualified to be a member of the said committee because of his background in education. With those few observations, I thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member. We can proceed and at the end of the debate the Majority Leader will address the issues. Any other Member? Yes, Member for Banjul South.

[Point of Observation]

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Honourable Member for Bakau made a proposal, so would it not be fitting for the proposal to be seconded?

HON. SPEAKER: Please, the Honourable Member for Bakau has made observations and suggestions which are noted and at the appropriate time, the mover of the motion would respond to the issues raised then the plenary may agree on some of the proposals.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Having looked at the list of committee members and the report, I think it was only fair enough to have given us this list in advance so that we can thoroughly look at it before today, but most of us

if not all received it just this morning. This is a very important list of committees that needs to be properly scrutinised.

Also, I do not think they were prudent in establishing these committees. They have taken a lot of time which I would applaud them for, but due diligence was not given to the selection. Consideration of the Standing Orders was also not done to the maximum.

Honourable Speaker, Standing Order 96[2] states: "Committees shall consist of such members as maybe nominated by the Committee of Selection and approved by the Assembly on the motion tabled by the Committee of Selection" and 96[3] states "Except as provided in Standing Order 111 [Committee of Selection], every committee shall be constituted as far as is possible to ensure that the balance of parties in the Assembly is reflected therein" which I think has been taken into account, but not to the full extent.

Honourable Speaker, this Assembly is democratically distributed: NPP having 18 seats constituting 31.30%; UDP with 15 seats representing 25.86%; the Independent has 12 seats constituting 20.68%; NRP 4 seats, 6.89%; APRC with 2 seats, 3.4%; PDIOS with 2 Seats, 3.4% and the nominated members are 5, 8.6%. Out of the 58 seats, unfortunately, we only have 5 female Members in the Assembly. The fact that each committee should constitute 6 members, in my view, NPP should have 3 or I would say 2, UDP 1, and the Independent to have 1 that would at least be a proportional representation.

Honourable Speaker, this procedure has not been respected because the majority and the minority basically did the selection, so the composition of the membership of the Committee is biased. Also, Public Appointments Committee comprises: Honourable Sulayman Jammeh as the Chair, Honourable Omar Darboe, Honourable Suwaibou Touray, Honourable Fatou Cham, Honourable Alhagie Mbow and Honourable Kebba T. Sanneh, so the Independent is not represented. Honourable Speaker, we should be upright and be guided by our conscience when selecting members to committees because we represent our people not our political parties, and that is why we are duly called National Assembly Members.

The Committee of Selection should have been guided by the protocol when selecting members of the ECOWAS Delegation. In the protocol, Article 3 under vacancy, the seat of a representative becomes vacant in case of death, written resignation, certified mental or physical incapability, resignation due to incapability and so forth. In the Term of Office, Honourable Speaker, a representative shall be elected for a period of four years from the date of the inauguration of the Assembly by the Chairman of the Authority and his/her mandate shall end in the last day of the Legislature. However, a representative who is not re-elected at the national level shall remain in Office until a new representative from his/her Member State takes up the position. That means if you are re-elected, that seat does not remain vacant, but occupied. The Protocol further states that each Member State shall have at least 30% female representation in its Parliamentary Delegation, and membership shall be taken from the elected Members not from the nominated Members. I would have loved more

women to be part of the Delegation, the likes of Honourable Maimuna Ceesay because of her eloquence, unfortunately that is not possible because she is a nominated Member.

Honourable Speaker, some committees are without female representation which is unfortunate since we only have five female Members. We applaud His Excellency the President for nominating two out of the five females.

Honourable Speaker, important committees such as the Standing Committee on Privileges and Ethics and Subsidiary Legislation Committee do not have any female representation and that is quite unfortunate and it should not be. Even if we are 5, we should be in each and every committee so that many other females can be encouraged to contest elections to serve in this august Assembly. This is quite disheartening. I also agree with Honourable Member for Bakau that Honourable Yaya Gassama should be in the Select Committee on Education, Training, and ICT. It is obvious that we cannot all be in every committee, but the essence of sending in our CVs is to be considered when selecting Members for the various committees.

Honourable Speaker, it is not about 'yamanex' but proportional representation in the established committees. I am sorry for speaking in Wollof. This is not an Assembly with one party absolute dominance, so we, the minority, are not going to accept this report. I think the Committee of Selection needs to have a thorough look at it again in accordance with the laws. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member. You said among others that we should not take partisan politics. This is a National Assembly and I think in my ...

[Point of Correction]

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, you are here to listen to us and adjudicate, but not to answer questions.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please sit down. As I said, you, need to make some clarifications on certain remarks you made. It is fundamental that as we deal with issues that affect Gambians, we always put their interests first and that is why we are all here as representatives of the people. Nonetheless, I am not trying to put aside your comments. I think they are very good.

HON. YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I, first of all, want to begin by supporting the proposal of the Honourable Member for Banjul South that this selection list should be looked at again. Having said that, I only have a short observation to make with regards to the Select Committee on Education, Training and ICT. I would like to refer you to the beginning of page 4, the methodology, of the report of the Committee of Selection on the nomination of membership to committees which reads 'The Committee adopted the following criteria:

(a) Background of members,

(b) Political pluralism and

(c) Gender representation.’ If the Committee of Selection were indeed guided by these, then I do not see any reason why I am excluded from the Select Committee on Education, Training, and ICT. In fact, I have already submitted my CV and I think it should be clear to the Committee that I have not known any other job other than teaching before I came to the National Assembly. I have taught almost all levels of schools in The Gambia including The Gambia College, and even headed schools. Therefore, I should be a bona fide member of this committee by virtue of my experience as a teacher.

Secondly, I was the chairperson of this Committee in the 5th Legislature. I am not asking you to take me back as the chairperson because you have a competent chairperson, but I think I need to be a member for institutional memory of that committee.

Lastly, I have an observation regarding gender representation. There should be at least a female member in the Select Committee on Education, Training and ICT because most of our school-going children are females. So, I cannot understand why we do not have any single female member in this committee which is not a good example. Of course, it happened in the last legislature when most of us lack the experience of committee work, but with my five-year experience, I think it is important that we have a female member in the committee. On that note, I thank you very much.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I want to also join my colleagues to make some observations on the selection. I know it is not an easy task because we are considering the political pluralism of parties that

make it a bit more difficult and considering the experience, competence, and passion of people, for those are very important. If you look at No. 4 [Standing Committee on Public Appointments], I thought the Selection Committee would just select the Chairperson and then allow the various committees to discuss and select their respective vice chairpersons, but they selected both the chairperson and the Vice chairperson. In that respect, it is difficult to check competence, passion, and other relevant aspects.

I could remember the last time when we, [members of the Select Committee on Environment], met, I was selected as Chairperson, but I gave up because there was somebody in the committee who was more competent in handling that portfolio. I allowed the Majority Leader to take over because he was in the NGO affairs for a long time. So, that type of opportunity for members would have helped a lot in setting up committees to be able to do their job properly.

It would have been useful for us if they had put party tags for easy identification [e.g., Honourable Suwaibou Touray, PDOIS] because many people may not know that I am PDOIS. There are many people here who are NPP whom I do not know. For example, the mistake I have already made in relation to Honourable Sulayman Jammeh whom I thought was NPP because I do not know the party he belongs.

Apart from that, I am not sure whether we are treating the list of International Delegations and other Friendship Groups, but if we are treating all of them together, we should look at what the Independent Member mentioned about ECOWAS because these International

Organisations have their own rules. So, we should look at those rules to see whether what we are doing is in tandem with them. If what she is claiming is right, we need to consider it. Thus, for somebody whose term of office is not expired at the Assembly, I think he/she should continue in that delegation, so we must see a way of adjusting it.

Also, we should be mindful because if you look at the International Delegations, the Chairperson of The Gambia-Serbia Friendship Group [Number 4] is NPP; the Chairperson of The Gambia-Venezuela Friendship Group [Number 6] is also NPP; the Chairperson of The Gambia-Senegal Friendship Group is Honourable Maimuna Ceesay [I am not sure whether she is NPP, though, she is a nominated Member]; and The Gambia-Morocco Friendship Group has Honourable Fatoumata Njai as the Chairperson.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, always quote the number, please.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Regarding the International Delegations, two of them are confirmed to have NPP as chairpersons. I was thinking if they could give opportunity to other people to also chair some of these delegations. Also, my observation is that Gambia-China is an important friendship group which I was a very active member. It is just mentioned but the list is not provided. So, no one is selected under that...

[Interruption]

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it continues to the next page.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I do not think I have page 12. I have pages 11 of 14 and 13 of 14. Oh! I missed that page. Okay, it is already provided for. I think those are some of my observations and I thank you for giving me the floor.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity. I would also like to join my colleagues to commend the Committee of Selection for doing justice to the task. On page 13 of the report, Gambia-Serbia Friendship Group, the Chairperson and another Member are both from the NPP, but I think that group is dominated by the opposition.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: The Gambia-Serbia Friendship Group is still chaired by the NPP and many other delegations as well namely... *[Interruption]*

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Member, do you want to make an observation?

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: If we look at the dominating groups, then we are going back to the drawing board... *[Interruption]*

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul South, please!

HON. FATOUMATTA JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Member for Banjul South, allow me to proceed, please. You have already made your submission.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul South, allow the Honourable Member to continue, please.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: I am very much comfortable with the fact that justice has been done to all the Committees in terms of representation. Honourable Speaker, going by the submissions of some Members about, the selection of membership to the International Delegations like ECOWAS, I think both nominated and elected Members are given equal opportunities in the guiding principle of our document, the Standing Order. Mrs. Fatoumatta Jahumpa Ceesay, former Speaker who was indeed a nominated Member, was also a member of the ECOWAS Parliament.

Honourable Speaker, with regards to the submission on the need to have a security background before being part of the Committee on Defence and Security, I think with or without security background one can still be a member of that committee because I was a member of the Standing Committee on Defence and Security together with the Chairperson and Deputy Chair who were without security background. So, it is a matter of commitment. On that note, I beg to take my seat.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable nominated Member.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The work that we have before us is not a difficult task but to thank the Committee for a job well done. Honourable Speaker, care needs to be taken since we are not here to repeat everything but to look at the good things that we did in the National Assembly so that we can keep the memory. I think if not all, some of the old Members in the various committees should be retained to keep the memory of the Committees

because we have done a lot during the Fifth Legislature. Therefore, if all the old Members are displaced, they will start afresh in some of the committees, in which their inputs might be irrelevant.

Honourable Speaker, about Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie, the Deputy Speaker, being nominated as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Defence and Security, is it the culture that used to be given that the former Deputy Speaker was also the Chair to the Committee? The Committee of Selection is seemingly repeating the same trend. Now, if there is somebody in that committee with a security background, I think that person would do well. Let us speak with honesty and sincerity because this is about nation building, and not about compensation or position. We need to work and move as a National Assembly hence we all know that we have a mammoth task ahead of us. These Committees are not going to be idle. The Deputy Speaker is going to be a very busy man in the Assembly being the assistant to the Speaker. So, such a committee is crucial and needs somebody to put his energy, skills, and ideas to ensure a better security reform in the country considering the fragility of our security sector.

Honourable Speaker, in connection to the chairpersonship, if one is selected head of an International Delegation or a chairperson of a particular Committee be it standing or select, he/she should give chance to others to become heads of other delegations or chairpersons of other committees. How can one be given the responsibility to chair two committees particularly the International Friendship Groups? We have seen it in the past when the former Majority Leader was almost in all the

committees, and we have to collectively make a change. So, if the same system is being repeated, where are we moving as a country? These are my observations. Thank you.

