

1. PRAYERS

2. Correction and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September 2022

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September 2022 is before us for correction and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move that the said Records of Votes and Proceedings be considered and approved?

HON ALIEU BALDEH [JARRA WEST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, I rise to move the motion for the correction and Approval of Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September to be considered and approved. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members any seconder? Honourable Member for Jokadu.

HON. SALIFU JAWO [JOKADU]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, it has been moved and seconded that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September 2022 be approved. Any corrections, observations from Members can be shared by raising your hands when we begin. As usual, we all have copies of the Record of Proceedings, and we will go page by page beginning from page 1. Any comment from Page 1? We move to Page 2.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Page one where you have Bills, Standing Order 65 first reading of the following bills.

- a) Animal Health Bill by Honourable Minister for Agriculture, instead it was tabled by the Honourable Minister for Works and Infrastructure for record purpose.

THE SPEAKER: I think this was the extraction from the Order Paper probably, what the Table Office could do is to note down that it was tabled by the Honourable Minister of.... I am made to understand that further down in the minutes, it has been indicated that the Agriculture Minister was represented by the Minister for Justice. Honourable Member, are you fine? We now move to Page 2, any issue? No. We move to page 3, Member for Kiang Central.

HON YUNUSA N. BAH [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. On Page 3, it is indicated that I was absent without permission, but I was present. I was here throughout Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, have you sign in when you came?

HON YUNUSA N. BAH [KIANG CENTRAL]: Yes, Honourable Speaker I did sign in when I came.

THE SPEAKER: We will look out for that correction because the Honourable Member was not absent. So, the Table Office would do the correction. He will be included in the 53 Members who attended. That is noted Honourable Member.

HON YUNUSA N. BAH [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, any more on Page 3? We move to Page 4. Honourable Members, Page 4 last paragraph or just the First

Reading of the National Health Bill, you will see that it is captured in the minutes that the Honourable Minister of Agriculture was represented by the Minister for Works.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: That is ok, that was my observation.

THE SPEAKER: No more on Page 4. We move to page 5, Member for Nianija.

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Page 5, where you have Honourable Sulayman Saho Member for Central Baddibu seconded the motion, the usual practice as far as we are concerned especially when it comes to reporting matters of this nature, when a Member seconded the motion on a report and took part in the debate before resuming his or her seat. It is usually captured as the Honourable Member seconded the motion and spoke on the report but not like his name appearing on those who contributed later. If there are any changes no problem if it is fine, but the usual practice is not this way. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: But let us get it correct Honourable Member. If you look at the ensuing debate, it says the following Members debated on the motion that should indicate anybody who spoke on the motion. Now, for this one, Honourable Sulayman Saho Member for Central Baddibu seconded the motion. If Members want, it could be beefed up by saying seconded the motion and contributed, but his name should still appear on those who debated on the motion. Are we fine with that?

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Let it be indicated that he has seconded the motion and contributed, then in the list of the ensuing debate” it can “also be captured there too.

THE SPEAKER: That is fine. Member for Kantora and Majority Leader

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: I think it is all the same because he seconded the motion and he took part in the debate but people might not really look at this and say okay, I second the motion, but I took part in the debate and my name is not listed. So, I think this trajectory is welcome. When you second the motion, all the Members that took part in the debate are listed from the person that second the motion. Thank you.

HON. FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. On page 5, Honourable Kemo Gassama took part in the ensuing debate.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let us resolve this issue after which you can come in.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Okay thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, whilst others are saying that we beef up the statement to read as Honourable Sulayman Saho Member for Central Baddibu seconded the motion and contributed to the debate where his name would appear on the ensuing debate. Others are saying that we leave it as it is and then his name to appear as number 1, indicating that he contributed. The only difference probably may be that you will not know whether in seconding the motion is where he debated. So, are we having this two on the floor Honourable Members?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I think for the sake of consistency, the Member for Nianija was saying that normally, we capture it like Honourable Sulayman Saho, Member for Central Baddibu seconded the motion and contributed. The contribution was done before you asked the question. So, I think it is important that we capture it there before the question was put and agreed to by the other Members.

THE SPEAKER: Has that been the practice? I do not know why the Table Office deviated from the practice? Thank you very much Honourable Members. we can now beef it up to show that he seconded the motion and contributed.

Honourable Members, we now move to Page 6 which is the last page

POINT OF OBSERVATION

HON. MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I just have an observation under ensuing debate. I can remember that...

THE SPEAKER: Sorry, Honorable Member, you are taking us back to Page 5.

HON. MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Yes, Page 5.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, go ahead.

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: I can remember I took part during the debate, and I spoke immediately after Honourable Birome Sowe, and my name is not captured in the list provided.

THE SPEAKER: Table Office, the Honourable Member for Banjul North said his name did not appear on the list and he contributed.

HON. FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. As I was saying on the ensuing debate, Honourable Kemo Gassama participated in the debate and his name is not captured.

THE SPEAKER: On Page 5, Honourable Kemo Gassama participated, and his name did not appear.

HON. FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Yes

THE SPEAKER: Is Kemo in?

HON. KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Yes, I took part in the debate, but my name did not appear on the list.

THE SPEAKER: We expected that you will say it.

HON. KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Yes, I wanted to say it, but she said I should give her the opportunity, but it is all the same.

THE SPEAKER: No, that should not be because what will happen is, if somebody says it, we will have to ask you.

Honourable Members, Honourable Kemo Gassama of Lower Baddibu participated in the debate. Table Office please note it down. So, we are going to have about 22 Members who participated in the debate. Any other issue on Page 6? Then thank you Honourable Members. It has been moved and seconded that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September 2022, be approved with Amendments. Who was shouting? Member for Sandu, can I hear from you.

HON. EBRIMA JAITEH [SANDU]: In Page 6, under adjournment, where you have 18 minutes after 8 o' clock in the afternoon, the Assembly was adjourned until Monday 26th September.

THE SPEAKER: So, what should it be?

HON. EBRIMA JAITEH [SANDU]: It should be 8 o' clock in the evening instead of in the "afternoon".

THE SPEAKER: Sorry, Honourable Members what the Table Office is saying is that it is an error. In fact, it is 18 minutes after 3 not 8 and it was in the afternoon on that particular day. So, we still have to correct it. It is 18 minutes after 3 o' clock, but the afternoon still remains. Are we fine with it Honourable Members? Okay.

Honourable Members, it has been moved and seconded that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September 2022, be approved with Amendments.

[Question Proposed, Put, and Agreed to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 22nd September 2022 be Approved with Amendments.]

3. LAYING OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

(I) Consolidated Report of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for the period 2019 – 2021 by the Honourable Chairperson of the Committee

THE SPEAKER: Can you take the floor Honourable Chairperson of the Committee?

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. It could be recalled that sometimes last week the Committee was supposed to present this report and the Members beg for the report to be differed to a later date for the fact that they did not have the time to go through the report, and today we are here given the opportunity for the FPAC to present the report.

Honourable Speaker, the Members of FPAC in the Sixth Legislature considered the importance of the issues that are highlighted in the report and agreed in principle not to allow the report to gather dust. We should make good use of the report and the issues highlighted if amicably adopted by the relevant Committees, including FPAC will ensure the implementation of those issues considering the fact that there was a ruling for the Sixth Legislature to take over the works of the Fifth Legislature and that has mandated the FPAC which has earlier on agreed to adopt or to take over this report for the consideration of the plenary.

In that vein, we want to thank the entire Members for taking that move to allow the Sixth Legislature to take over matters of such importance.

Honourable Speaker, in the Sixth Legislature, FPAC is lucky to have Members who were serving in the Fifth Legislature. To look at the issues that are highlighted will require the background knowledge surrounding those issues. In principle, the Committee has decided through the Chair to delegate the responsibility of presenting the FPAC report to the Fifth Legislature by the Vice Chair of the committee who was an active Member of the Fifth Legislature.

Honourable Speaker, with your permission and indulgence the laying of the report proper would be humbly done by the Vice Chair of the Committee. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Can we now invite the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum, Vice Chairperson of the Committee to proceed with the tabling of the report.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Chair of the Committee. I hereby report the outcome of the FPAC sessions convened in public at the National Assembly Auditorium from 2019 – 2021 which covers the periods 11 -22 February 2019, 10 – 25 February 2020, 26 April – 31 May 2021 and 10 September – 15 October 2021 respectively.

In compliance with Section 102 and 109 of the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] had the following engagements:

1. That is to review consideration of Auditor General’s Reports on the Accounts of Government of The Gambia covering the periods 2016 – 2018.
2. Review and consideration of the Activity Reports, Financial Statements of External Auditors, Management Letters and Compliant Reports of The Gambia Public Procurement Authority [GPPA] on the following institutions:
 - I. That is the Central Bank of The Gambia [CBG], from 2017 – 2018 and we have also done 2019.
 - II. The Financial Intelligence Unit [FIU], that is the FIU 2014 – 2017

III. The Gambia Revenue Authority for the period 2016 – 2017

IV. That National Audit Office [NAO] for the year ended December 31st, 2016.

3. Consultative audience with the Constitutional Review Commission [CRC]

The review of the Public Finance Act 2014

The aim of this scrutiny is to ensure accountability, transparency and probity in these public agencies for efficient service delivery. During the exercise, Honourable Speaker, the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] received and considered testimonies and evidence from witnesses including board chairpersons, management, and external auditors of the said institutions. Also, the officials of the Gambia Public Procurement Authority [GPPA] provides the compliant status of each of the institutions. It is worth noting that appearance before FPAC and other committees should be seen as a process by which the National Assembly being the apex oversight institution of the country holds the management of public agencies and institutions accountable for the actions and decisions they have made in the management of public resources. It is a session where good management or best practices is recognized and rewarded while bad management is appropriately sanction with report at the plenary.

For clarity Honourable Speaker, the FPAC takes this opportunity to clarify that adoption of reports and financial statements mean the said institutions have met minimum performance level of the admissibility of the reports and accounts for consideration. This report of FPAC on the situation of the accounts and performance of the institutions under its purview is submitted to the plenary for consideration and adoption.

Meanwhile, I take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Members, Subject Matter Specialists, the Clerk and his team for their invaluable support and the commitment given to the Committee during the sessions. Similarly, I want to thank all the witnesses who fully submit themselves throughout the legislative scrutiny.

Honourable Speaker, on Page 3, where we have the introduction, it is mentioned in the opening remarks that we got the power to examine the accounts showing the appropriation of sums granted to the National Assembly to meet public expenditure.

FPAC hereby extends gratitude to the Honourable Members, Subject Matter Specialists, Clerk of the National Assembly, and the support staff for their dedication throughout the session. We equally thank the witnesses for their cooperation in submitting themselves and their institutions to legislative scrutiny required by law.

Objective and scope of scrutiny

The scrutiny is intended to ensure transparency and accountability in public agencies to enhance efficient service delivery. During the engagements, Finance and Public Accounts Committee received and considered testimonies and evidences from board Chairpersons, Management, and External Auditors of these institutions. Officials of The Gambia Public Procurement Authority [GPPA] also give compliant reports on those institutions.

Page 4, the Auditor General's Report on the accounts of Government of The Gambia at the end of the Fifth Legislature, FPAC dealt with the audited accounts of the Central Governments of 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, up to 2018. May I also say that We have treated everything that

was before us. So, there was nothing outstanding even though we found a backlog of almost 5 years.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

Findings in the Auditor General's Report for 2016:

- a. Grants totaling D1,296,377,878.96 were not disclosed in the financial statements, and grants continue to be received by sectors but not recorded by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs.
- b. There were contingent liabilities totaling D360, 092, 828, US\$2000, 000 and 2,855,826 Euros were not disclosed in the financial statement. And in fact, this too contributed to the adverse opinion that was given by the auditors.

Honourable Speaker, the adverse opinion for 2016 means that the financial statements are misrepresented, misstated, and do not accurately reflect its financial performance and health.

Finding in the Auditor General's Report for 2017

On reconcile transactions totaling D1, 050,587,268.60 were identified during the review. Government Bank Accounts totaling 116, 806 were not disclosed in the financial statements.

- c. Total liabilities of D8, 168,654.2 from concluded litigation cases against government were identified.
- d. Government guaranteed loans to State-Owned Enterprises were unpaid and also not recognized in the financial statements. So, for 2017 also the Auditor General has rated the Accountant General adverse opinion again which means that the accounts

were misrepresented and do not accurately reflect its financial performance.

Findings in the Auditor General's Report for 2018.

- a. The net worth of State - Owned Enterprises [SOEs] was reported as D5, 389,778,820 dalasi in the financial statement, but could not be confirmed because the audited financial statements of the State -Owned Enterprises were not provided for proper consolidation to be done.
- b. There are differences amounting to D15, 688,641,938 dalasi and D13, 429,150 respectively between the previous year's closing balance and the current year balances irrespective of loans and grants. So, for 2018 also, the Auditor General has rated the Accountant General adverse opinion once again because there are material misstatements in the accounts.

Findings, analysis and key issues and conclusions still on page 4.

Grants from multi-lateral Agencies do not go through Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs or the Accountant General's Department. They are arranged through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or NGO Agencies and are delivered directly to the affected sectors. Moreover, fear of not receiving full budgetary allocation usually prevents institutions from disclosing the grants they received to Ministry of Finance.

- a) Officials from the Ministries other than the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs usually sign some of the financing agreements.
- b) The undisclosed contingent liabilities discovered in 2016 remained unresolved as at the time of finalizing the Management Letter of 2016. Accountant General's Department [AGD], however, commits

itself to work within a reasonable timeframe to solve the issues. They assured FPAC that these outstanding balances have been analysed and will be cleared in the Accounts of 2019.

C) The Accountant General Department is a signatory to only Central Government Accounts, Project Accounts which are opened through Accountant General Department [AGD], but the Project Implementation Units are the sole signatories, the Accountant General has never been part of project negotiation so they only have access to already signed finance agreements. The Accountant General is mandated by law to be responsible for the revenue collection from all sources, unfortunately, payment for the Securiport and scanning fees are collected by third parties.

D) Litigation against government involved in third party information, could only be obtained from the Ministry of Justice. The figure for 2019 were disclosed to the extent possible, figure for 2020 has been requested but not received.

E) Audited accounts for State-Owned Enterprise were not available at the time of the audit exercise. The difference in closing and opening balance of loans was a debt management data issue since IFMIS does not capture the outstanding balances from the interface, only debt servicing information is available from the interface.

F) Financing agreement of projects usually dictate designated accounts and reporting requirements. Some donors have stringent human resource and software requirements, they also require a specific public finance management pay for capacity in terms of coordinators and accountants. However, creating project coordinating units everywhere is

a waste of resources. Chartered Accountant of the Ministry of Finance could oversee projects accounts like the chartered accountant that currently heads the Accounts Office at the Ministry of Environment.

G) FPAC is concerned about the persistent adverse audit opinion over the years because of the materiality of the misstatements involved, especially when no plausible explanation has been advanced by the Accountant General or efforts made to reverse such unfavourable trend.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FPAC

By virtue of the forgoing analyses and conclusions, FPAC hereby recommends as follows:

- a) The committee directs the Ministries to liaise with Accountant General Department for all grants to be consolidated. The Public Finance Act must be amended for ministries to disclose these grants.
- b) Evidence of payment of loans granted to the various State- Owned Enterprises must be provided by the State-Owned Enterprises since government is the guarantor.
- c) FPAC recommends that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs does whatever it takes to judiciously use its funds instead of relying on budget supports which might not be forthcoming or have strings attached to them.
- d) AGD must hire Chartered Accountants across all Ministries to ensure that proper accounting procedures are followed. They must be able to handle any project account within the Ministry.
- e) The Accountant General must report on project accounts in all MDAs which are part of the Government and must therefore be

part of the IFMIS. This will ensure transparency and consolidated reporting. All projects should use IFMIS instead of other customized accounting software.

- f) Outsourcing revenue collection must be regularized as a matter of priority and project coordinating units need to be mainstreamed to ensure sustainability. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs must ensure that revenue collection by third parties is stopped by end of 2021 and handed over to the Accountant General's Department.
- g) The Accountant General Department to update FPAC on status of unretired imprest by giving the amounts, names and locations of affected persons. AGD to also provide FPAC with a list of all the outstanding imprest that is retired or paid back.
- h) The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to do complete overhaul of the finance regulations, particularly the parts dealing with the administration of imprest.

And that's the end of the Central Government.

The Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) also had audience with the Accountant General on the status of the repayment of outstanding imprest issued to the ministries, departments and agencies. The Accountant General informed the committee that the sum of D31.7million was confirmed as outstanding imprest out of which only D2.5million was recovered. The Accountant General however clarified that his office has written to all sectors affected with the names of the persons the imprest was issued to. Unfortunately, they discovered that majority of the officers involved have left service and some of them could not be located.

On that note, Honourable Members expressed their disappointment with such attitude of public officers mishandling public funds. The committee directed the Accountant General to take further steps and use all avenues to recover the monies. Every imprest issued by the Accountant General must be given a timeline within which it must be retired. Failure to do should result to sanctions.

On the 12th March 2022, FPAC had audience with Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Permanent Secretary and other senior technicians of the Ministry. The agenda of the discussion was for the Minister to explain the reason for adjusting the allocations of the Gambia Revenue Authority, their plans to provide office for the Financial Intelligence Unit [FIU], to update the committee on the status of repayment of outstanding imprest and to inform the committee on the status of the review of the Public Finance Act, 2014.

Now, to the Central Bank of The Gambia, in consideration of the reports of the Central Bank (CBG) for the years ended 31st December 2017 and 2018, the FPAC, unanimously adopted the two reports.

During the review of the report, the committee commended the management of the bank for their steadfastness and position in turning the Gambian economy into financial stability in 2017. The committee was also satisfied that all the key audit matters raised in the 2017 reports were addressed and covered in the 2018 reports.

Considering performance, the Central Bank of The Gambia made a steady growth in assets and their performance was good in 2018 with a positive net cash flow of D1.07billion from the operations recorded during the year.

Among its mandate, The Central Bank of The Gambia is responsible for achieving and maintaining price stability, stability of the currency in circulation in the economy, directing and regulating financial insurance and banking systems for the economic development of the country. However, FPAC cautioned the CBG to address few issues observed in the reports which include lack of adequate IT outfit at the Bank, irregular meetings of the Financial Stability Committee, Vault register, performing regular on-site examinations and accounting issues like outstanding supporting documents. It is expected that all these issues should be cleared and reported in the 2019 reports of the Central Bank of The Gambia.

Findings and Observations of 2019

- a) Economic challenges of the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region include increase in the number of extreme poor and livelihood per capita. Owing to these factors, many countries in the region will not return to their pre-pandemic level until 2025.
- b) CBG has a grossly inadequate background for its ITC infrastructure. An offsite background facility is needed, and this must be tested periodically to make sure that it works.
- c) The policy regarding transfer of foreign currency cash payment to the currency unit was submitted to be discussed with board. It now awaits approval for implementation.
- d) The problems at Mega Bank were caused by the real estate sector, most of whom were servicing their loans with overdraft.

ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES AND CONCLUSION OF 2019

- a) Fiscal lapses which result to expenditure on services as opposed to production are the main cause of too much money in circulation. Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG) needs to engage the commercial banks so that they increase their portfolio at affordable interest rate for the business sector to have access to more financing.
- b) Owing to the structuring of CBG, the recruitment has been suspended. Every effort would be made to make sure that the current workforce at CBG delivers. There would no longer be any compromise or complacency regarding the maintenance of standards.
- c) CBG is also working with a company to develop suitable software for payroll and administrative matters. When the payroll database failed in September 2019 there was no backup, so the data on August 2019 was repopulated. Technical issues T29 which is the banking area platform, they are using led to duplicate inputs as authorizers.
- d) In the search of an offsite backup, there must be caution in acquiring asset seized by commission of enquiries to avert future legal challenges.
- e) CBG assures FPAC that all outstanding issues raised by the auditors will be addressed in prior year matters of 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF 2019

By virtue of the forgoing analysis and conclusions, FPAC hereby recommends as follows:

- a) All the Management letters regarding internal control must be addressed urgently. Prior year matters of 2017 and 2018 must be addressed in the 2020 report to ensure compliance.
- b) All technical issues relating to the Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG)'s T24 which is the banking application must be resolved by end of December 2021.
- c) A proper backup facility or disaster recovery site must be created and tested regularly to ensure that the system is working properly.
- d) Central Bank must not remain attached to our continuous supervised institutions it has rescued from financial difficulty.
- e) Going forward, FPAC recommends the documentation and formalization of all past audit action by reporting instructions.
- f) Central Bank of The Gambia should coordinate efforts geared towards establishing fund for the purchase of vehicle for The Gambia Police Force from the payment towards security escort for cash shipments. To this end, Inspector General of Police must liaise with Bankers Association of The Gambia to discuss and agree on the modalities.

May I also say that the Central Bank of The Gambia have submitted their accounts for 2020 as well which the current digit has also dealt with. So, the only remaining is 2021 accounts, then I follow to page 9.

THE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT (FIU)

FINDINGS OF 2014 TO 2017

The Finance and Public Accounts Committee carried its review on the audited financial statements and annual activity reports of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) for the period 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively. During the review, the committee observed the issues discussed below.

The first issue is rampant sales of pharmaceutical products by unlicensed persons at public places/gatherings which need to be investigated by FIU for redress by the Ministry of Health. So, unscrupulous persons or expired medicines not fit for consumption are cleared from the market.

Secondly, the issue of money laundering and terrorist financing through bank transfers or related facilities was a concern raised by the committee. The Management of FIU clarified that cases are thoroughly investigated, and the reports provided for the police for their action.

Thirdly, the issues of withholding taxes D8, 666.73 queried by the auditors which was not deducted from vendors is a contravention of Section 98 of the Income and VAT Act 2012. In addition, the Financial Intelligence Unit lacks the Management Information System for evidence, collection and storage as well as an accounting system to keep track of their revenue and expenditures.

Despite some improvement in 2017, the FIU still failed to comply with the procurement rules of GPPA as required. The compliance status of FIU was reported to be unsatisfactory. Therefore, management was warned to institute procurement structures and rules in order to improve their compliance status.

On the issue of their challenges, the FPAC noted the importance and crucial role of FIU in financial governance, thus the unit should be given proper office accommodation as well as mobility so that it can hire the right number of staff to run the institution effectively. The Committee resolved to engage the relevant line Ministry that is the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA), Committee on Rent and Accommodation (CORA) and Office of the President to address the matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The committee recommends that since the FIU was established under the Anti- Money Laundering and combating of Terrorism Financing [AML/CTF] Act 2012, it should implement an accounting system as well as MIS for evidence collections and storage. It is also recommended that newly established institution like FIU should be adequately staffed before going into operations.

Consequently, the reports of FIU for the period 2014- 2017 were adopted.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS:

- A) Financial intelligence Unit (FIU) lacks proper office premises, adequate office accommodation, and inadequate number of staff to effectively perform its core functions.
- B) There is no means of mobility to conduct information requests and intelligence dissemination. FIU manually conducts analysis of Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) owing to the lack of proper analytical tools. FIU faces inadequate budget allocation to meet essential operational requirements.
- C) Most of FIU's stakeholders lack awareness about their mandates under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing (AML/CTF) Act 2012. Implementation of the AML/ CTF regime is cumbersome owing to weak enforcement and low capacity of law enforcement agencies.
- (d) FIU has trouble in supervising designated Non-Financial Businesses and professions because most of them do not have supervisory or regulatory body.

(e) Since FIU was created in-house by the Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG), it continues to receive subvention from the CBG owing to funding constraints.

(f) Owing to lack of space, the staffing inadequacy at FIU could not be addressed. Although FIU has the position of Internal Auditor on its organogram, no recruitment has been done owing to resource constraints.

ANALYSIS AND KEY ISSUES

- a) FIU is highly dependent on subventions from government. The increased income realized in 2019 was completely exhausted, except for the D500, 000 that remained. Despite Program-Based Budgeting being implemented by MoFEA, D16 million is allocated to the FIU annually and D4 million is made available to them per quarter. FIU was operating on a very tight budget and the funds were not forthcoming. Erratic release of quarterly allocations grossly affects their operational efficiency.

- b) Central Bank of The Gambia carries out oversight over the financial infrastructure of the country. This explains its continued connection with FIU.

- c) The status quo at FIU shows that all newly established government institutions must be adequately staffed, equipped, and resourced, otherwise, their operational efficiency and effectiveness will be greatly hampered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By virtue of the foregoing analyses and conclusions, FPAC hereby recommends as follows:

- a) FIU must be fully equipped and staffed with adequate funding through the national budget. FPAC must meet with MoFEA and FIU to discuss and remedy issues surrounding FIU's budgetary allocations.

- b) The committee recommends that FIU be detached from CBG to guarantee its financial autonomy. FIU should be adequately budgeted for and not dependent on subventions from government institutions.
- c) Personnel from the Directorate of Internal Audit must periodically visit FIU to check on their records and documentations.
- d) Copies of FIU's Loan Policy be provided to FPAC for further scrutiny and the FIU Act must be reviewed and aligned with international best practices.

Hon. Speaker, I now move to the Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA). Now, it is also important Honourable Speaker to state that The Gambia Revenue Authority is a sub vented institution, and their collections are deposited in the Consolidated revenue fund and they operate based on subvention from the Ministry of Finance.

FINDINGS OF 2016 AND 2017

The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) presented its activity report, audited financial statements, management letter and procurement compliance status for the year ended 31st December 2016. These reports were reviewed and considered by FPAC followed by adoption on 10th February 2020. Key issues observed by the Committee included:

- Porous borders used by smugglers.

- Frequent border closure between Senegal and The Gambia posed challenges and are in violation of the ECOWAS Protocols relating to the free movement of people and goods among Member States.
- The use of Commercial Banks to transfer monies collected by GRA to the Central Bank of The Gambia.
- The issue of tax defaulters.

The Commissioner General of GRA, in his testimony, clarified that the Authority was aware of smugglers using the porous borders to smuggle their goods. The Authority has therefore organized patrol teams to watch along those borders to catch culprits.

Considering the impact of border closure between Gambia and Senegal, both the Committee and Management of GRA expressed similar concerns and observed that this issue requires strong political commitment between the two Governments - Gambia and Senegal. As brothers and sisters sharing almost everything, such incidents need to be controlled to facilitate trade and movement of people in line with the ECOWAS Protocols.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before the adoption of the 2016 reports of GRA, FPAC requested Management to fulfil the following recommendations/provisions:

- That the GRA removes the Internal Auditors as members of the Loans Committee for the purpose of independence.
- That the GRA updates its ICT Strategic Plan and provide copies to FPAC.

- That the GRA provides contract agreement or MOU with the MoFEA to FPAC.

- That GRA provides a comprehensive list of its assets and disposals.

Finally, the FPAC adopted the 2016 reports of Gambia Revenue Authority.

Honourable Speaker, we are now moving to the National Audit Office, which is the main auditors of The Gambia. The reports of the National Audit Office (NAO) for the year ended 31st December 2016 were considered and I am just going to highlight the issues here.

- Contracts were awarded to suppliers which were not registered with GPPA, in violation of procurement regulations.
- NAO was rated 85%, which means they are not fully compliant with procurement rules and regulations.
- NAO's budget for 2016 was tampered with by Ministry of Finance without the knowledge of the National Assembly. This was considered a violation.
- There was no IT Policy in place to govern the implementation of its IT systems.
- NAO was found to be biased. Only few or the same audit firms were awarded several times leaving out others that are also equally qualified to do the work.

The Auditor General clarified the above queries and assured the Committee that the aforementioned concerns were subsequently addressed and will be captured in the 2017 reports as well as his audit paragraphs to the National Assembly.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF 2016

- a) The FPAC advised the Auditor General to ensure that all the concerns and queries reported, as well as the procurement compliance, are addressed and stated in the 2017 reports. The NAO, as the supreme audit institution of the land, should not allow such violations. They should rather become a good role model for the subordinate institutions under their supervision.

- b) Most of the prior year matters raised by the Auditors were addressed as at the time of the meeting. The remaining outstanding concerns raised were clarified by Accountant General's Department (AGD).

- c) National Audit Office should endeavor to make a timely submission of their own Activity Reports and Financial Statements to the National Assembly.