HON. YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Good morning Honourable Speaker and my fellow National Assembly Members. I have a few observations to make regarding the report of the Selection Committee. Firstly, I concur with the Member for Banjul South that this report needs to go back to the Committee for the needful adjustments to place people where they will perform to expectation. Let us take national issues seriously and not to compromise the integrity of the National Assembly. It should not be about rewarding people based on their political affiliation. Therefore, it is my opinion for the committee to review the report to do the needful adjustments. Secondly, the Committee of Selection should only select members to the various committees and leave the membership to select their chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons. Through that, we will know who has the right experience to chair a particular committee. Even though experience is achieved over time, the committee needs to sit together and choose who should be the chairperson and vice-chairperson of a particular committee. I have no problem with Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay being the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Constitutional Matters [Number 12] because he is a seasoned journalist and journalists are expected to know more about human rights and constitutional matters, but Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie has no legal background, so he is not fit to be in this committee. Therefore, I would

reiterate that the committee should go over the report again for the needful modifications.

Moreover, both the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson of the Subsidiary Legislation Committee [Number14] should be looked at even though, the Honourable Member for Bakau has already made the due recommendation.

[Number 12] Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects, I think I should lead this committee, to scrutinize and perform oversight function on all government projects. I am not blowing my own trumpet but being a civil engineer by profession and in project management for over 19 years and managed one of the heaviest infrastructural portfolios in this country [OIC project].

Now, [number 7] Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC], I suggest Honourable Sowe to lead the said committee or be part and parcel of it because he has 15 to 16 years banking experience.

[Number 8] Standing Committee on Defence and Security, Honourable Seedy SK Njie should not be in this committee because he is a security threat to the country. I do not know why the committee ... *[Interruption]*,

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member. Can you withdraw that statement, please?

HON. YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKINDA SABIJI]: I withdraw.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. You may proceed.

HON. YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKINDA SABIJI]: I recommend Honourable Member for Busumbala to lead this Committee. He has a

master's degree in Security, and he was once an Intelligent Officer at the State House. Let us take national issues very seriously, please. We should be realistic and very honest to ourselves when choosing the leadership of committees. You cannot have Honourable Member for Busumbala and choose Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie to lead the Standing Committee on Defence and Security. This Committee has to perform oversight function on soldiers and the police, so his affiliation with the government will have an influence but having an independent person like the Member for Busumbala who has vast security experience is the rightful person to lead this committee. Thank you very much.

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I also want to join my colleagues to thank the Selection Committee for the work and the trouble they went through. I also have observations on the selection of both the Standing Committees and the International Delegations. In Kombo South, defence is a priority because six people were killed in Kombo South in the last five years and nothing was done about it. The incident of Buba Drammeh who killed Buba Jammeh in Gunjur was another case in point. Also, 28-year-old young man was killed in a broad day light, and the killer was taken to the security at Jeshwang, but he was left to escape the prison. Apparently, the Minister promised that they were going to investigate the issue, but no report to that effect. In the previous Legislature, the Standing Committee on Defence and Security did not complete their work.

Honourable Speaker, for the Standing Committee on Defence and Security to be led by Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie ... *[Interruption]*

[Point of Order]

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if it is a Point of Observation, you can allow or disallow, but this is a Point of Order. May we hear the Point of Order, please?

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Order 18 [Point of Order]: "Any Member deviating from this Standing Order maybe immediately call to order by the Speaker or any other Member raising Point of Order.". Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member is deviating from the main topic.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is the deviation?

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: I have cited the Order already.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let me rule on the Point of Order. Can we have Honourable Member for Kombo South to continue, please?

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Concerning security which is very key to me. As I said, the Standing Committee on Defence and Security should be headed by somebody with a background in security who will not be a threat to The Gambian people. Honourable Speaker, on the Select Committee on Education, Training, and ICT, I concur with my colleagues that it is about time we take the educational process going on seriously. So, I suggest that Honourable Mbow who has worked tirelessly with this committee to continue to work with Honourable Yaya Gassama as leaders to enable us to complete the unfinished business. We have a threatening situation now as students may not be sitting to their examinations because of the situation

in Foni. How do we have a committee that will not be able to solve that problem and aggravate the position of the students? I think it is important for us, National Assembly Members, to approve the selection of people who have the institutional memory to be able to take this committee to higher heights and to better place Gambia in the West African region. I support the idea of Honourable Gassama being part of this committee again.

Honourable Speaker, I think the Selection Committee did not listen to advice. They have constituted the ECOWAS Parliamentary Delegation by flouting the rules and made their own decision which is not in the best interest of the Gambian people. Thus, the Supplementary Act of 2016 signed by Honourable Bala Gaba Jahumpha on behalf of the President of the Republic of The Gambia is very clear on representation to the ECOWAS Parliament. According to it, when a member is sworn in, he/she shall remain a member of the ECOWAS Parliament until the end of that Legislative year which cannot be changed. Some mentioned that the former Speaker of the National Assembly was a member of the ECOWAS Delegation but that happened before this rule came into effect. This came into effect in 2016 when Honourable Fatoumatta Jahumpha Ceesay was not a Member of the National Assembly. I think people need to understand this so as not to mix oranges and apples.

Honourable Speaker, I am of the view that projects in this country should be properly and seriously monitored by us because a lot of money is pumped into these projects, and we are losing millions. So, how can we have somebody who does not have any background on infrastructural development to chair that committee? Also, the procurement processes are

not done in the right way. So, I want to decline and give chance to Honourable Sanyang who has been a seasoned procurement and project officer to lead the Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects for effectiveness. He can also help us put the money Gambians will be paying into better use.

Honourable Speaker, I want to remind this Assembly that it is important we look at the capacity, dedication, and commitment of people. Honourable Suwaibou Touray and the team had done a lot of work in the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Constitutional Matters. So, I think it is important that we give them opportunity to continue to the next level because we have a lot of human rights issues in this country that need to be solved. We can only do that when we have competent people, people who have the passion and commitment to do the work. I want the Committee of Selection to bring in Honourable Suwaibou Touray to lead this important committee.

To conclude, I want to move a motion without notice, Section 53[k], that all those selected now to be in the International Parliamentary Delegations be called on to give a ten-minute speech as to why they are the most qualified and what they know about the delegation they are selected to be part of. Honourable Speaker, that is the motion.

HON. SPEAKER: There is a motion on the floor moved by the Honourable Member for Kombo South who quoted Section 53[k] of the Standing Orders. I think the discretion of the Speaker can put that motion off, so that is why I said we have heard your motion. We are now looking

at the urgency of it. That is to hear Members given reasons as to why they should be in the committees they are selected.

Why is it only the International Delegations and not all other committees like the Select Committee on Education? If that is so, it would therefore mean that every member of each committee or delegation have to justify his/her membership. So, all members of the Assembly are equal since we are all here to represent regardless of whether a member holds a doctorate degree or a certificate. You are right that people who represent us should do so effectively. We are also cognizant of the fact that not everybody here has the relevant... I do not want to use that word, but we are not equal on the stage that is why we have more than three in a committee. I am confident that if 2 or 3 members in a committee are efficient, they can help the others so that everybody would have something to contribute. Also, I am with the opinion that one does not have to be chairperson of a committee to become very effective. I quite agree with you for us to select qualified people in the various committees where they can best contribute. So, I think we need to revisit that, Honourable Member for Kombo South, otherwise we will create a Pandora's box that we will not be able to control.

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH]: For the interest of time, I withdraw the Motion.

HON. SPEAKER: Alright, Honourable Member for Kombo South has withdrawn the motion.

[Point of Observation]

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The Honourable Member for Kombo South did suggest that I should be allowed to chair the Human Rights and Constitutional Matters Committee, but I am nominated here as the Chair of the Public Petitions Committee. I understand that Human Rights and Constitutional Matters, and Public Petitions Committee are both Standing Committees, so I cannot be the Chairperson of both. Thus, let me just be a member of the Human Rights and Constitutional Matters Committee. That would be satisfactory. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member.

HON. LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I would thank the Selection Committee for taking time to put people in the various committees. Having gone through the list of Committees, I realised that the background of members is part of the criteria for selection. So, what kind of background do we mean? Is it educational background or work experience or gender representation? I have a concern with respect to gender representation since out of 23 committees only one committee [Gender, Children and Social Welfare Committee] is to be chaired by a female. Consequently, having five ladies in the Assembly, three of whom are elected, I think they should be given the opportunity to chair more than one committee. Apparently, we have had lots of security lapses within the past five years and my sister, Honourable Fatou K. Jawara, was a member of that committee when she made it clear that she has no security background. So, do you think such a person will be able to... *[Interruption]*

[Point of Observation]

HON. SPEAKER: May we hear the Point of Observation, please?

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: The Honourable Member for Kiang West is misquoting me. I did not say I have no security background. I said we had the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson here in the Defence and Security Committee without security background, and I think every member's academic qualification matches with his/her experience. So, I am fit to be in that committee and no amount of intimidation can stop me.

HON. LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, I believe security is one of the most important sectors of our country, so anyone who does not have a background in it is not fit to be in that committee. So, she should not be in that committee otherwise our security would not be advised appropriately. And when it comes to the area... *[Interruption]*

[Point of Order]

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, in a Point of Order, you must quote the provisions of the relevant Standing Orders. So, which provision of the Standing Orders?

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Standing Order 29 [5] "No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member." So, I believe I need to be protected, Honourable Speaker. Tell the Member for Kiang West not to use improper motives against me.

HON. YAYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: 29 what? That is a wrong interpretation. She got it all wrong. That is not the interpretation of that.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Are you the Chair? Respect the Chair, please?

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Kiang West, I sincerely believe that every Member of the Assembly, elected or nominated, is competent and fit to belong to or be a Member of any Committee [i.e., Select or Standing], as well as Friendship Group. Now, it is left to the Assembly as a body to decide who to put where to achieve the best results possible. However, if a person is not put in a particular committee, it does not mean he/she is not fit to be in that committee. So, that term is unparliamentary and we should desist from it. Sincerely, the Honourable Member for Kiang West should withdraw that statement.

HON. LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, hence the selection of members to the committees is based on a set criterion which is important, so not everyone is fit or can be part of any committee.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have said that every member of this Assembly is fit and can belong to any committee. You do not have the mandate to say that an Honourable Member is not fit to belong to a committee when that person is equally sent in as a representative. Please, can you withdraw that for us to progress.

HON. LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, I humbly withdraw the statement. I want to make an observation with respect to the

Select Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare. In number 23, I have observed that all the five female National Assembly Members are in the said committee which has eight members all together. For gender equality and equity, I suggest we have four males and four females in that committee because gender representation does not necessarily mean only females. So, I believe this committee needs to be looked at again for possible addition of another male member to make it balance. Thank you very much.

HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, I would like to thank the Selection Committee for it is not easy to select members of the various committees even though there is set criteria. Honourable Members, we should know that these committees are central to the Assembly which is the heart of The Gambia. If these committees fail, we fail totally as a country. [*Laughing*]

The National Assembly is where we meet with different people who matter, so to select the membership of the committees, we have to look at it very carefully. For example, in the Defence and Security Committee, we should give opportunity to somebody who has more knowledge in that area to be part of the committee. We know one another here as The Gambia is too small. Therefore, I am also recommending the Chairperson for Defence and Security to be changed, please. Let the Committee look among themselves and choose their Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson since they know themselves. How can you just handpick somebody to be the Chairperson? It would mean imposing on people and that is not democratic. I think the list should just come verbally and indicate that each committee

is to select the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson among themselves. Through that, committees will be able to perform very well.

Also, [Number 15] regarding Select Committee on Health, Refugees, Disaster and Humanitarian Relief, who will say here that Honourable Member for Nianija should not be in that committee? Nobody will say that because he has health background. So, he should be given the opportunity to lead that committee. When health issues arise, he will be able to lead us. I am an educationist throughout my life. Consequently, if you take me to the Health Committee, I will only sit down and listen because I do not know much about health.