- d) Also, FPAC had an Audience with the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) as part of our report and which we have indicated. Essentially, it was along the line of the waiver of taxes that was shown in the Constitution, regarding the Fourteen (14) days period for approving the Budget, seven (7) days for passing the Appropriation Bill, Executive Reports on Cumulative Government Investment etc. So, this was the consultation we have with the Constitutional Review Commission.

After the engagement, FPAC submitted its position paper on the afore-captioned thematic points to the CRC for incorporation into the Draft Constitution. Then the FPAC actually had a review of the Public Finance Act 2014. We have done the review and I am not sure if it is necessary

to read all the sections or what we have agreed to but if you see that we have made series of recommendations and from the recommendations, we believe that there needs to be complete overhaul of the Public Finance Act of 2014.

Honourable Speaker, may I also say that we are aware that the Minister of Finance is in consultation, and we also have a plenary meeting with them sometime this year in relation to the Public Finance Act with regard to our recommendations. So, I am not going through the recommendations that were made on the Public Finance Act but essentially at the end, we think that they just need to overhaul it completely and come up with a new Financial Act. So, I am moving to page 18, on the conclusion.

Honourable Speaker, the Finance and Public Accounts Committee is happy to report that the backlog of reports of the four (4) institutions under the scrutiny of the Committee were expected to be completed during the course of 2020. All the institutions concerned were strictly warned and given a strict deadline which ended as of July 2020 to submit their reports for 2018 and 2019 respectively. The Committee emphasized that this backlog of reports needed to be cleared so that institutions answerable to the National Assembly can provide current reports as required by the law.

The Accountant General's Department (AGD) must be committed to working within a reasonable timeframe to resolve the audit queries. AGD must be part of all project negotiations and have access to the associated financing agreements. The trend of adverse audit opinions on the Government of The Gambia must be reversed as a matter of

urgency especially taking into cognizance the level of freedom in the current dispensation.

The Financial Intelligence Unit(FIU) cannot be too dependent on government subventions and the erratic quarterly allocations will continue to hinder FIU's productivity. To mitigate the rising level of poverty in the country, bank loans and expenditure must be redirected to the productive sectors of the economy. Whereas Central Bank of The Gambia urgently needs an offsite backup for its IT infrastructure, caution must be exercised in acquiring a suitable property where it would be located.

The committee is of the view that several sections of the Public Finance Act, 2014 needs to be amended and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs agrees with the committee.

In conclusion and by virtue of the foregoing, the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) hereby submits its report for final consideration and adoption by this august Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Members any seconder?

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Upper Saloum for making that brilliant submission. I rise to second the motion and to make my submission short and brief.

Honourable Speaker, the Minister was not around when the estimate was laid in this chamber, and issues were raised in the plenary especially the SoNA [State of the Nation Address], and again this important report

by the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum. I know he is busy with his work but let him also reconsider the National Assembly, because there are issues which are very important and as highlighted by the Member for Upper Saloum, there is nobody to respond to these issues raised. The Minister should reconsider this National Assembly; he cannot succeed without the National Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, I have two issues on the recommendations, one of which is the grants that enter in the country, which the citizens are not aware of, only few knows that there are grants in the country and most of those grants go back to their donors, because the project intent will fail and those who should benefit from those grants find it difficult to get the grants.

Honourable Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum that all grant should be submitted to the Accountant General and the Minister of Finance because it is meant for the citizens, you cannot just come and submit it to a particular group or sectors whereby it will not be beneficial to the citizens, and again, the presence of grants in the country should not be considered much because most grants have a particular time after which it will come and exhaust and if they cannot exhaust it, they returned it to the donors.

Honourable Speaker, the second one is about the GRA, the borderline and the leakages, most of the staff in GRA, are all lobbying for this border post especially in Farafenni and Karang. What is happening there is detrimental to our port. Now, no vehicle comes through our ports, basically they all pass through Senegal whereby the officers would be charging per vehicle, there will be leakages and compromise of taxation.

We really need to look at what is going on at the border because it is terrible.

I am 100% in support of the recommendation the Member gives which is to change our revenue collection regime because the leakages are too much and there are Millions of dalasi that goes out of our government coffers to an individual, if you are posted there, within a year you are rich. Basically, the in and out of vehicles and commodities that come through that borderline are not accounted for. They are only for individuals enriching themselves not the government.

Honourable Speaker, not only our border post, but go to Gambia Ports Authority, what the agency earns from the shipping line, in fact, they get more monies than the government. I am not saying that we close all those gaps, but we have to minimize the leakages of funds through these places, because if the GRA has 11 million tax to collect for example, what is going out might be half of it which is not going to government coffers. There should be resolutions whereby the officers in charge of those offices can deal with the young staff and the senior staff over there.

On that note Honourable Speaker, I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Lower Saloum. Honourable Member, the concerned raised about the presence of the Honourable Minister of Finance, I think it is genuine but I did find out that this report is informed by the Auditor General's, and I was also made to understand that the Accountant General and some members from Finance are also around and the permanent secretaries are also around to listen to you and to take note.

[Question proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Consolidated Report of the Finance and the Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for the period 2019 to 2021]

THE SPEAKER: I now open the floor for Honourable Members to partake in the debate. We now have the Member for Brikama South.

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. First, I want to really thank the FPAC for doing an excellent job, by trying to clear up all the backlogs, I thank you for the job well done. But interestingly, I want to believe some of the findings and the recommendations are over taken by events. I want to believe that the FPAC would start engaging the various institutions and the Ministry of Finance before finally allowing this thing to be tabled for consideration and approval. I am very much happy for flagging certain interesting areas which is the issue of grants that do not passed through the Ministry of Finance or the Accountant General's Office. I think these are very important areas. We have seen that there are lot of grants that come into this country without the Finance Ministry or the Accountant General being aware of talk less of the National Assembly.

Sometimes, you go to the field and see these grants being implemented but you do not know where they come from, and you do not have any control over them. So, these are very interesting issues and the recommendation you did mention, which I really want to delve into. I think it has to be put into consideration, that the signing of some of these grants or projects should involve the Ministry of Finance, which is very important. I think that needs to be enforced from the particular aspect of it.

The other issue I want to talk about is the Institution of the Financial Intelligence Unit which is also very important and play key role in our Economies. So, I think they need to be given the required capacity to operate fully.

The recommendation you did mention in terms of staffing and office space are very important. I do not know whether you made any engagements to make sure that all those things are put in place.

Honourable Speaker, the porous borders, even though, the GRA made the emphases that they have a patrol team that is established to look at these things. There are lot of leakages when you come to porous borders and which need to be resolved in the soonest possible time.

With regards to the Central Bank of The Gambia, especially the software you talked about covering up certain back up, I do not know how far have you gone in trying to engage them with that because this is very important. The committee should engage the Central Bank which is the financial muscle of the country to establish and install the necessary software infrastructure in order to be able to retrieve certain backups. I am pretty sure most of these things must have been resolved by now since it is not this year but it has been 3 - 4 years back. Other than that, I think I am very much happy with your report and I am in support of it. I am also urging Members to also adopt this particular report so that we can go over the institution that are within the report and that of the Ministry of Finance to look at it whether they are completely resolved. Thank you so much!

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Brikama South. I now invite the Honourable Member for Niamina Dankunku.

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor, let me also thank the Member for Upper Saloum and the FPAC committee for presenting a good report.

Honourable Speaker, being a Member of the FPAC during the Fifth (5th) Legislature, I may not have much issues because many of the issues happened in my presence but I just want to lay emphasis. Honourable Members, if committee reports are presented in the Assembly, they come with recommendations which are derived from issues during public hearing or during our interventions with an institution that is the time the committee would sit down and make some recommendations. What is important now, is to make sure that these recommendations are implemented because if the committee comes with recommendations and the recommendations are not implemented what is the committee going to achieve at the end of the day? Because the recommendations are meant to help the institution to improve. So, we should now try and change our reporting format so that when we have our recommendations, they are accompanied by a strong resolution for implementation, if not they will just keep on repeating the same thing.

The report is already over taken by events. The responsibility of FPAC now FPAC to rollout, since the report is overtaken by events because most of these is to roll out to see whether some of the issues that were raised during the past five [5] years have been implemented because these are audit queries or queries during the committee sessions. I would definitely recommend things happened in institutions within the Greater Banjul Area. So, let them go and see what is happening.

Regarding the issue of the Central Bank of The Gambia, there was a recommendation that a proper vehicle for cash shipment to be purchased for the police which is seemingly not done and should have been done by now because there are certain recommendations which need to wait until the following year. There should also be a proper backup facility in the Central Bank which should be taken care of as quick as possible.

Honourable Speaker, these was actually what I have to add on this report to make sure that committees' recommendations are implemented. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honorable Member for Niamina Dankunku. I do not think all the report have been overtaken by events, some of these things are ongoing issues, probably the committee may engage the relevant institutions to give us feedbacks on their recommendations and some of the recommendations date back from 2020 to 2021. They can give us feedbacks and the implementation is purely the Assembly's own, there are lot of procedures to be taken to engage and ensure that recommendations are turn in to something else that may be little bit binding on the Executive.

HON. ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and FPAC for the wonderful job done in relation to the backlog that they have immensely reduced, and today we are able to have reports and also made some observations which is indeed great for their job considering the respective years ahead such as 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Among the recommendations of FPAC include:

1. Recommending that the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs to take over the issues of management of government coffers.