Honourable Speaker, how can one member be selected as chairperson of two or more committees? There will be no effectiveness in that. A Member should be a chairperson of only one committee and be a member in others. Chairing two committees brings conflict of interests. A chairperson is very important in a committee, so we have to look at it critically. I would reiterate the fact that Honourable Yaya Gassama, Member Kiang East, was an educationist, so it will be very important to have him in the Education Committee which he was previously a member. Honourable Speaker, let us bring him back to this committee because we were there before, and we know what is there. So, we want to continue the good work with him. The institutional memory is very important as far the work of committees is concern. In the same vein, the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu was also in the Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects, but he is moved. He should also be retained in that committee.

So, Honourable Speaker, these are some of the observations I want to make. As I stated before, committees are the heart of the National Assembly, because when committees fail, people will point fingers at us. So, let us consider The Gambia first if we want to enjoy our sitting in the Assembly. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Sami. As Chairman of the Committee of Selection, we are not being authoritarian, but Section 96[4] of the Standing Orders states: "The Committee of Selection may nominate the Chairperson of a committee, but if no Chairperson is nominated, the Committee shall elect its own Chairperson. A Committee, may elect its own Vice Chairperson." So, it is not more or less authoritarian or imposition, but it is there in the Standing Orders. Thank you. We now have Honourable Member for Janjanbureh.

HON. OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. May I please say that the Table Office needs to do the rightful selections as to who is to speak because some Members are given the floor for two to three times while some of us have been raising our hands without due recognition. Furthermore, I heard one of my colleagues saying that the selection of committees was consultative, but I want to bring it on records that I do not really think so because the composition of the committees excludes the independent representatives and I urge this august Assembly to consider that. Also, [Number 20] the Select Committee on Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports, in my view, does not fully represent the young people. I would like to recommend Honourable Modou Lamin B. Bah, the Member for

Banjul North, to be part of this committee because I was with him at the National Youth Council (NYC) as members and having him will be of great advantage. So, I would urge this august Assembly to consider my observation as to the composition of the committee. Also, regarding the chairpersonship of the committee, experience is paramount. I do not know what experience the Chairperson of the said committee has in relation to tourism development in this country, but I think it is important for us to sit together to select the right persons to chair the various committees. In addition, I think the Independent Members are not well represented in the International Delegations, so I would like this august Assembly to look into that and give due consideration.

I have also noticed that from Numbers 1 to 13 the Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons have been identified, but from 14 to the last Number have not been identified. So, I do not know if that was deliberate or was just meant for the committee members to decide among themselves. Basically, these are some of the things I want to put across. Thank you.

HON. ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Firstly, I just have an observation with regards to the list of membership of the committees. Most of the International Delegations are chaired by the re-elected Members, I do not know if it was based on experience as some of the Members indicated. We were all scrutinised at our constituency levels, and I believe any Member is fit enough to become a chair of a particular committee. So, the newly elected Members should also be chairpersons of some committees and/or delegations.

Secondly, as the Independent Member for Janjanbureh rightly said, there was no consultation done at the level of the Independent Members. I expected the committee to have asked the Majority Leader to consider the representation of the Independent Members in these committees.

Similarly, I can fully remember that the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu was one of the Members of the Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects, although I was not in the Assembly then but working with GAMEX, a consulting company in the country during which I used to see him and Honourable Sambla Jallow on monitoring tour of development projects. He used to ask us very tough questions during that time which motivated us to do the right thing as consultants and contractors. So, I see no reason why he should be removed from that committee because his work was very effective in my opinion. Therefore, based on that experience, I truly believe he should be included in that committee once more. Thank you.

HON. BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I have observed that the Committee of Selection has done a great job and they need to be commended. Nevertheless, looking at the membership lists, you will realise that the members of the Selection Committee have fixed themselves well in the various committees and the International Parliamentary Delegations. They are all in the International Delegations since Honourable Salifu Jawo is selected in the Pan African Parliament, Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay and Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay are in the ACPU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Billay G. Tunkara also selected in ECOWAS Parliament together

with Alhagie S. Darboe who are all members of the Committee of Selection. I do not seem to know, but I think something is special about these delegations. These Parliamentary Delegations are very sensitive because it is about speeches towards Pan Africanism and its concept. How far has one been defending Africa? What has one done for Africa? I think it is one's inner spirit that should be demonstrated in the above delegations to help actualise the best interest of Africa.

Also, I support the idea of Honourable Yaya Gassama being part of the Select Committee on Education, Training, and ICT, because there is nobody more educationist than him. The Education Committee is a business committee which needs to work effectively as the tragedy in Foni is unacceptable. So, the committee should start work immediately to regulate the urgent issues due to the unrest in the area. Ultimately, the Committee of Selection should go back to the drawing board and put themselves into other committees rather than putting themselves in the International Delegation. Thank you.

HON. ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The document presented before us, as a guide with respect to the various committees, will only be in effect if we properly scrutinise and agree on it.

I thank the Clerk, his team, and the Selection Committee for the great job. It is a herculean task to check the 58 National Assembly Members' profiles and suitably place them in the different committees. No proper selection will be made as far as the status quo is concerned, but we are to scrutinize

and disagree to agree in the best interest of the Assembly and the country at large. So, I believe it is not a witch hunt, but it should be seen as the best practice for us to achieve the desired goals. Also, we should bear in mind that posterity will judge us as National Assembly Members.

Honourable Speaker, I have some observations in key areas such as [Number 16], the Select Committee on Education, Training, and ICT. Actually, I have been in the field of education for quite a while in which I have worked with the selected Chairperson of the committee. I think we can really work together to change the narrative of the country as far as education is concerned. I believe the committee will perform well in the deliberations. Three weeks ago in my Constituency, students were not going to school because of the tragic border crisis. Although last week the Permanent Secretary and Officials from the Regional Education Directorate went to Kappa School in Foni Kansala to discuss the issues of the teachers on strike demanding their risk allowances. "Alhamdulillah", they have reached a consensus, but I will go there to follow it up because most of the GABECE practical works are not even marked on account of the strike. I believe the Select Committee on Education would do better to iron out some of the issues affecting the Region, particularly Foni. From 2017 to date, the education level of my people in both Upper and Senior has drastically declined because of the effect of the incident.

Another area of concern is Defence and Security Committee which I have some experience and background, although, the Committee of Selection have made their findings and conclusion, it should still be scrutinized. The Assembly is not about colours but The Gambia, so we would strive to

change the status quo as we move on regarding defence and security. I believe the list of membership that was comprehensively given has somebody who can chair the committee and perform better with the support of members. Competency does not matter sometimes because somebody may be recognised as incompetent, but maybe better than those perceived to be competent. I believe Honourable Muhamed Kanteh, Member for Busumbala, could serve as chairperson in this committee to wipe the tears of my people in Foni. For example, Haruna Jatta was murdered, Ismaila Tamba was shot in the Kanfenda incident, children were brutalised, and farmers are deprived of cultivating their agricultural farms based on the nature of the current situation in Foni. So, these are hell lot of issues that I think the Standing Committee on Defence and Security should endeavour to ensure that last peace and security are restored in our Region. We have ECOMIG stationed in Foni, and thousands of properties are being destroyed. We can only tackle these issues provided we have a leader capable of changing the status quo of this important committee.

Moreover, honesty is key in performing one's role effectively in every society or organization. So, if one is selected Chairperson of two committees, he/she ought to decline the chairpersonship of the second committee to give chance to others because we all know that the work of National Assembly Committees is a mammoth task. Also, we are divided into various committees as per our expertise or area of specialization. If for instance you find yourself in a committee that you cannot perform better, simply seek for an appropriate swap in the best interest of those committees.

On the International Delegations, we, the Independent Members, were never consulted in the selection of membership. I believe my colleague has mentioned the reason why people grab such delegations. As alluded to, the new NAMs also have that mandate to analyse, research and deliver to expectation, but I believe we are not considered in the International Delegations. The Committee of Selection have put themselves in these delegations and ignored others. To have a fair and balanced Assembly, the Selection Committee should very carefully consider the observations highlighted.

As regards the Parliamentary Friendship Groups, I am a seasoned trainer and I have good Arabic background as well, so, I think it would be good to have me in the Gambia - Saudi Arabia Friendship Group. I am not lobbying but I have been working with a lot of donors which impacted the lives of many in the society, especially the Muslim community. I believe consideration should be made in this regard.

In the area of Agriculture, I would like to reiterate that my people are being deprived of their farmlands because of the Senegalese occupation of the area, so I submit to this August Assembly that something needs to be done immediately because by June or July farming will start.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, we are not on an adjournment debate, so be specific with the issues and observations on the agenda item, please.

HON. ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you, I beg to take my seat.

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. We are here as representatives of the Gambian people and not preferencing party colours or labelling somebody as a threat. Honourable Speaker, the Chairperson of Defence and Security Committee in the Fifth Legislature was the former Deputy Speaker, and the Vice Chairperson was Honourable Halifa Sallah who leads a political party. Despite their engagements, they delivered well because their interest was The Gambia. So, we should emulate them in the best interest of the country.

Honourable Speaker, someone being a chairperson of a particular committee does not mean he/she cannot be scrutinized by members of that committee. If he/she is not doing the right thing, committee members should apprise him/her of his/her flaws. For instance, Honourable Sulayman Saho worked with us in the Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects as our Chairperson, but we sometimes criticise him very well. Members can criticise their chairpersons yet work hand in glove to move The Gambia forward. Please, Honourable Members, let us forget about party politics and work as a team because we are representing the people of The Gambia. In fact, we need to emphasize decorum by ignoring or keeping our differences outside the Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, I have issues to raise as the composition of committees is based on party representation, experience and so on. With regard to Chairpersonship of committees, the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu was the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects, and he has

demonstrated his competence as well as worked hand in glove with the members of his committee as earlier mentioned by the Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal. Although we have our differences, he supports things of national interest. The Gambia belongs to all of us so let us give chance to anyone who can do the work to lead us.

In addition to that, I want to decline my membership in the Health Committee and move to another like the Monitoring Committee.

HON. SPEAKER: Can you quote the number, please?

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes, Number 15. I have discussed the issue with the Deputy Majority Leader, so I propose that Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay and I be swapped because I do not want to be in a committee where I will be less effective. So, I seek your permission to swap me with Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you saying that you want to move from the Health Committee to Monitoring Committee?

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER: So, you want him to replace you in the committee you are being selected, and you move to his committee. Is that what you are proposing?

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. In fact, I have proposed it to him, and we agreed. *[...laughing]*

On a more serious note, I am a member of The Gambia-Venezuela Friendship Group, but if there exist anybody who is not captured in any of

these, I can easily decline to give that person a chance since I am also in ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. On that note, I beg to take my seat.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would like to remind you that we have Standing Committees, Select Committees, International Parliamentary Delegations and Parliamentary Friendship Groups. These are 4 different categories of membership and for your information, we tried as much as possible to have at least every National Assembly Member in each of the friendship organizations at least before being a member of two. Thank you. We now have the Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON. SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Firstly, I thank the Standing Committee of Selection very much for a job well done.

Besides, I have few observations and one suggestion possibly. As rightly mentioned by my honourable colleagues regarding the chairpersonship of the committees, I also suggest we allow the members of the different committees to sit among themselves to select their Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons, if that is acceptable. Furthermore, it is worth knowing that we are to work as a team. The Chairperson is there to lead but certainly he is not the only one to decide. We decide as a group based on our experiences to help the Chairperson to deliver on our behalf. He is like a captain in a team who does not play the whole game all alone but has the support of the other players. I think we must look at things properly. I heard from colleagues that we have experienced people within the committees, so for me, that is excellent. It would have been a serious issue

or problem had it been that they were not part of any committee. If the Chairpersons were selected based on experiences per se, that is welcoming for me.

Talking about experience, some Members in the last Legislature were not experienced in certain committee responsibilities assigned to them, but they were able to learn on the job. So, learning on the job is essentially what we are highlighting. We are also experienced in different areas because some of us were heading associations, companies and organisations which cumulatively will help in executing our oversight functions. So, we, the new Members, should also be seen as people with relevant experience, and who can deliver.