The recommendation needs to take a step so as to correct previous years. It's laudable and I think is in the right direction, whatever finances that they could do, ownership should be done by the Minister of Finance and National Audit Office and again, all government accounts must be disclosed during the audit engagement so that it will ensure accountability and transparency which will also help them in their key functions.

Also, the other observations they made regarding FIU which is lack of space and staff is a great concern. The whole unit responsible for the running of key areas in the financial sector, if it has a problem of space, then proper scrutiny will also be a big challenge and I believe FPAC should make proper follow up. Moreover, their recommendations, which states that personnel from the Directorate of Internal Audit must periodically visit FIU to check on their records and documents. I think this is a good thing, FPAC could also work with the Directorate of Internal Audit to periodically follow and make checks and Balance in order to see that it is amicably resolved.

Honourable Speaker, in relation to GRA, I believe the FPAC should visit these border posts to see for themselves, make proper recommendations, though you could analyze and say let us do XYZ but if you visit all those border posts, I think it will be an eye-opener and you could set patrol teams within the area. But sometimes for you to be able to take ownership or smugglers whereby they have their ways of doing things by advising GRA what measures would they take to reduce the smugglers. As we all know a lot of vehicles now comes through

Senegal down to The Gambia, is not an exception, we have seen it and we may end up losing revenue through that. So, I think FPAC should make a study in other to come up with a powerful recommendation and set standards to see that we would be able to take and control our border.

Looking at the key aspects of FIU, I believe software is important in the Central Bank where an offsite backup is not in place and if it is in place now, let them check how far and whether it does have mechanisms to make sure it does the financial intelligence for key sector areas. Not only offsite backups but periodically let them see it running and they can also see they have demanded power in making sure they watch all those areas. I believe if that is done, it will be impactful.

We thank FPAC for their wonderful job and I believe we are in the right direction to move forward in terms of these grants. I know grants are always in place, but you look at 2017 to 2018, a lot of unreconciled transactions were made, and it is repeatedly ongoing in 2016, 2017, and 2018. So, I believe if checks and balances are put in place, it will be history and FPAC should properly stand to see that follow ups are made. Thank you very much!

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honorable Member for Foni Kansala. I now invite the Honorable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honorable Speaker. I also wish to thank the mover as well as the presenter, Honourable Mbow for a very good report. Honorable Speaker, the report has actually exposed the lapses in our Financial Management System, and I believe that those lapses as recommended must be

addressed if we actually want to make a head way both in the expenditure management as well as the revenue side.

Honorable Speaker, I know that the FPAC must have engage the experts to help them in the scrutiny of the whole process. So, I would not ask that, but if you look at the analysis that talks about the outstanding supporting documents, where it is expected that all these issues should be cleared and reported.

THE SPEAKER: Honorable Member, can you make reference to wherever you are quoting so that Members can follow you.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Okay, that will be difficult but what I am trying to say is clear, they have made recommendations that should be done in a particular period before 2019. So, if you look at the CBG report of 2017, it says you adopt it without reservations, but my question is why is it done without reservations? I think if you are asking for outstanding supporting documents that are missing, I believe it should not be without reservations. It should be with reservations. I will come to do What the Speaker is saying.

Honorable Speaker, the question comes to mind when you come to the table. On page 7, it says what potential risk is? My question is what is potential risk in the debt-to-equity ratio? If you look at it the debt-to - equity ratio is at 93.52%, because this is a key financial metric which indicates a potential financial risk. So, if it is high, it means that the bank has taken debt and the area needs interrogation because if the debt doesn't lead to significant increase in revenues, the additional debt burden would reduce the bank's profitability which could result to bankruptcy. So, I just need some explanation whether it was given to

you regarding that particular issue and looking at the same table. It says that in 2017, the non-current assets were four hundred and seventeen million (417) million and then in 2018 is (349) million which has gone down. So, I am just imagining that what we expect on assets is for the value of assets to go up rather than going down. But in this case, it appears that it is going down, maybe something has happened that makes it to go down.

Honorable Speaker wants me to go page by page but on the issue of imp rest, I want to say that the report is blaming the civil servants for mishandling public funds. But for me, I think the concern should be based on the poor regulatory framework as stated in the recommendations. If there is a good regulatory framework in place, it will be difficult for the public servant to do certain things, but the regularity framework must be weak. So, just like you are recommending, we need to update and ensure that when you are given imp rest - there is a specific timeframe for you to bring back the imprest. It must be retired one week or two weeks after the conducted trip. What they do is to go and deposit the amount in their savings account at a commercial bank and if it stays there for 1 year, you make a lot of profit after which the money is returned. In fact, if there is no urgent call for the money to be returned, it can be kept there until sufficient profit is made. So, that regulatory framework should be properly looked at so as to provide for sanctions against perpetrators for failure to return any imprest on time.

Honourable Speaker, if you go to the key analysis of the issues in 2019 which is talking about the Inspector General of Police's dealing with this people as already alluded to by the Speaker before me that he needs to

be proactive. I am sure it must be overtaken by events to provide vehicles to the police which I am sure is already done.

Honourable Speaker, if you look at Page 4 of the report which talks about physical lapses, I think this is a problem because I always talk about the lapses. The Government does not have a consistent policy on this matter because at one moment, we said the commercial banks should provide more funds to the investors to invest into the productive base and the way to do that is for the government to take less through the treasury bill and money will be available in the commercial banks because if the interest rate is high at the Central Bank with the treasury bills, the commercial banks are likely to send their money because it is easy business and there is hardly any risk because you are giving loan to the government. But if the government take less, then more money will be left with the commercial banks so that they have to give it to the business people to invest into the productive sector.

So, if we really want the productive base to grow, we must allow the commercial banks to give loans and the only way to do that is to reduce the interest rate at the commercial banks and that means that the government will have to take less because once the government need more money they will have to raise the rate and raising the rate is actually encouraging the commercial banks to bring money there. So, that is something we need to consider.

Honourable Speaker, the issue I want to raise here is under roman figure [3] which is on Page 8 of the report. I think I have already addressed that which is dealing with the physical lapses of the three reports. If you go to Page 9 of 2014 to 2017 Paragraph 3, the FIU not

having all the requisite equipment to control money laundering will constitute a very difficult task because money laundering is a very sophisticated kind of crime and it requires lot of expertise and lot of other sophisticated equipment to really tackle it. To combat terrorist financing, let me give an example of what money laundering is. If there is a drug baron in South America for example who get millions of dollars with them and whose target is to take this back to the Bank of Europe or United States, knowing fully well that they cannot take it there directly because they will be apprehended. So, they will look for a weak country with a weak financial system like The Gambia and deposit the money into such countries which will be happy when they see dollars. So, when they put that in our banking system, our dalasi will immediately appreciate against the dollar and we will also be happy about that but that is not good for us because it is also creating another problem for us on the other hand. So, how do you detect it? It is not an easy thing to detect because these are people who have lots of millions of dollars and they did not get this money through the proper way. It is also easy for them to make their way through bribery. When they succeed in depositing such monies. After a short while, they make withdrawal and take it to another country and to its final destination America or Europe. Such transactions will make it seem legitimate money. So, even the Unites States want to make follow up on how such things happened until it entered. This is what money laundering is all about.

So, if you have a Financial Intelligent Unit [FIU] which is lacking Management Information System and evidence collection and storage, how are you going to track such a complicated money transfer system?

It will not be possible. So, I think the recommendations really need to be translated into action by not only giving them a separate office but also to ensure that they have the necessary tools to be able to deal with this problem. The countries that are being affected by this are also linked to us in one way or the other, such countries will offer support to FIU so as to get some of the equipment because the unit is helping them.

Honourable Speaker, the FPAC is giving recommendations on Page 9, [b] and we are now in 2022, so within this period as chairperson, did you make any effort to see that some of these recommendations are actually addressed even in the minimal way or did you make anything before you actually bring the report? You know that your report is overtaken by events, it has a gap since 2014, you are dealing with all these issues up to now. I have observed that if all the recommendations of the FIU are implemented, it will be an improvement.

When you go to Page 11, it is talking about the problem of tax collection and you know the President also mentioned it in the SoNA, that the collection has gone down to 14% in the first two months of the year, compared to 2021. So, we had a problem of collection, some people say we do not have collection problem but I think we have a collection problem, the fact that it can go down by 14% at the same time. The FPAC is also talking about the same thing, so I think we should take it seriously since we are a tax collection country. So, we should ensure that we collect our tax otherwise people will not get their salaries eventually.

On Page 15 Paragraph 8 Honourable Speaker, I read with your permission, "Section 15, temporary investment of money from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, it reads: The Permanent Secretary may invest temporarily in The Gambia or elsewhere, money from the Consolidated Revenue Fund that is not immediately needed and the recommendation under it is that, FPAC, recommends that the sentence includes 'in consultation with the Accountant General". So, I am thinking, what type of investment could this be since the money is already deposited in the CRF. I do not know how money can be in the CRF, which is not needed, and the fact that it is already in the CRF, even if it is not needed, it means that, we must have a surplus budget for us to have money in the CRF, which is not needed. I do not know how we can give this blanket opportunity to the Permanent Secretary to invest and to invest what? So that is a clarification, whether you seek clarification on that, I think the fact that you have recommended, you must have sought clarification on that because Gambia is not yet having, a surplus budget in my opinion

So apart from that Honourable Speaker, I think the report is very good, but the recommendation from the Speaker informed me that the committee goes back and verify whether some of these recommendations have been addressed or not, will be quite useful to all of us, so that when we speak or when we follow things we know what we are following. On that note, I thank you all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Wuli East. Honourable Members, just as the Honourable Member said the committee should note that Members will want to know the implementation of your recommendations and probably the challenges

faced by them because it has been a long time. We now move to the Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol

HON KEBBA TUMANDING SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you very much Honourable Chair. I must start by first and foremost commending the FPAC committee for a job well done, we have a lot of expert in the committee who have done a brilliant job. I must also thank the National Audit Office for the sacrifice, honesty and integrity that you performed during the investigations. I must also thank the Subject Matter Specialists for being honest in guiding us during the period of discussion. I must also thank the Clerk and team who were there and did perform very well. I must also thank the witnesses and then the external auditors for being very honest during the investigation. Well, I do not have much to say because I am part of the committee, and whatever recommendation that is made, I am part of those who contributed to that recommendation.

Anything I have to say here, I just have to go back from 2017 up to 2021 as the report highlighted. A lot of grants and money was pumped into this economy. However, if you look at our economy today, it is very sad If we are honest to ourselves because I was one time working at the Livestock Department and then I could remember in 2018 when I was invited to a workshop, I was told that millions of dollars, was pumped into the country especially in the Live Stock Sector in order to improve it but go to the Live Stock Sector at Abuko today and see what is happening there, it is very sad. We are not empowering our businesses, because if you look at the entire economy, the moneys that we are talking about the total grants amounts to **D1,296,377,878;** they are telling us that these were not disclosed in the financial

statement and the grants continued to be received by sectors. Where is this money going to? You look at the social media every day; you will be told that moneys are disappearing every day. There are too much leakages. So, how do we close those leakages? If you continue to have these physical contacts with cash, then the I am afraid the country will just continue to go backward while our people continue to suffer. We have to act on this report.

We must act on the recommendations immediately without fear or favour. We have to see that things are put in the right direction so that the country can move forward. We have to forget about party politics, we have to forget about favoring people, we have to put the right people in the right positions, putting someone who does not know what he is supposed to do in a position, would only lead to this catastrophic thing that we are experiencing today. Our economy is almost red, we cannot even create jobs, every institution and sector you go in the country is crying because nothing is working for them, this not about political statement, any institution that comes here have something to complain we do not know whether such complaints are correct or wrong but 51 billion is the debt that increases within these 6 years. Let us look at the impact, is it positive or negative? Our youth are just out there no jobs; our horticultural women also lacks lot of things. Every National Assembly Member here is just asking something to take back home to his people, either vegetable garden or horticultural garden or whatever.

This year, we ordered manure, our farmers cannot even buy it including myself because a bag of fertilizer is costing 2000, how many of them can afford it? Schools have opened, people have started to struggle, some are going to be drop outs, and some cannot continue, others

cannot go to the university, they cannot go to GTTI because of the economy. We have to support our small businesses for the economy to grow because we are losing a lot.

Looking at the problem of tax collection, there are instances whereby you pay and you will not be given a receipt. Sometimes, even these taxes that they collect in the villages, people will go and pay and authorities will just write your name without giving you the receipt. Taxpayers are often told that receipt will come later and sometimes when they are giving receipts, there is a big dispute as to who pays and who does not pay. You pay something and you are not given receipt up to 12 months., How is this country going to move? How are we going to create jobs for the youths out there? We know that they are deporting people every day, and every year, the youths are graduating? So, this report that I am part of, we are going to make sure that every actor including the president, should be ready to be called a dictator because that is what this country deserved. We do not need a president who is lenient, the malpractices that are happening in offices, we cannot allow that to continue while our people suffer. People struggle to go to work, even this institution that we are talking about that millions have been stolen, their own staff, the junior staff will struggle to go to work while you are pointing fingers at institution that millions have disappeared, then who is taking these moneys? We have to ask ourselves. My emphasis here is to make sure that this report is implemented without fear or favor. FPAC have done a brilliant job, the Auditor General have not compromised his integrity and professionalism they have done what they supposed to do. So, any actor who is there should not just be writing a report, design everything, read it here and then forget about it.

That is the past, even if it warrants arresting anyone who is involved in this, we have to do it because we have to first see the interest of the country before anything else. We cannot allow people to be jobless out there, go to the Livestock Sector that I am from, I was told that all the animals that are coming there are from Senegal and we cannot even empower our own people that are doing such businesses. During Tobaski time, how much was the cost of a Ram?

Can we support the "kafoos" [organization] in the local communities so that they can do sheep fattening, poultry and other things which will be cheaper? But if you just sit here to prepare good reports when we know it is wrong and we have to defend it because we are looking at our political parties which is not going to help the country. If you look at the revised budget and you ask the Finance Minister, he will tell you that he is going through some sleepless nights, because even to reconcile what he inherited is a problem. A lot of things are happening in the Finance Ministry and there is no way that we are going to move because Finance is the cream of the nation and the engine that will drive us to where we want to go. But even now, look at our donors, the moneys they earmarked for flood victims, they said they cannot give it to government instead they wanted to give it to the Red Cross directly. Is that not a shame to us? Now even our donors are saying that they will not give money directly to the government instead they have to give it to Red Cross, because they do not trust the government. How do we see that? I think we have to change our attitude to make sure that the country moves from where we are to a destiny that will favor all of us. I thank you Honourable Chair.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol. Honourable Member, nothing is working in the country and you said FPAC is doing very well just like FPAC is not part of this country. So some area may be working, not everything is bad. Honourable Member for Wuli East

POINT OF ORDER

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, you are not part of the debate, you are not supposed to debate, please.

THE SPEAKER: I am not debating.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Okay you not debating?

THE SPEAKER: You know what is debate? If I am debating, I will go contrary to what you are saying. As Speaker, I am putting things into perspective and to coordinate the debate. If I want to take part in the debate, I will ask the Deputy Speaker to come and sit here and I will be with you. Honourable Members, we now have the Honourable Member for Bakau.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. and I want to seize this opportunity through you to thank the FPAC Committee for doing a wonderful job.

Honourable Speaker, since the Anti-Corruption Bill is yet to be tabled before this August body, this report has exposed incompetence and malpractice in our Public Finance Institutions. Where are we as a nation Honourable Speaker?

Honourable Speaker, Page 4, Findings and Observations of the Report; according to the report from 2016 to 2018 government lost track of a

total sum of over 15 billion Honourable Speaker due to improper consolidation of government accounts.

Honourable Speaker, these lapses are due to inefficient and corrupt practices in our Public Finance. Honourable Members, where are we as a nation? This is not about UDP, APRC or NPP, it is about the Gambia. When the Gambia sinks, we all sink as a Nation. This report is not a witch-hunt against any party or any individual. We have assigned and entrusted a responsibility to Members of a committee comprising different political parties to do a job for us which they are not supposed to represent a political party but The Gambia.

Honourable Speaker, I do not want to waste time on this report, we have assigned a committee to come up with recommendations, so any Honourable Member who goes against these recommendations, is encouraging corruption not only corruption but looting. I do not want to be part of this August body which will go against these recommendations.

Honourable Speaker, it is Important that all the recommendations of this committee be implemented with immediate effect. Honourable Chair, of FPAC Committee, I thank you very much with your Members for performing your constitutional duties and serving to the best of your ability.

Honourable Speaker, with these few remarks, I am appealing to all Honourable Members to give support to this recommendation and give your sincere thanks to Members of FPAC committee for their time efforts, resources and sleepless nights. I thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Bakau. Honourable Members, should take ownership of this report laid by FPAC. You have all the authority to look at the report and to give further recommendations or expunge some of their recommendations. This is for your own adoption so that you own it, FPAC did it on our behalf. Honorable Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to also contribute to this great job. Firstly, I think it would be proper to definitely thank the FPAC committee for doing such a great job. This is a job well done, and I think your committee constitute Members from different political parties but you have approached this work in the spirit of bipartisanship and I think this is what is expected from every committee which is tasked to do certain functions. This committee has definitely, done a great job, so we really have to thank them for doing such a great job. We have been well informed through a marathon presentation.

Honourable Speaker, I would love to look at few issues as far as the report is concerned, and I think there were issues that concerns Financial Auditing compliance, and performance auditing. These are all important aspects of auditing to ensure proper implementation of budgets and when it comes to financial auditing and I think the National Audit Office should be in a position to ensure that they are au fait with the provisions of the Public Finance Act to ensure that whatever they are going to do in Public Office when it comes to the management of public funds should be in accordance with these provisions that we have in our public Finance Act. Regarding their compliance, I could remember issues being raised when it comes to GPPA awarding of contracts to agencies

or institutions which are not registered with them. This is an issue that they need to observe, this is an important regulation that they should not violate. Performance auditing is also very important as it will definitely help us to assess and evaluate the impacts of the project, on the people of The Gambia. We can only realize the impact of these grants on beneficiaries through the performance auditing, and I think the National Audit Office already has a Performance Auditing Unit in their institution which will help them to assess the impact of these funds that are coming.

With that little preamble, I just want to have a look at Page 4 of the report which says the Government guaranteed loans to State- Owned Enterprises which were unpaid and also not recognized in financial statement...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you make reference so that Members will follow.

HONOURABLE LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Under the 'findings' in the Auditor General's Report D, "It reads Government guaranteed loans to State- Owned Enterprises which were unpaid and also not recognized in the Financial Statement. I think some of these State- Owned Enterprises are sub vented by the Government. Being sub vented by the Government, there are so many roles that you need to play. that is performance, creating recruitment for the people, the Citizens and of course to generate revenue for the country. We cannot be sub venting you as a Government, to generate revenue for us instead you underperformed. You get loans, you are indebted and we go back to

deplete our National coffers to bail you, instead of generating revenue for us, this is something that we need to look at.