The re-elected Members are re-elected because they had good connections with their people through the feedbacks, they give them. Similarly, we, the new Members, are also elected for a reason and experience is an integral part of our election as representatives of the people. So, the new NAMs can equally deliver or even better than some of the re-elected ones. Sorry for any inconvenience but let us see ourselves and work together as one family in the committees. Let us go back to the drawing board as committees and then come up with ideas which the chairpersons will report on behalf of the committees. When they are reporting, the members can observe them. Thank you.

HON. KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I would start by commending the Selection Committee for the job well done. It was not an easy task putting into

consideration certain elements about representation such as gender, since we have only five females out of the 58 Members, it is the responsibility of the Committee of Selection to put the bits together and come up with a very formidable force.

Honourable Speaker, I have listened very well to the interventions of the Members and three main points were highlighted. The first thing was about representation. Basically, in relation to the Independent Members, I think this august Assembly must have a keen ear and have an oversight responsibility to do self-assessment. Now, if some Members say they are not represented, we should ask ourselves what are the underlining principles? I think whatever was done by the Selection Committee was either guided by the Constitution or the National Assembly Standing Orders. So, what I would suggest is for the august Assembly to quote Standing Order 111 and then correlate it to what is obtained on the report of the Committee of Selection.

According to Standing Order 111 [1], the Committee of Selection shall consist of the Speaker as Chairperson and five Members of the Assembly of whom three shall be nominated by the Majority Leader and two by the Minority Leader. Therefore, if we turn to page 2 of the report of the Committee of Selection on the nomination of Members, you will have the members of the committee as follows:

1. Honourable Speaker as provided in the Standing Order,
2. Honourable Billay G. Tunkara from NPP,
3. Honourable Alhagie S. Darboe from UDP,

4. Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay from NPP,
5. Honourable Salifu Jawo from NPP and
6. Honourable Madi K. Ceesay from UDP.

Consequently, the composition of the Committee of Selection is in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Assembly.

[Point of Order]

HON. SPEAKER: May we hear the Point of Order by quoting the relevant section of the Standing Orders?

HON. ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Standing Order 111 as the Honourable Nominated Member refer to which states that the Committee of Selection shall consist of the Speaker as Chairperson and five Members of the Assembly of whom three shall be nominated by the Majority Leader and two by Minority Leader in consultation with their respective groups. So, we did not say that we are supposed to be represented in this committee. All what we are emphatically saying is that we were neither consulted by the Majority Leader nor the Minority Leader in the nomination of the five other Members besides the Speaker to constitute the Committee of Selection.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is not a Point of Order. It is probably a Point of Observation or Information. We expected you to raise a Point of Order instead. So, can we allow the nominated Member to continue, please?

HON. KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and the Member for Sabach Sanjal. That is exactly where I was

coming if at all the composition of the Committee of Selection was done in accordance with the Standing Orders, we can now look at how it was executed. That brings the important question, where does the Independent Members fit? Do they fit with the Majority or the Minority? I would like the entire Assembly to digest on that. On the issue of representation, we need to improve on consultation among ourselves. It is, therefore, important to involve the Independent Members in whatever we are doing but I would not deliberate further on how that should be done. I think both the Majority and the Minority Leaders are in better position to continue in that endeavour.

The other issue most Members deliberated on was the ECOWAS Parliamentary Delegation of which the Honourable Members for Banjul South and Kombo South quoted the same relevant Section of the ECOWAS Protocol. I have listened keenly while they consistently talked about the issue of disqualification from the ECOWAS parliament. According to them, a member can only be disqualified if he or she is not elected? This needs to be clarified as elections are at two levels. Are they referring to election at constituency level or at the Assembly level? Of course, I am neither supporting A nor B or changing the composition of committees, but as far as Assembly deliberations are concerned, we should not leave any room for ambiguity. Whatever we say must be crystal clear so that at the end of the day we can be better guided.

Also, I would align myself with my brother, Honourable Member for Foni Kansala that the old Members know where is good, but we should not make that definition because if we do, we might be wrong. We are

supposed to be a united Assembly and a formidable force, so let us put aside our party colours. It should start today because by virtue of forming these committees, be they standing or select, the 6th Legislature is assuming its powers which are not only the oversight and legislative powers but also the power of representation. Therefore, membership to these committees is important, and the Committee of Selection reported that they have looked at the background (academic background and work experience) of all NAMs which means whatever is obtained in this list should be good for the Assembly. I have gone the extra mile to put party tags on individual members and realised that all the parties are proportionally represented since there are the NPPs, the UDPs, and the independent Members, and so on. Although, in some instances, there are some lapses. I have certain expertise in relation to certain committees where I did not find myself, but I believe I am already overloaded. Unless we have other motives, but if at all our motive is to serve, efficiency should be underscored.

Finally, I would like to make some observations about the Standing Order Committee on Defence and Security which should be on page 3 of the report [Number 8]. I believe the security sector is one of the most important sectors of the country which should not be taken for granted. It is only natural that this Assembly is given the oversight function to regularly scrutinize the security sector to the best interest of the country. Unfortunately, we have taken some missteps on the very first day of the Sixth Legislature. I think no individual Member has an iota of the country's interest at heart more than the other because this is the only country, we

all have. So, it is rather unfortunate for Honourable Members to label one another. [some interruptions]

HON. SPEAKER. Honourable Members, we have laws governing this institution which are made and approved by us. So, we are all expected to go by them. Please, address all your issues to the Chair and let us allow the Honourable nominated Member to continue.

HON. LANG KEBBA FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Speaker, the point I am referring to is that there are nine (9) members in the Standing Committee on Defence and Security from Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie to Honourable Abdou Sowe. These Honourable Members are supposed to work together to make sure the security sector of this country serves the people. I believe that Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie has the experience since he has served in the National Assembly before, and he served the country well. If in one way or the other, he is not the Chair of the committee, then it must be based on expertise. I am somebody who believes in merit. If there is someone who has security background, let the individual lead the committee. The selection should not be automatic. Let us allow the committee itself to decide but we should not start labelling one another. This Assembly is Honourable, and we should be always exemplary. Honourable Speaker, on that note, I thank you.

HON. KEBBA T. SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Most of the observations I would like to draw your attention to have already been pointed out. It is only one area that the debate is centred on which is leadership because, in my view,

anyone of us be it elected or nominated is competent or qualified enough to be here. Remember we rigorously competed with one, two or three people in our respective constituencies, and we were eventually voted in to be here. Leadership is all about commitment and teamwork, so we are just debating on as to who supposed to lead or not lead a committee. Talking about experience, my experience can never be known unless I am tested. So, we must be competent enough and dedicated to serve our country because we swore to defend the interest of this country. By virtue of that, I believe anyone of us is fit to serve in any position or committee. What matters most as a leader is to be a keen listener or a learner. Leaders must learn from and listen to the people they are leading to achieve the desired results.

Every one of us represents our constituencies, so all of us are fit to be in any committee but going by the Whiteman's knowledge of experience is another way of eliminating others. For those of us coming newly to the Assembly, it means we have to be back benchers because we do not get the right experience. We must be tested that we get the requisite experience if not there will be no term limit for leadership because those with the experience will continue to lead. I thank you.

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Let me join my colleagues to thank the Committee of Selection for cross checking our CVs to come up with this selection modalities.

Honourable Members today is one of the most important day as we are laying the foundation of the Sixth Legislature for the next five (5) years. We are deciding on committees which are the life blood of the National Assembly. Therefore, if we are dealing with these committees, we should do the right thing. For example, I am almost fifteen years in the Assembly since then, I have always been a member of only two committees, that is, the FPAC and the Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects. Now, I am removed from all these committees and taken to another committee constituting new members meaning that we are all new in the committee. Do you want to utilise my experience or just dump me in that committee? These committees are very important, so we should have the right members in each of the committees. Honourable Speaker, as we all know the Member for Busumbala was a security personnel, I am not saying that he should be the Chair but let him be part of the Defence and Security Committee.

The other issue Honourable Speaker is that the Selection Committee has done their selection, but I would want us to refer the selection of the Chairpersons of committees to the Committees themselves because the plenary is the highest decision-making body in the Assembly, once a selection is done and approved at that level, it is not easy to undo. Therefore, let us refer it to the committees to select their chairpersons and vice-chairpersons. So that if the person selected is proven to be inefficient, the committee can just sit down and replace him with somebody. This is my opinion.

Honourable Speaker, the Standing Order has made it very clear that the FPAC Committee and the Public Enterprise Committee [PEC] cannot be chaired by parties in government. Both the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the said committees should come from the opposition group so that in the event the Chairperson is absent automatically the next person will take it up.

[Point of Clarification]

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. The Member was saying that if the selection is done at the level of the Selection Committee, we cannot remove him unless we go back, that is incorrect. What is correct is that, when it comes to a vote of no confidence, it can be done at the committee level, and you can be removed. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Yes, you can refer to Section [98] of the Standing Orders.

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I do not want to argue with the issue of ECOWAS protocol. The decision would not be taken here; it will be taken in May when we are all there. We have already received our letters to participate in the next session. It is irrelevant to argue anything here because it is only applicable at the ECOWAS level. We will be there in May by the grace of God.

Honourable Speaker, I think these are the few observations that I have but we must be very careful with the way the committee is setup especially

about my case. I have 10years experience as a member of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] and the Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects, taking me to another committee I do not know would seriously underutilise my potentials. So, are we doing justice to the selection? Anyway, we have seen People with their expertise being removed and dump into other committees. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Niamina Dankunku. I want us to refresh our minds as I noticed that series of recommendations are being put forward focusing on one issue that is to allow the committees to select their various chairpersons and vice-chairpersons. I heard it over and over, but we must be mindful if we want to ensure that we capture all the various political groupings, gender representation and competence of individual members. So, we must be careful as we approach the issue otherwise, we may create more problems.

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Firstly, I want to thank the Selection Committee for dealing with a very delicate job. I think the issue on the table is about the committees, which is the lifeblood of the Assembly. In my view, it is going to be difficult for the selection process of a committee to satisfy the entire National Assembly because people have different and diverse interests. Notwithstanding, I want the set criteria that were put by the Selection Committee that is political pluralism, the background of the Members, and gender Representation to be reconsidered especially the background of Members which should not only be limited to their academic experience but also the experience gathered by Honourable Members in the previous

Legislature [Fifth Legislature]. Previous Speakers before me did emphasize that some committees were performing more than others owing to good leadership citing that if the leadership of a particular committee is not proactive, it is always difficult for that committee to live up to expectation. As far as our oversight functions are concerned, I want us to consider a member who served a particular committee in the Fifth Legislature because such a member is not a passenger but a carrier. He/she can offer a lot in that committee, and the fact that there is a lot of unfinished jobs to be completed, such members can guide the committee to accomplish all the pending works. That is my observation and I want you to put that into consideration. Going back to the report of the Selection Committee at the tail end of No. 14 [Subsidiary Legislation], there is a footnote that says, it requires no plenary approval. So, I want the mover of the motion to make that emphasis. Are you talking about the committees or are you talking about the composition? So, I want you to make emphasis on that. It is always very unfortunate to come last, but I want to stop here for the time being.

HON. MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I will try to be very brief as I just want to highlight some issues that I have observed in Africa specifically in The Gambia. We make good laws, but in practice, we miss the first steps. We are informed that the basis of selection for the composition of the committee is the background of the candidate but the selection itself reflects otherwise which means that we are defeating the very purpose because the reason for considering their backgrounds and

experience is to make sure they are comfortable in their positions and effectively execute their functions. That is one of the problems that we are having.