The public enterprises that should generate revenue for the country and create employment for the citizens. We need to look at these things to ensure that they generate revenue for the country. If they cannot generate revenue for the country, we cannot subvent them. Having subvented them, they implemented that and could not run to anything but deficit. This is defrauding the country and it is not helping our national coffers.

So, I think these issues need to be dealt with. We need to look at these things very well. We should make sure institutions that are subvented should generate revenue for the country and create employment for the citizens.

Honourable Speaker, I want to look at recommendations on Page 5, which reads; Recommendation A, B and C, I am looking at C which says FPAC recommended that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs does whatever it takes to judiciously use its Funds instead of relying on Budget supports which might not be forthcoming. This is a reality. We have seen in the recently concluded revised budget, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs reported that nonrealization of some the funds is one of the reasons that led to the revised budget. So, I think this recommendation is very important and we should make sure that we follow them so that we can have the implementation report of such important recommendations.

Honorable Speaker, letter D of the recommendations say that the Accountant General's Department [AGD] to update FPAC on the status

of unretired imprest. This is important, let us be honest as citizens. It is not only ministers, the President, National Assembly Members, or any official who holds public office should be honest but also every citizen. I think that is already an existing policy that should guide the retirement of the imprest. When you come, you are given an imprest and when you come back you report on the imprest, failure to do that should attract deduction from salaries of perpetrators, it is so huge to hear that D31 million worth of unretired imprest and this might be a bad debt because if those citizens are no longer working with the Government or with the institution, how do we get hold of them to ensure that the monies are recovered. It is also another task. So, let us be honest to ourselves, citizens are out there watching to ensure that when you go for any field trip you should come back and retire the imprest. Let it go back to the national coffers because it belongs to the citizens.

Honourable Speaker, findings under the Central Bank of The Gambia, [A] says; economic challenges of the Sub-Saharan Africa Regions include increase in the number of the extreme poor and livelihood per capita. We live in a country where our GDP is produced by few and per capita income shared among all of us, this is why we are very poor. There is a projection which indicates that likely, some of the Sub-Saharan African Countries will unlikely recover back to pre-pandemic levels till 2025. I think our Ministry by now should lay down plans as to how do we recover before 2025 because this is a projection and it is very important. How do we mobilise resources, is it domestically or whatever means to ensure that we recover before 2025? It is a projection but does not really mean that the Ministry has to sit until 2025 to say this is what the

projection has told us. This is a projection but there can be a strategy and work to ensure that we meet targets before the projection.

Honourable Speaker, analysis of key issues and conclusion of 2019, Page 8, Paragraph 3, says; CBG is also working with the company to develop a suitable software. I think CBG is the regulator of the financial institution in this country either private or otherwise to ensure that they have a proper software that is user-friendly to ensure that we seal all the loopholes in order to stop corruption and fraudulent activities in the institutions. So, I think these are some of the recommendations that we should ensure that they are implemented and CBG also should definitely make follow ups to ensure that they have a system software that is going to seal all the loopholes.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to have a look at the findings and observations in 2018 and 2019 on Page 9. Under findings and observations which says: The Financial Intelligence Unit [FIU] lacks proper office premises and adequate office accommodations. So, I think this is an issue that needs to be approached and tackled as soon as possible to ensure that such an important institution has an office space and the right recruitment of officials that are required to ensure that they do the right job that they need to do.

The recommendations on 2018/2019, Page 10, which says, the committee recommended that the FIU be detached from CBG to guarantee its functional autonomy. I think this is also very important because of their independence. They need to be independent from this institution, even though, the institution can perform oversight on them

but we need to make sure that they are separated so that they can have freedom to perform their functions very well.

Regarding the National Audit Office, the report says; the NAO's budget for 2016 was tampered with by the Ministry of Finance without the knowledge of the National Assembly. This is a serious issue, and it is a violation of a provision in the Public Finance Act and I think the Ministry will take note of this to ensure that they do not have any interference with such practices. This is not going to help the country, and I think the FPAC has done a brilliant job. they lit a candle to ensure that our nation is consumed in the light and today we sit here as National Assembly Members to also lit another candle so that the corrupt will not have anywhere to hide. Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I beg to take my seat.

HON. KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I must begin by thanking the FPAC of both the 5th and the 6th Legislature for a job well done.

Honourable Speaker, as a present Member of the FPAC of the 6th Legislature, my deliberation will be short and brief, and I will just basically concentrate on areas where we might need further clarification. After looking at the report coming from the 5th Legislature very carefully, I want to ask whether there were any prior audit queries which the 5th Legislature might have inherited and if so, what follow up mechanisms were done and what is the status quo as at the time of the compilation of this report? The other question I would like to ask the Honourable Chair of the FPAC, and the experienced Members from the 5th Legislature is about the unretired imprest. It is stated that out of 31.7

million dalasi, only 2.5 was recovered and if you look at recommendation 1.3(g) on page 5, it is mandating the AGD to provide the list of all those people responsible and the values involved. So, I would like to enquire about the current status quo as to whether some recoveries have been done or not. Moreover, I would like to make clarification to avoid any possible doubt. If you go to Page 4 of the report where we have analysis of key issues and conclusions it is noted there that securiport collections are done through third parties. Who are these third parties for the avoidance of doubt and it is finally stated in the consolidated report that FPAC is recommending for the elimination of having Project Coordination Unit especially whenever grants are received? The status quo should be known to the 6th Legislature so that we would know where to start from, thank you very much Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Nominated Member, Kebba Lang Fofana. Honourable Members, the issue of unretired imprest has been a problem even during our time and as was reported, some of the people who have not retired their imprest went into retirement. It is almost the same thing happening I think it is important that what some of the Members say that the plenary take a final decision and directs the FPAC on conclusive recommendations or even resolutions on this matter.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. As a member of both the previous and current committee, I do not think my contribution is going to be long or based on the report itself because I contributed in the report. My contribution will be as a source of guidance to this National Assembly through you to direct them

to the constitutional mandate that governs the office of the Auditor General.

Honourable Speaker, I would guide this august Assembly to a section of the Constitution, specifically Section 160 (1c) with your permission if I can read it to the august Assembly please.

Honourable Speaker, it is mandated that 'at least once in every year, audit and report on the Public Accounts of The Gambia, the accounts of all offices and authorities of the Government of The Gambia, the accounts of the courts, the accounts of the National Assembly and the account of all public enterprises, 1(d) within six (6) months of the end of the immediately preceding financial year to which each of the accounts referred to in paragraph [C] relates, report to the National Assembly on the accounts to any irregularities in the accounts audited and to any other matter which in which his/her opinion ought to be brought to the notice of the National Assembly'

Honourable Speaker, we are here talking of accounts from 2015 to 2019 again, by the time we go to address this, it would have been overtaken by events and I sadly hear some Members saying that we should include that some of the things are not taken by events.

Honourable Speaker, that is sad, we had a previous government from 2016 to 2021, and now we have another government. Obviously, they have inherited something that was done by a so-called previous government, even though, it is the same administration they have inherited. Even though it is under the same administration, it is sad to say that we are sitting here. Yes, I am a Member of the committee, but we still need to ensure that the laws we make as legislators are

respected and we expect the Auditor General to be bringing reports. We are in September and as far as this August Assembly is concerned, in July, we should have expected reports of 2021, and that would have given us the mandate to exercise what we should have been doing because it is no accident that it should be given to us at least 6 months in the year. The budget is done in December; how can we look at the expenditure to ensure that funds that were appropriated have been done properly. If we receive reports four or five years along the line, that is a cause for concern, and I think this August Assembly should put a stop to that. Notwithstanding, I will applaud the previous FPAC from whom we inherited reports as far back as 2012, and we were judicious enough to at least put some aside and look at some of the most recent ones. Notwithstanding, it was still against the law and as law makers, we should be seen to respect the laws that we make. If we know that it is not possible, we should go back and revisit our laws and ensure that we change it, so that we respect the laws that we make. Honourable Speaker, I think that is my contribution.

It is mentioned that we recommend funds to be taken if they are not needed for investment. Honourable Speaker, if you go back to the laws, before any money is withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund, or any other public fund, the Auditor General should ensure that the withdrawal is in accordance with the provision charging the same on that fund or the relevant appropriation. Budgets have already been made; we have also factored investments when we made those budgets. So, we should be conscious of how we use the funds, somebody will come up with fictitious investments, we have heard people mentioned how funds have been embezzled, and how they can put them in an account to incur

interest. How are we going to monitor and follow those interests? I mean, we should be judicious, we should be honest to ourselves and look at the interest of the nation rather than the interest of our pockets, that is my contribution, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Banjul South. I think you have done a beautiful analysis of the constitutional provisions. I was going to expect that it would come as a form of recommendation following questions you might have posed to either Minister of Finance or the Auditor General to advice because we will not know why for instance they are unable to bring the accounts within 6 months after the end of year. So, I think those were the committee's responsibility to do, and then give us recommendations on the state of affairs of that particular one, whether the challenge is theirs or not, but I think it is a good point that you raised and it is the same thing as the investment. I think I told you here that Members have a right to look at the recommendations, adjust, amend or add, before you adopt. So, these are the recommendations that emanated from the committee. It is now your decision, and Members can input or do whatever.

However, I thank you very much Honourable Member for Banjul South.

HON. SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I also join my colleagues to thank the FPAC for their job well done. Yes, it took you time to come up with recommendations with regards to your findings. With regards to the backlog of cases, I raised a concern that auditors' reports are being packed somewhere from 2014 to date. We are still dealing with 2016 and now we are in 2022. What is the cause? Why is this happening?