I want to specifically talk about the Defence and Security Committee. I would not like anyone to downgrade the importance of this committee. The Gambia is part of a region that is very volatile and then we have a lot of security challenges, and this committee must play a very instrumental role in guiding this august Assembly with regards to the formulation of effective security strategies in the country. We have had our security challenges in the Fifth Legislature, and a case in point was the Faraba Bantang issue. We do not know how proactive the previous committee has been, and we heard somebody saying that one of the members did not have a security background. So, giving such a committee to somebody who does not have any security background amounts to defeating the purpose, because that committee is supposed to scrutinize the security apparatus, both the Police and the Army, and any individual with that responsibility should be au fait with the operations of that institutions. So, we cannot afford to have a chairperson with no security background. He/she must know something about that institution so that it will be very easy to support him. Like Honourable Jarawa once said here, that is exactly our priority. It is a positive move that you voluntarily exclude yourself from a committee in which you feel it will take you time to adjust yourself. This is what we expect every member to do when you are positioned in a committee. I beg to object the nomination of Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie as Chairperson of the said committee since he does not have that security background.

Further to that, will he have the audacity to speak the truth through the power he wields as a chairperson because we have security challenges and sometimes the Select Committee on Security will go and do their findings and report to the National Assembly plenary. We expect that report to be impartial without influence because we have all sworn to that.

The other issue as alluded to by the Honourable Member for Foni Bintang and others that they [members of the Selection Committee] have fixed themselves in all these International Delegations. You cannot tell me that this move is based on experience. Five years ago, prior to your entry into the Assembly as a member, where was the experience? So, do not tell us that you got into those committees because of your experience. There is no school that teaches people to go to West African Parliament, and there is no certificate also. So, I thought it would have been a best practice to allow the fresh people to go and expose themselves because we have seen the composition of members who were in those delegations. They have been in other International Delegations and have now shifted over to another delegation., Are they the only competent people here? Are they the only members Gambian people have elected? I think the best practice would have been to allow others to also serve after the expiry of their five - year term. I have only seen one or two new members and, I highly encourage that. In my view, they could have allowed or given chance to those that have been in the Fifth Legislature and were not exposed to that leadership level. I do not think, there is anything like parliamentary experience with regards to that.

I want to re-echo the statements of Honourable Member for Kiang West with regards to the Select Committee on Gender, Children, and Social Welfare. I am all out for women's advancement, but that does not mean we should dump them in one committee. The fact that it has something to do with gender does not mean that it is where they can function well. The gender parity like Honourable Member for Banjul South has indicated is the reason why they have grouped all of them in one committee and that is why you cannot see them in other committees. However, this is limiting their inclusion to other committees. So, I want to suggest that it is enough to have a female to chair it, and another female to deputize so that the other three female members be taken to other committees where we do not have any female member, in that way, we will have female representatives in all committees. Thank you.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Thank you so much Honourable Speaker. I am not speaking as a member of the Selection Committee; I am speaking as a Member for Old Yundum Constituency with regards to the composition of the members in the various committees in the Sixth Legislature of the National Assembly. I would like to help the Majority Leader who is the mover of the motion before he comes to clarify issues raised by National Assembly Members. In fact, part of what I wanted to say has been clarified by the Nominated Member Honourable Kebba Lang Fofana on various issues relating to Defence and Security and other committees as per the International Delegations. Still on the Standing Committee on Defence and Security, I heard Honourable Members talking about an individual who cannot chair the committee. I think that is not fair,

we have looked at the backgrounds of Honourable Members, political pluralism and then the party representation. Therefore, as far as I know, Honourable Seedy SK Njie was a law student at the University of The Gambia, and I think having him as a member of that committee and as a Chair is something that... *[Interruption]*

[Point of Order]

HON. MADI M.K. CEESAY [SERREKUNDA WEST]: Honourable Speaker, my Honourable colleague from Old Yundum is a Member of the Selection Committee. I think the ideal thing would have been to wait until Honourable Members make their observations, if he has anything to add on or clarify, he can do so. However, he should not intervene at this time of the debate.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: I just wanted to clarify certain issues because I do not think it is right for this issue to come on and on. It should be clarified once and for all so that other members who have not spoken can take it up from there.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I think what he was saying is that you being part of the Selection Committee should listen to comments from individual members and afterwards you address their concerns by making clarifications.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Honourable Speaker I am a National Assembly Member for Old Yundum Constituency and I think I have the right to speak my mind.

HON. SPEAKER: You still have the right; it is just a suggestion. If you want to continue you can please do so.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Of course, I want to continue. I just wanted to buttress more on what they have said on the nomination of Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie as Chairperson to dispel the sentiments coming from Honourable Members in that regard.

Some of my colleagues have said that there is somebody in the Selection Committee with a security background who also served in the Fifth Legislature, and I also heard Honourable Member for Tallinding saying that, in the last Legislature, the Defence and Security Committee was not functioning effectively. So, if we have somebody who has a security background and the committee was not functioning, why did the National Assembly fail to select somebody who has a security background to lead that committee as per his submission? So, I think it is wise for us to select that member into the committee. The position of the Chairperson is nothing to me, what is more important is to have qualified members in the committee to support the Chairperson to do the job. So, for me, it is not about pointing a finger at an individual to say he should not be a chairperson of a select committee or standing committee, it is about the composition. Let us talk about the composition. Do we have the right people in that committee to do the job effectively? This is something that should bother us rather than pointing fingers at an individual to say he/she is not supposed to be the Chairperson. This is what I wanted to clarify. Thank you.

HON. BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the opportunity to highlight some of the issues being discussed. Firstly, I want to thank the Selection Committee for selecting people into various positions. This is not an easy job as it involved having to scrutinise the CVs of all the National Assembly Members before anything is done. So, I just want to make a personal appeal to the National Assembly Members to put the interest of our dear country first the moment we enter this building. We should disregard our party affiliations, and constituencies, what should concern us is The Gambia. What is more important to me is the composition of the committees. Interestingly, I have already tendered my CV, and by profession, I am a health worker and an educationist, I also have skills in sport and the media, but I cannot be in all these committees. So, what is important is to work as a team in whatever committee you may find yourself. Being the Chairperson does not mean that whatever you say should stand. The members are more effective than the Chairperson. So, I want Members to understand so that the unnecessary confusion can be averted. We should not be in a state of limbo over the issue of selection. This is just the beginning of the journey. So, I am urging members to respect the decision made by the Selection Committee. We can just come up with our opinions, but this is a responsibility assigned to them. If you want to see it the other way round, we will make life difficult for us. Thank you.

HON. OMAR JOBE [NIANI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the chance. In fact, what I wanted to say have been highlighted by my colleagues, but I still have few things that I want to talk

about especially on the issue of security. In our criteria for selection of members into the Defence and Security Committee, the issue of background and experience took centre stage in our arguments. It is very important to have the background knowledge of a particular issue, but the experience is paramount because once we have a member of a committee who have the experience, he/she would be able to help the Chairperson regardless of whether he/she has the experience or not in carrying out that function. The weakness of that committee can only be realised if there is no teamwork. Défense and Security is very crucial especially in rural Gambia. Although, we tend to focus everything within the Kombos [urban areas] but the rural Gambia is also suffering. In my constituency, there is a particular area where an attack is launched against a particular village on a yearly basis and is still happening. When you go to Niani and Sami, it is the same story. To conclude, I want to suggest that the inexperienced members be given chance to also have the necessary experience. On that note, I thank you.

HON. FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I have some observations which I want to bring to the attention of the National Assembly. One of the points is gender equality which I think needs to be taken very carefully. I want to appeal to the Selection Committee to consider this properly because referring back to the registration of voters which preceded our elections, women have turned out to register and have constituted the majority in every registration centre which enabled them to vote for us during the last elections. So, I think they should also allow the women to

chair some of the committees. I also want to suggest that the newly elected members be considered in chairing some of the sub-committees because if we are not given the chance to learn, we will not have the experience which is not fair to the newly elected members. I think we can take cue from the former Majority Leader and Member for Kombo South who took the position of Chairperson in the ECOWAS Parliament right at the beginning of his parliamentary term in the Fifth Legislature.

I want to recommend Honourable Member for Serekunda West to head the Delegation of the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly. I would also like to seek clarification from the Selection Committee as to why Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay is chosen to chair the committee when Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay was already there during the last Legislature. I thank you so much.

HON. ABDOU SOWE [KOMBO EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I have an observation here on page 10 under the list of International Parliamentary Delegations and Membership. I have noticed that the Selection Committee as my colleague Honourable Member for Foni Kansala rightly said that they have fixed themselves very well in this.... [interruption]

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member you said page 10, what is the number of the committee you are talking about?

HON. ABDOU SOWE [KOMBO EAST]: If you look at [Line 4], list of International Parliamentary Delegations and Membership, the selection process right from number 1 to 8 has clearly indicated that the Selection Committee was there to serve themselves. Having seen this, it seems we

are treated as newcomers, but we also came into the National Assembly with our diverse experience and capability. I can fit well into the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [page 3 No.7] than any other committee because it is [aligned to my CV]. I am advising the Selection Committee to go back to the drawing board to check the individual CVs because the national interest matters most. We should consider this with due diligence to fix members in their correct areas of competence to serve the country better. We have all submitted our CVs, but I am not comfortable with the way members are slotted in the committees because I found myself to be very unfitting in some of the committees and I want it to be revisited for better service delivery. I thank you very much.

HON. MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I just want to commend the Selection Committee for a job well done. I would also like to remind everyone of us with this saying, "a problem that is not solved is still a problem, but a problem that is solved is no more a problem". I believe this is a situation that we are facing right now as a team. So, it is important for the Selection Committee to go back to the drawing board to consider and recognize the importance of equal representation. Looking at the different committees we have, I believe competence is also very key in the selection of members into committees.

Regarding the International Parliamentary Delegations and Membership [page10], I have not seen myself being part of any of the delegations or committees much to my surprise. Notwithstanding, I have provided my CV which they do not seem to understand. I am very experienced as I have

served internationally, and I was a public servant working with the Banjul City Council. In addition to that, I have been the focal person between [Nanjing City] in China and the Banjul City Council which have yielded dividends especially during the COVID. I believe this is something that needs to be considered when going through our profiles. Being a member of these delegations is not only for the sake of membership, but it should be beneficial to the country. Members should understand the International Protocols which have nothing to do with sentiments. I believe all of you will agree with me that understanding issues especially international issues is very important. I do not want to mention names on the list, but I believe like I said before, the Selection Committee needs to go back and review our profiles to come up with a very good selection procedure with regards to our International Delegations.

In the list of Parliamentary Friendship Groups [on page 12], I saw myself in the Gambia- Franco Friendship Group. I appreciate that group, but I think I have more understanding about the issues between Gambia and China and I should be part of that group. This is my appeal to the Selection Committee. Thank you very much.

HON. MAIMUNA CEESAY [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I want to comment a little bit about what my colleagues have been emphasizing here. Firstly, I would like to thank the Selection Committee for doing this wonderful job. This world is not balanced, and not everybody will get it their own way, but at least, we have to promote understanding and harmony among ourselves. Not everybody can serve in a committee of their choice, but when it comes to

the interest of the National Assembly and the people who were serving here, we must consider so many things.

I would like to refer to the Honourable Member for Kiang West who indicated that putting all the five female candidates in one committee is not balanced. I just want to put to him that gender and children are our domain, and you do not want us to be left behind. Out of the 23 committees, we have only nine committees where the females are represented. So, sharing the positions in that committee should not be a problem. Therefore, I would like the committee members to understand that these are the various positions we can also do better.

In the National Assembly, we expect us to be very decorum when it comes to deliberations. We must respect each other. We are all adults, and we are responsible people. We all know our missions here and cannot be looking at each other's eye or attacking each other. I think today is our first day and we are learners who want to learn in a better way. The comments from the two "Kiangkas" were not very favourable, and I just want them to see... *[Interruption]*

THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please address all concerns to the Chair.,

HON. MAIMUNA CEESAY [NOMINATED]: We must respect each other; Let us put party politics behind us. We are here to represent the people of The Gambia, let us see ourselves as responsible and formidable members who are expected to put the country first before politics. Honourable Seedy Njie is a Gambian and for him to serve in any of these committees is

his fundamental right. To attack his personality does not tell well, I want to put that to my colleagues. Thank you, I beg to take my seat.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker and all Honourable Members that have contributed so far to the debate for the confirmation of the draft report of the selection committee.

Honourable Speaker, this is not an easy task as we are dealing with fifty-eight [58] members, with variant profiles and experiences, and putting them into categories is not an easy task. We must thank them for giving it a try. What we have is a draft not final, and it is up to us to make suggestions to them based on what we know about their experiences, education and where we think they can fit. That is all and nothing else. This is just a suggestion that they have. It is not a perfect document, but it is up to us to make it perfect so that we can move forward and work as a team.

The effectiveness of any committee or the productivity of any committee does not rest in the hands of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, or the rapporteur. It is the responsibility of all the members that must work together to understand the remits of the committee itself and move this nation forward. To give an example, I was in the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for the past five years, I was neither the Chairperson nor the Vice-Chairperson and not even the rapporteur, but in most of the reports I used to present and defend them. It is about teamwork; it is about sharing our education and experience to move on. This has nothing to do with the Chair. The Chair of the said committee was

the Speaker of the National Assembly, and the Vice-Chairperson was Honourable Sidia S. Jatta, but because of the way the FPAC works together as a team, everybody contributes, we share it and move the committee forward. In fact, that is why I say you must understand the remits of the committee before we draw conclusion that this one is not fit, or I am fit here and there.

To give you another example, I can fit in about ten committees in this Assembly, and I will work very well, but I cannot be in all those committees. If you look at the Public Enterprise Committee [PEC], I can also fit in very well, but I cannot be there. We must be contented sometimes and know our limitations because the more committees you are in, the more ineffective you become. The work of these committees is very demanding. So, let us see where we think we can fit best, and we give them suggestions so that they can finalize the document. I can tell you from experience, that the effectiveness of the committee does not depend on the hands of the Chairperson. There had been instances where we replaced chairpersons here because of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. We removed them and put somebody who can deliver. We can do that based on Standing Order 98.

So, I can tell you, do not fear anybody here as we are all equal. Nobody can drive you except the constituency that elected you or the President that nominated you. We must work together and to ensure that the remits of these committees are respected. Let us do as it is expected of us. There will be no dictatorship in this Assembly, be rest assured.

Honourable Speaker, I think there are two Committees that I think I can give my suggestion to. One is the Gender Committee. I know the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu, we worked together for the past five years. He is my in-law, a very good one for that matter, but he is very particular about this Gender Committee, and we have about eight members right now. I will suggest that we add him there to make it nine members because he is very passionate about gender activities. We are suggesting that we add him to that committee. The other one is the Member for Kiang East Honourable Gassama, also in the Education Committee, we were there together as a team. He has a lot of experience, he was the Chairperson of the Education Committee, and I was the Vice Chairperson. We worked so well together as a committee. So, I think it is important that we can bring him back to the committee. If need be, we can remove him from another committee or reduce the number of members.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, as per your first suggestion, where do you want us to place the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu Honourable Sulayman Saho?

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: To be in the Gender Committee.

HON. SPEAKER: And how about the other one?

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: It is about the Member for Kiang East to be retained in the Education Committee.

HON. SPEAKER: Okay you can continue.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes, that is up to him. I am just suggesting for him to be there but wherever he wants to get himself maybe he can say it. It is just based on the experience both of us had in that committee and we worked so well together, I know we have a lot on the table that we need to put back for plenary. I think it is important that we at least have two or three members, because if you look at it now, it looks like I am the only returning member of the Committee for Education, everybody else has been removed. So, it is important that we bring him back.

Then on the issue of International Delegations particularly with ECOWAS, we need to be very careful here. The selection of members of any International Committee rests on us here at plenary. The Selection Committee gave us a list in 2017, by way of a motion from the Majority Leader, we were able to confirm members and sent them to ECOWAS, Pan African Parliament, and other International Delegations. When they were going, they took along a letter of confirmation indicating that they are representing The Gambia in those committees for a period of five years effective from 2017 to 2022 to be exact. If there are any supplementary changes in the ECOWAS protocol regarding the membership tenure, we should be communicated to because whatever decision we made at the level of plenary is final and no other parliament can undo it. When you look at their rules, it is kind of very interesting. For example, in the Pan African Parliament that I was a member, by the time you are sworn in as a new member, the tenure of the previous membership must be dissolved/finished. That is what we have in the Pan African parliament.

The moment a member is going for election, he/she is no longer a member of the Pan African Parliament, and if he/she is re-elected, and your parliament decides to send you back, then that is the only time he/she can be a member. So, it is the same thing that will apply. It is the plenary that decided the membership of ECOWAS in 2017. We agreed here through a motion by the Majority Leader. He was the one that raised the motion, and it was passed that five of them be representatives of the Gambia in the ECOWAS Parliament for a period of five good years. Those five years have elapsed, and it is upon us now to pick another five. If we want to take the same people back, or change them, it is up to us. There are two things involved: you are either recalled or removed. Somebody is removed from the Assembly when he/she lost an election whereas by way of motion, we can recall members sent to ECOWAS when we want to effect changes. It is up to us to decide. The plenary should decide not ECOWAS if we want to take them back. Nobody else can decide for us, and no amount of amendment in their Protocol or Standing Orders will change that. You cannot change that. It is this Assembly that will decide who should represent us, so we must understand that and work together as a team. To be in an International Parliamentary Delegation is just a privilege, and not a right upon anybody. So, we must understand that. We can learn a lot by representing our country. I do not believe the Selection Committee has anything against anybody in this Assembly for a moment. So, they did what they did under the circumstances to the best of their abilities. However, our responsibility is to give suggestions for improvement here and there until we unanimously arrive at a final list. We put the motion

here, pass it and it becomes our own document that we will keep. We have nothing against anybody, so let us work together. On that note, Honourable Speaker, I thank you.

HON. MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I would start my observations with the criteria for selection of Members to various committees which include the background of Members, party pluralism and gender representation. I believe this is the cream of the Gambian Nation. We, the National Assembly Members, are representing the whole country, so we should be sincere to ourselves in anything we do here. We must do the selection in accordance with the laid down criteria. Now, if there is an element of biasness in terms of the selection of membership of the committees, what do we expect the institutions to do particularly those that we should scrutinize as per our oversight mandate? So, I must acknowledge the process taken by members of the Selection Committee and the time taken to come this far. Notwithstanding, they need to do it properly and better for this Assembly represents Gambia. Looking at the background information of the Members, it would not be fair enough for someone with a master's degree, LLB and a security background to be answerable to someone who does not have any security background. We can work with him if there is no sense of biasness in the selection process. At this point in time, I would advise the Committee of Selection to adhere to the principles and the criteria they have laid down for the selection process.

Regarding the international delegations, some of the us, the new NAMs, believe that the old Members have taken advantage over us due to some benefits attributed to certain committees or international delegations. We are your brothers and sisters, so teach us good manners to represent our constituencies, and above all The Gambia. So, let us do things in this Assembly that will represent or propagate the best interest of the Gambian people. Let us do something in this Assembly to make the Gambian people proud. We have realised some biasness from the onset in terms of selecting Members to the various committees. For example, as a barrister in law, I believe my service will be needed more in areas like Subsidiary Legislation Committee, and the Standing Committee on Human Right and Constitutional Matters as well as Defence and Security Committee than other areas. By virtue of the verse knowledge and experience I have gathered for 15 years as a security personnel, I believe that would have put me in a proper footing to chair that committee. If I do not chair that committee, I will say the selection is biased and we should not allow this Assembly to be trampled upon just to serve a particular purpose or interest group. Let us unite as Gambians. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Busumbala. membership, chairmanship, and vice chairpersonship of committees in the Assembly is not about being answerable to somebody. The committees work together as one body. chairperson is just first among equals and that is the spirit we should carry on.

HON. SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I want to make a

comment concerning the issues at hand. since morning, we have been discussing the Committee of Selection and I think we are already leaders the moment we are elected. So, it is about teamwork which is very important rather than being a chairperson or whatsoever. The issue is we should be able to impact the lives of the Gambian people, and this is the objective of our being here. So, if we want to go by choice, we will put ourselves in committees we desire not where we can be productive. I have seen myself in certain committees which I know I can do something, but there are other committees I can deliver better. Therefore, we must understand and work as a team. Good leadership is about the team you work with. If a leader succeeds, it is the people that he leads. So, whatsoever the case is, let us just try to understand each other and move forward after all that is what our electorates and people would expect from us. For me, I am already a leader in my constituency. So, I am here just to do something that will impact the lives and aspirations of my people. Thank you very much.

HON. SANKUNG DAMPHA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I want to join my colleagues to strongly thank the Selection Committee for a job well done. Definitely, it is not easy, but they have tried very well in placing people in the right committees. So far, the committees comprised all the parties proportionally represented, and I think they have played a very important role. For that being the case, every Member in this august Assembly is given the opportunity to be in at least one of the committees. They have set and used the criteria for selection which is very important as all the Members

are better placed, and I think we will all serve better in our various positions.

As far as education is concerned, I will be very pleased if certain Members of this august Assembly are put in this committee because we need their expertise like the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu. Education is the backbone of any country. He was a seasoned teacher who knows many things in education, so obviously to have such people in the Education Select Committee would be very instrumental.

Again, I want to thank the Committee of Selection for the job well done, and I think whoever is placed in a position will do his/her utmost to serve the Gambian people. Thank you very much.

HON. BIROM SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I want to equally join my colleagues in thanking the Selection Committee for a job well done. As alluded to earlier, it is difficult to satisfy everybody, and the task given to us as representatives is much more important to me than leadership. Since we are all here to represent our people as alluded to by the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda, we are already leaders, since we were voted to represent our people here. So, the task at hand is very important which we need to focus on more. I commend the Selection Committee for a job well done.

I am satisfied with all the committees I found myself because I do not have any preference since I am here to perform my duties to expectation. In performing this duty to expectation, it should be linked to the job I was doing during the Fifth Legislature.

The Selection Committee was methodical in using the set criteria including the background of the Members, party pluralism, and gender representation which was very good. However, my observation is that they should have also referred to the list of re-elected Members and the committees they were in the Fifth Legislature because we all know that there were a lot of unfinished work. Most of these newly elected Members would be dependent on us to take them through those files. So, if we are put in completely different committees of which we were not members before, it will be extremely difficult for us to make a headway. For instance, I was in the Select Committee on Trade where we have gone too far with regards to the prices of commodities, but we still have a lot to accomplish, and I love working in that committee. I thought I will accomplish something that will benefit the nation in one way or the other only to realise that I am moved to a new committee. This is one of the issues the Committee of Selection should have considered. The committee should take the membership list of the various Committees of the Fifth Legislature as a guide which I think was an oversight. If not too late, you can still guide yourselves with that so that in each of the committees, there will be at least one person who experienced the work of that committee for institutional memory. That is my observation.

On the issue of Defence and Security, I do not see any reason why Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie cannot chair that committee. Looking into the matter, the task to be performed is more of parliamentary procedure than performing the role of a security personnel, and this is the reason why he is selected a member or the Chairperson of that committee. Remember he

got the parliamentary experience as he was once a member of the Assembly. So, I am against any side condemning Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie as a member of that committee.

Moreover, the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda has said it all. We are here as one family and as Gambians, so we should put party colours aside and work in unison to move The Gambia forward. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKR: Who wants to contribute and has not contributed? Honourable Members, may I now call upon the Honourable Majority Leader and member of the Selection Committee to respond to the issues raised and wrap up the debate? Honourable Majority Leader, please.

HON. BILAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: I want to seize this opportunity to thank the Honourable Speaker for his professionalism in handling the proceedings in the chamber. I would also like to thank every Honourable Member for their contributions to making the debate very interesting.

Honourable Speaker this is the first day of the Sixth Legislature in the National Assembly, to set the ground as per our working tools by putting in place committees to keep the ball rolling from where the Fifth Legislature stopped.

We appreciate and value every single contribution and observation as they make work easy and more professional. As earlier mentioned, the three yardsticks the Committee of Selection did utilise are the political background, the gender representation and, of course, the experience of each Member. As for the first speaker, Member for Nianija, I thank you

very much for commending the committee for the good job. It is obvious that we can never satisfy everybody but, of course, we appreciate your comments.

The Honourable Member for Bakau did observe and thank the Committee of Selection for selecting the membership of the various Standing and Select Committees. Also, he flagged the issue of the chairpersonship of the committee on Defence and Security. I want us to see ourselves as Honourable Members and should endeavour to keep our brotherliness by being each other's keeper, entrusting one another and working hand in glove. We should talk to each other not to talk at each other. Chairpersonship of committees is a paramount responsibility as well as a privilege. Once given, it is the responsibility of the members to amicably work with him/her and offer help for the success of the team. The leadership of committees does not really matter but what matters is the extensive debate on topical issues by members. The role of a chairperson is limited as he/she hardly debates, so I always want experienced ones with certain exposure as members to effectively scrutinise Ministers, policies and programmes relating to the committee concerned. Chairperson's role is like that of a referee, but if we have members who are well experienced and exposed to issues, they can come up with observations and counter opinions to make the committees work perfectly. So, I would really appreciate the likes of Honourable Member for Busumbala with his experience and exposure to be an active member and not a referee. It has to be borne in mind that membership of each committee will check performance, and if anybody does not perform to

expectation, the committee is at liberty at any point in time to effect changes without really going to the plenary. On the issue of Honourable Yahya Sanyang being Chairperson of the Subsidiary Legislation Committee, I told you the reason why the Committee of Selection identified Chairpersons of the various committees is to help the plenary not to violate the Standing Orders. We want to make sure there is no duplication (i.e., one member to be chairpersons of two Select Committees). The Standing Orders has really stated that if one is a member or a chairperson of a Select committee, he/she cannot be chairperson in another select committee. The Committee of Selection only selected chairpersons of each of various committees considering the membership of other committees to avoid one person chairing two or more committees and then the vice chairpersons would be selected by members of the different committees once we are done here. The membership of the committees will have a meeting to elect or select their vice chairpersons, but the issue of the Selection Committee identifying chairpersons was only meant to avoid duplications which is a violation of the Standing Orders.

The Honourable Member for Banjul South suggested Honourable Yahya Gassama to be in the Education Committee. Now, it is up to the Honourable Member to withdraw from the committee he is and move to the Education Committee. I think that has been the debate of the Assembly. His experience and leadership style are really befitting as attested to by his Vice Chairperson. So, he should be on board. Therefore, Honourable Gassama, latitude is being given to you to make preference as to which committee to forgo for the other given the fact that your experience is

really needed in the Education Committee. The Honourable Member also said that there is no Independent Member in the Public Appointments Committee. I think that is a mistake because Honourable Kebba T. Sanneh, Member for Foni Jarrol, is indeed an Independent Member and he is part of the committee in question. Another issue she raised was about the ECOWAS Delegation. Basically, the ECOWAS Protocol cannot override our national laws. The only authority or approving body to send Members from this country to ECOWAS is this National Assembly, and there is no other tool that can override that. I would also refer the Members to a particular letter given to you dated 7th January 2020. "Submission of names of Gambian Representatives to the Fifth Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament. The aforesaid members of delegation were:

1. Hon. Kebba K. Barrow
2. Hon. Samba Jallow
3. Hon. Muhamed Magassy
4. Hon. Fatoumata Njai
5. Hon. Matarr Jeng.

The aforesaid delegation was approved by a resolution of the plenary of the National Assembly of the Gambia in April 2017 to represent the National Assembly in the ECOWAS Parliament from 2017 to 2022 and further confirmed by the Committee of Selection in its meeting of Monday 06th January 2020. So, it is now clear that the mandate given to the membership of ECOWAS Gambia Delegation is to serve for the period of 5 years and nothing more.

The Honourable Member for Kiang East also talked about his experience as an educationist and leadership in the Education Committee, but I think we have resolved that, and you could be a member in that committee. He also looked at the issue of gender representation in terms of committee membership. With only five females in the Assembly, it is barely impossible to have them in every Select or Standing Committee. We have done our utmost best to make sure the females are adequately represented in the committees. So, that is the constraint the Assembly has. It is unfortunate but, of course, we are also guided by party representation in various committees.

Honourable Member for Wuli East spoke about the Public Appointments Committee and agreed that he could be more productive and useful in that committee.

Honourable Fatou K. Jawara, nominated Member, indicated that the Standing Orders has given equal opportunity to both elected and nominated Members in relation to the membership and chairpersonship of International Delegations as well as the Friendship Groups. She also thanked the Selection Committee for a job well done and commended them clarifying some of the concerns raised.

The Honourable Member for Central Baddibu is concerned about the old Members in new committees. Of course, we also fervently believe that institutional memory is very important. Nevertheless, the committee clerks could also guide the new NAMs at the level of committees since they have the expertise and records of the proceedings of the previous committee

engagements. The committee clerks will help the new Members to understand what has transpired before them. It is to this effect that the Assembly asked the Chairperson of each Select Committee to make a handing-over note and submit it to the committee clerk concerned which would be used to brief the new NAMs as they assume their committee responsibilities.

He alluded to the Defence and Security Committee which I think I have responded to. Similarly, he mentioned the representation of Friendship Groups which is subject to discussion as the list of members are not exhaustive. The representation is not only limited to those on the list, but also could include those who fervently believe they can perform well in the Friendship Groups. Such people can submit their names for consideration especially in the Gambia-China and Gambia-Turkey Friendship Groups. So, the door is open for possible addition which will be based on experience and expertise, but we want to avoid putting people in so many committees that is why the committee took its time to adequately fix members. If a member wants to move from a committee to a friendship group, he/she must swap with another Member, and in so doing, we will not have a member in two or three friendship groups.

The Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji highlighted the issue of chairpersonship of committees, but it might interest him to know that the Selection Committee is mandated by the Standing Orders to select chairpersons of the various committees to avoid one person chairing two or more committees.

Honourable Member for Kombo South is concerned about the issue of security in his area and said the person with experience and expertise in security should head that committee. He should be rest assured that Members are at liberty to report any security issues concerning their constituencies to the committee for investigation, so that urgent action can be taken swiftly. Having come from a volatile community does not really mean that such a member must be part of the committee. He also proposed that Honourable Yaya Gassama should also be the Chairperson or a member of the Select Committee on Education because he once served as a member of that committee. Also, he cited the Supplementary Protocol of 2016 on the ECOWAS Delegation, but I want to assure him that those protocols cannot override our national laws and the mandate given to the delegates was approved by plenary for a period of five (5) years and that has been done. He also mentioned the issue of Honourable Yaya Sanyang being an expert in Construction Company to be given privilege to man the Monitoring Committee. If I am right, he should decline his membership in another committee to allow him to chair that committee. He also suggested Honourable Suwaibou Touray to lead the Committee on Human Rights and Constitutional Matters which I think Honourable Touray responded that he is satisfied with Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay leading that committee, and I thanked him for that.

The Honourable Member for Kiang West reiterated the issue of gender representation in the Committee on Gender saying that women are too many in that committee so some men should be incorporated as well since gender is not only about females. I want him to know that we would not

want to have lesser women representation in that committee for it is a very good practice to have them there as alluded to by Honourable Maimuna Ceesay, nominated Member. However, it is also opened as the Member for Upper Saloum stated that pioneers and advocates of gender issues, the likes of Member for Central Baddibu, to be members of the committee which depends on the approval of plenary as well.

Honourable Member for Sami reiterated the issue of the chairpersonship of the Defence and Security Committee and the issue of Honourable Yaya Gassama to be part of the Education Committee.

The Honourable Member for Janjanbureh also highlighted lack of consultation in terms of the nomination of memberships to the committees by the Committee of Selection. Well, I think that is at the level of the Minority side. Also, in terms of Youth and Sports, he felt that the number of youths in the Youth and Sports Committee is too small. It does not necessarily mean you have to be a youth to be a member of that committee. I can assure him that there are very good people with verse experience who were even previous members of the committee like the current Minority Leader who was the Chairperson. He is very good in that area and was always representing the interest of the youths very well.

Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal also made an observation as to why the committees and particularly the international delegations are headed by the old NAMs. Of course, this is based on party representation as we allow the leaders to nominate from their various parties and priority was given to them to better help the committees or delegations. For instance,

Honourable Mbow was a member of Pan African Parliament, and he has been very active that is why I nominated him from the side of the majority, which comprises Members from the Independent, the APRC and the NRP too, to lead that delegation.

The Member for Foni Bintang said that the Committee of Selection fixed themselves well as opposed to new Members which I think is really a serious allegation. To the best of our abilities, we ensured that the background of Members, party representation, or political pluralism and gender representation were considered. Therefore, there was nothing like favouritism or nepotism in the selection process. We have taken an oath to execute our duties without fear or favour, affection, or ill will, so, we would not do anything contrary to that. It is very early to start accusing or pointing fingers at one another. We noted his contribution for Honourable Yaya Gassama to be part of the Education Select Committee

Foni Kansala also reiterated that he could be very effective in the Education Committee, but I can assure you there are so many former teachers, headmasters, principals who are already members of the committee., I was also a lecturer, but I am not in the Select Committee on Education, so it is very difficult to satisfy everybody. I had to give way to others. Honourable Sankung Dampha is a member of the committee and was a headmaster, but Honourable Alfusainey Ceesay who was a member of the said committee is now moved to another committee. Despite that, I fervently believe the committee will be very effective, and the return of Honourable Yaya Gassama, former Chairperson, will really add value to the committee. Also, the Member for Foni Kansala also indicated his Islamic background to

avail him the opportunity to join the Gambia-Saudi Arabia Friendship Group. I believe he is in one of the friendship groups, but he can swap with a member in the Gambia-Saudi Arabia Friendship Group which could be more effective for him. It is noted anyway.

I thank the Member for Lower Saloum for the comment and we appreciate it. We believe that conscience leads us in our deliberations and not the issue of competing for chairpersonship or leadership in various committees as alluded to. Everybody is already a leader at constituency level from far and near. He also mentioned the issue of swapping with Honourable Ceesay of Old Yundum that is moving from the Health Committee to the Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects. If agreed by both, we can do the swapping.

The contribution of the Honourable Member for Jeshwang Constituency was more of advice regarding chairpersonship of committees. He said a committee can achieve a lot regardless of who chairs, especially, if the members effectively work as a team. What is important is to consider the nation first. He added that it is too premature to try to downgrade each other's potentials in various positions.

Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol, thank you for the advice that leaders should be listeners and learners. These are of course the qualities of a good leader. You must be able to listen and learn from each other, nobody has everything in terms of knowledge and expertise. You must be willing to learn from each other and to make sure you allow the led to educate the lead.

Honourable Member for Niamina Dankunku is concerned about his membership in FPAC and Monitoring committees in the previous Assembly and he thought it prudent to have him back in these committees. But it is always important to experience the new committees. It is on the job training because nobody is an expert in terms of parliamentary oversight. When I came here, I was in the Trade Committee with no background in trade, but I learned overtime and I was privileged to be the Vice Chairperson. As of now, I am no more there. I am also ready to take a different challenge again because one must be willing and ready to take up an entrusted responsibility and try to make difference in other committees. Being in a new committee that you did not serve in the previous Legislature is a challenge as far as I am concerned. Basically, I have no objection to that.

We should allow the Select Committee to carefully look at the selection process to make sure that there is no duplicate of chairpersonship in these committees. Most importantly, we are all members to three committees minimum and four committees maximum which has really been considered. I am sure that very few members are into five committees.

Honourable Member for Wuli East has also allay your fears in Clause 98 thus give you the right to say that you are approved by the plenary, therefore, you cannot be removed. But, if you are found to be incompetent, you could be removed at the level of your committee without going to plenary. We have done that before. We have also selected our new Chairperson at the level of our committee. The Environment Committee

has also done that. So, your fears are allayed for the fact that if anybody is found wanting in the committee, we are at liberty to change that person.

Honourable Member for Brikama South, be rest assured that the Committee Clerks will be there to help settle the members. He also asked about the ones which are not for parliamentary approval. If you look at the list, there are some with asterisk and those ones are not tantamount to plenary approval. So, I think that have answered your question.

Honourable Member for Tallinding Kunjang, I think when it comes to the issue of security, committee leadership and of course gender should be considered. I want to appeal that we leave some women there. We can take the proposal made by the Member for Upper Saloum to bring in additional men but not to really reduce the membership of women from that committee. Basically, the Member for Upper Saloum has made suggestion that the pioneer of gender issue in the Assembly are Member for Central Baddibu and he could also help in terms of moving the committee forward.

Member for Old Yundum, your submission was more of clarity to avoid replica of what has happened already, and that of the Member for Upper Fulladu West is a comment. The Member for Niani also made a comment regarding the Security Committee. He raised the issue of experience and background as very important which should be factored in the selection. Be rest assured that we have really considered the experience especially, the experience of members in the last Assembly which is believed will help move the committee forward.

Member for Sanimentereng, did talk about the general representation of the committee. Of course, I told you, we are really constrained with the number of women in the chambers. Obviously, we do not have the required number of women, but be rest assured they are really factored in different committees.

The issue of leadership also as I told you is added prerogative of the committee. If you think that you are fit to chair a particular committee, it depends on how you can lobby your members to give you that opportunity to lead. However, the Selection Committee did propose leadership on various committees and delegation to make sure that they head those committees.

Member for Kombo East has also raised the same issue regarding the International Delegations. The selection process was based on party representation, and we were giving preference to them. It is not only the issue of membership of a committee that matters, one can also come in as an observer to a committee at any time and give your blessings. Meetings of committees also are open to members for attendance. If you think that you are well experienced and exposed, and you can really be of help to the committee, nothing should stop you from attending their meetings and give your expert advice. That would really help the committees.

Banjul North is also concerned about his membership regarding the International Delegations. I told him that not everybody can be factored in

the International Delegations, they are only six and the rest are friendship groups. However, you could be a member of the friendship group if you think that you can do best in the China delegation. You can see how best you could swap with another member.

I think you are already in the Franco Gambia Parliamentary Friendship Group as well.

Nominated Member Maimuna Ceesay, your contribution is more of a comment and by giving the women the priority to lead the committee that has to do with gender is a good step, and I think they are better off in that committee. However, they are not also opposed to bringing in men but to reduce their numbers should be avoided.

Member for Upper Saloum, did applaud the Select Committee for a job well done. It is never easy to satisfy everybody, but I think what we did was to the best of our ability and the interest of the country. He even helped me in answering some of the concerns raised in the Assembly in terms of composition about the Members of ECOWAS. He also made some proposals about Honourable Sulayman Saho and of course Honourable Member for Kiang East.

In response to the comments made by the Member for Busumbala, the issue of leadership is not about being answerable, it is about collective responsibility given to the committee. So, I believe with your background in law and experience in the Security Sector, you could be of help. That was more the reason why you are factored in the Defence Committee because we could not have any better person than you to be there. So, irrespective

of who leads, it is about the spirit of teamwork. Let us see ourselves as Honourable Members of the National Assembly who can contribute effectively and move the country forward. You can also support the committee based on your legal background. I am made to understand that you are a barrister and work at the Security Sector for fifteen years which is a very good experience. I think you could make a difference in that committee.

Regarding the comment made by the Member for Bundungka Kunda, of course, we are all leaders in our various constituencies that is why we are here, and that is why nobody is called by his/her party tag. We are members of the National Assembly from different constituencies. Therefore, the national interest should really supersede personal interest. I concur with you entirely on this. It is not about who leads but it is about how to work effectively to move the committee forward to achieve its cardinal objectives.

Member for Illiassa, it is not an easy job to split members of the National Assembly into different Standing Committees. It is not an easy task because you need to consider lot of things including background, political pluralism, and experience.

Member for Niamina West Constituency raised the issue about the Trade Committee. As I have indicated, you may be very good at trade, but to ensure that the institutional memory stays, Honourable Kebba Jallow was a rapporteur to the committee and as such, we deemed it fit to maintain him there. The previous members are no more there. We believe that is a

challenge. It is true that you have passion for the job, but the committee decided that it is important to leave at least one old member for institutional memory. In fact, that member has already been proposed to be the Chairperson of the Select Committee.

I think that is the end of the responses. I want to sincerely thank everyone of us for your cooperation and collaboration to move this institution forward. We cannot satisfy all but let us appreciate it as a starting point. Let us work harmoniously regardless of who leads to make sure that the committee moves forward.

I thank you very much, this is the first session of the Assembly, let us keep the spirit of unity and strength. The issue of representation is factored which makes it easy for us to arrive at a decision, and it is always important for us to appreciate it.

I want to thank the Minority Leader for his collaboration and understanding. I will not do justice if I fail to thank the committee clerks, office of the Clerk for the support. On that note, I beg to move. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Majority Leader for your brilliant responses to issues raised by Honourable Members. Equally, let me also thank Honourable Members for their contributions to the deliberation. I can attest that during the deliberations of the committee, they dealt with issues maturely, bearing in mind the supreme interest of our people. Thank you.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. With your permission, I want to thank the Majority

Leader with that marathon responses. But I think issues raised by Honourable Members are very valid particularly the chairpersons of the Select Committees. I want to remind the Assembly that when we came in 2017, we allowed the committee members to make selection of their leaders and we did not have any problem. It was so democratic, because we had the opportunity to choose and recommend members to our chairpersons

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are taking us back.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I am not taking you back.

HON. SPEAKER: We have just raised those issues Honourable Member. We have a lot of committees and having to ask each of the committees to select a chairperson and vice chairperson can bring a lot of complications, omissions, and duplications which you may realize after the selection is done. The Majority Leader said it. So, it is fair enough for the Committee of Selection to propose these things to you. If at the committee level, you feel somebody is not efficient, you can invoke the relevant section of the Standing Orders and do what you need to do.

So, Honourable Members, I now put the question on the report. "Be it Resolved that this Honourable Assembly do adopt the report of the Committee of Selection on the nominations of membership to Committees of the National Assembly and International Parliamentary Delegations with amendments for the period 2022 to 2027.

[Question proposed]

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: No, let us do a hand count.

HON. SPEAKER: In his response, he made a lot of brilliant suggestions which they have accepted, and the relevant amendments will be done.

MOTION ON THE ADJOURNMENT

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Honourable Speaker, let us do a head count it is safer. You are ignoring Honourable Members Honourable Speaker.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Order 54 [1] of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, I rise to move that this august Assembly do stand adjourned Sine Die.

I move a motion and Honourable Speaker I would like to give the Assembly a brief of what has transpired during the Second Ordinary Session, which is the inauguration of the Sixth Legislature for the period 14th April to 25th April 2022.

During this session, we witnessed the election of both the Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Deputy Speaker and the administration of oath by Members. May I use this opportunity to congratulate you the right Honourable Speaker on your election as Speaker. Indeed, you are no

stranger to this chamber, and we are pleased to benefit from your rich experience and guidance.

In the same vein, I wish to congratulate the Deputy Speaker and all Honourable Members on winning the trust and confidence of Gambians to serve in this noble institution.

Honourable Members, earlier today, we considered and adopted the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 14th April 2022. It was just an inaugural Session for the Sixth Legislature as there was no bill or oral questions for the Ministries.

We also considered and adopted the report of the Committee of Selection on the nomination of Members to various Standing and Select Committees of the Assembly in International Delegation and Parliamentary Friendship Groups respectively.

On a final note, as this august Assembly considers the motion to adjourn sine die, I wish to seize this opportunity to express sincere thanks to our electorates for the trust and confidence they continue to have in us especially in the new Gambia.

I wish to assure them on behalf of all Members that we shall continue to strive to live up to expectation by pursuing the supreme interest of the people of the Gambia, without fear or favour, and party affiliation. As we began to enjoy our experience and professional guidance, Honourable Speaker, I would like to thank you for the good manner in which you have handled the affairs of this august Assembly. I pray to Allah the Almighty to

grant you the strength and wisdom to continue to lead the affairs of the Assembly in our service to the people of the Gambia.

My Honourable colleagues, I salute you all for your foresight, dedication, patience and understanding especially in the consideration of the motion on the report of the Committee of Selection for the nomination of members in various committees.

I also want to register special thanks and gratitude to the Clerk and the Staff of the National Assembly Service for all the support and services rendered to Honourable Members during the Session while looking forward to your continued excellent services.

I beg to move.

HON. SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion for this august Assembly to stand adjourned Sine die and equally move a motion for us to adjourn without debate.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can we hear from you again?

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much. I rise to second the motion raised by the Honourable Majority Leader for the Assembly to adjourn sine die and move a motion for us to adjourn without debate.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: No, it cannot be possible. There is a motion on the floor, please.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Members address the Chair please. The motion has been moved and seconded.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: No, the motion is not seconded.

HON. SPEAKER: The motion to adjourn sine die has been moved by the Majority Leader and seconded. You said it is not so Honourable Member. Can you tell us what next?

[Question proposed]

It has been moved and seconded, Member for Banjul South, please stop shouting. If you want to talk, address the Chair and I will give you the chance. What do you want to say Honourable Member?

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you, Honourable Chair. What I am saying is that the motion was to adjourn sine die and the Member moved a counter motion to adjourn sine die without debate

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you were talking instead of listening to me. I said the motion to adjourn sine die has been moved by the Majority Leader and seconded. It is important to listen. Now I will call on the Honourable Member for Nianija to make his motion.

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Can I come in? I rise to move a motion for us to adjourn sine die without debate.

HON. SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we have two motions, so I now put it to you.

1. [Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[That this august Assembly be adjourned sine die]

2. [Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[That this august Assembly be adjourned without debate]

HON. SPEAKER: Those in favour please say 'Aye', and those not in favour say No. Honourable Members, the Ayes have it.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: No, Honourable Speaker. We are calling for a division.

HON. SPEAKER: You call for a division after I have made the pronouncement. I have put it to both sides and the 'Ayes' have it. I have taken that decision already, please.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: Honourable Speaker, the position on division comes after the declaration of your position.

HON. SPEAKER: Who is speaking please identify yourself?

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: I am the one seeking the floor in connection to the position of division. I said the call for division comes after your pronouncement on the voting, so that is the time the vote or the motion on division can be raised. Then, you can also take a position on that.

HON. SPEAKER: What we will do now is to vote.

1. Honourable Members, those who do not want us to debate, hands up.
2. Those who want us to debate, hands up.

Honourable Members, I have just been given the results. Those who want us to adjourn without debate are 32 and those who want us to debate are 24. So, the Ayes have it. Honourable Members, we are still on session. Sit down, please.

Honourable Members, this was a very brief session for the inauguration of the Sixth Legislature following the National Assembly elections of 9th April 2022. After the adjournment of this session, the office of the Clerk will make the necessary arrangements for proper induction before the next ordinary session. This will give new and returning Members the opportunity to learn or refresh ourselves on Assembly processes and procedures. Thank you.

[Adjournment]

[Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[That the Assembly stand adjourned sine die]