When budgets are sent to this Assembly for approval for the following year as expenditures, we can only act on expenditures based on the auditors' reports, but if at all there are findings that we have come across in these reports that need to be taken care of and they are not, how will we move ahead as a country? I think before the National Assembly approves any budget of any department or ministry, it is important for the Assembly to see the current audit account of that particular institution before approval is given. I think this is the only way we can move ahead. However, we cannot always be acting on reports that are three or four years ago. The 5th Legislature were acting on reports that were supposed to be done by the previous Legislature. We the 6th Legislature are now looking at reports of four to five years back. So, I think it is important as colleagues to look into this properly.

Also, there are Internal Audits that are within government institutions or government departments. We called them departments or units, what is their relationship? Are they answerable to the National Audit or are they working on their own? These are the people who are doing audit before the National Audit comes on board. However, if they are doing based on their own criteria or on their own, how can you audit me as the head of an institution whilst you are working for me? Is it going to be fair? No, I think we have to look at the Internal Audit Department and try to link them with the National Audit to work hand in glove so that they can be there as people representing the National Audit. But if the National Audit comes up and try to work with Internal Audit when they are also working on their own, it might bring conflict of interest. So, I think National Audit should work on this and look at how best we can put the two together. If you do not have enough manpower, you add the

manpower and see how best you can work on the reports. It is very important. So, look at the two departments, if at all they can be brought together to work under you...

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Please address the Speaker.

HON. SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: I am addressing the Speaker and thank you for your observation. I think it is going to be very important that we look at the two things together.

Coming to the imprest aspect of it, yes, we said there were many imprest paid and they were not retired, why? There was no proper audit report. Had it been that the audit reports were intact, and were the current reports that are being sent, there would not have been any problem of unretired imprest. Now, those who are nowhere to be seen, how will that money be recovered when those people are no more within the system? They might not even be alive or they are not in the country. How are we going to recover those monies? That is the big question. So, let us please look at things properly and try to act as quickly as possible, if my colleagues accept, then we pass this resolution. If your accounts are not properly audited, and are not sent, there will be no budget for you. We are not going to approve your budget and that is the end. I think if we start working in that dimension, things will change. It is very important that we start seeing ourselves as Gambians. Let us see The Gambia first and not to think that the country belongs to one party. Let us work together as a team and make sure that the country moves to where it is supposed to be.

Regarding the grants that are coming into the country sent by who, on behalf of who, to the Gambian people? However, some grants coming here are sent back again for not being used. This is very common to the Ministry of Agriculture. Whenever the country receives grants, They rushed signing contracts within a period of 3 months, and they really know that within 3 months duration, contract cannot be executed So, such contract will just be signed for the sake of trying to get hold of that money because it is hundred percent known that the contract being signed cannot be accomplished within a short time So let us always act on time when we are given grants. Let us invite the relevant authorities who are responsible to execute the work as quickly as possible.

With regard to NGOs, I would like to know who is monitoring them. There is a unit monitoring the NGOs but are they monitoring them properly since they are also taking grants on behalf of The Gambian Government. I do not know if my colleagues can put me through. Have we ever invited these NGOs in this Assembly for questioning? I do not think so. Has it ever happened inviting NGOs here for questioning? They are also getting grants on behalf of Gambian Government. So, I think it is important we look at these grants properly and then act seriously on them.

National Audit being the referee and the one who should put us straight, on Page 12, some of the issues that were raised about the giving out of contracts to unregistered suppliers and also rated them 85%. I think the National Audit should take things seriously because they should be the one that are to control other ministries or departments under The Gambia Government. If they are not doing things right, how would you

expect other departments or ministries to do it right? As far as the recommendations are sent to you, it is good you act on them as quickly as possible. It might be an oversight but act on them as quickly as possible. Let us not be biased in the way we do things. Let us work as a team to confront any challenge knowing that this country is our country. Reports are coming all the time indicating that things are not going right which need to be corrected. FPAC took it upon themselves to sit and scrutinise almost four, five years reports to come with results. Why not the National Audit Office? It is now 2022, going into 2023. We still have not received those reports even if we come to the PEs, you see things happening there.

If you go to the PEs, you also have audit reports that are only for 2016, 2017. There is no Audit Report for 2018 and 2019, you can only count few that already got audit report of 2019. So, where are we? I think we have to be very serious with the way these audits are being taken care of and let every department or ministry prepares its audit reports as quickly as possible, and all the grants should come through the Ministry of Finance. If they come in through the Foreign Affairs Minister, let them hand them over to the Ministry of Finance, to do their own monitoring to make sure that these things are taken care of and the monies sent to the right people, the right department or to the ministries, that should take care of them. NGOs will come and do what they want to do, Foreign Affairs Minister will come and give it out to any sector he wants to give it out which will not help the country. We have to do things right and then come together and work as a team. Thank you very much.

HON. BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you so much Honourable Speaker for giving me the opportunity to have my

share as far as the FPAC report is concerned. I think it will be very unfair if we do not thank the FPAC. We have to thank them so much for the good work they have done.

Going through the reports, my deliberation is going to be very short and precise simply because there is a Committee that we have given an assignment which is the FPAC. I want to emphasize that, all the recommendations that are put in place should be fully implemented. If you go through the reports, you will come to realize certain things as my brother mentioned, that is, the National Audit Office and the Internal Audit Department which sometimes cannot be differentiated. It confuses me just like you are putting an old wine in a new container. The Internal Audit Department gives assignment to audit the National Audit Office which does not make sense as far as I am concerned, and it will be very difficult for them to do the work as we want. He also mentioned one thing which is very paramount, I think as Gambians, before we come to the National Assembly, we all sworn to the Quran as Muslims, to speak the truth, nothing else but the truth. We are here simply because the people voted for us. So, under any circumstances, anytime we are speaking, we have to speak the truth so that when we succeed, we will succeed as a nation but when we fail, it is the same thing, whether you are the president, minister or National Assembly Member. If we fail, it applies to everybody as well.

The FPAC has done their job and I am very impressed with what I saw on their report. It is very unfortunate that reports of four to five years back have featured in the 2022 report. Sometimes, it is very difficult for you to read between the lines. But it cannot be business as usual and the narrative has to change. If we are very serious, and would like to

move forward as a nation. If you go through the report, you will come to realise that the Ministry of Finance have tampered with the budget of the National Audit Office which is not in line. Honourable Speaker, you can also realise from the report that the budget of the National Audit Office was tempered by the Ministry of Finance without consulting the National Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, also, the National Audit Office do award contracts to people or businesses who do not register with GPPA. When I saw it in the report, I thought that it was a fiction but on the whole it is real. It is like an Audit Department giving contracts to businesses that are not registered with GPPA. Absolutely, I think the narrative should change and the Audit Department have to put their house in order. Definitely, I am not happy with the way things are going. I am not impressed because we owe Gambians a lot. The fact that the National Assembly is the soul and heart of the country, when we succeed, our country will also succeed. When we also fail, our country will fail. So, we should remember one thing, whatever is happening in the country, we should be held responsible as National Assembly Members. Honourable Speaker, as highlighted by colleagues, we have to realise that grants have been pouring into the country whilst the Ministry of Finance and the Accountant General's Office are not aware. So, these are things that should not happen in the country. Although, we all know the importance attached to grants, we also know that they are here to help the Gambian people, so anything that is coming to the country, the Government in charge should be aware. In the report, I have come to realise one thing that is the Financial Intelligence Unit should be well-equipped in terms of staff mobility in order to facilitate their work.

Honourable Speaker, I want Gambian people to hear my voice loud and clear. Gambians, sometimes complain that there is no money in the country, as far as I am concerned. I say a big 'No' to that because Gambia is among the richest country in the sub-region. I have my reasons, the problem with Gambians is attitude, we have to change our attitude, all the time when we talk about corruption, what they look at is the President, the Executive and the Judiciary but remember, those at the lower level are even more corrupt than the Executive. So, Gambians, this is a clarion call that we have to change our attitude if we want the country to move forward.

As I said, there are institutions in the country like GRA which the report talked about regarding the porous borders through which vehicles are coming from in to the country. Sometimes, they may not pay tax, and as such constitutes revenue losses for the country. I am saying a big no to that just like what Honourable Member for Foni Kansala highlighted that the FPAC should try to visit these porous borders. They are supposed to do it in order to have a first-hand information, and they will come to realize that most of those vehicles coming from Senegal entering Gambia pay taxes, but the problem with Gambians, like Honourable Member for Jeshwang said, people pay tax, but they are not given receipts. Sometimes people will pay tax for example amounting to 10,000 or D20,000 and are given a receipt of 2000 dalasi. This is happening in this country and is caused by who? The very Gambians working in the government institutions, not those ones in the Executive or Judiciary but those working under them. These are the same people who will come and say the Government is corrupt or people working in the Government are corrupt and they are the same people who are

collecting tax on behalf of the Government. So, there are lots of lapses in the way the Government generate taxes and I have said that in my last deliberation. I did say if we are to make 100% of the tax collected by the government, remember government is getting only 54% and the 46% is going away. I will just give a scenario, someone who works as a junior staff at GRA for 3-6 months, within that short duration, you will see that particular person building a mansion. Where did that money come from? These are realities on the ground and people are seeing it. So, as Gambians our problem is we have to change our attitude if we want this country to move forward. Sometimes, it is very stressful that people are working for the government and they do not want to take responsibility. Every Gambian should be a police officer if we want the country to move forward.

Well for FPAC, I think we have to give them a tap on their back because they have done a lot. As I said, GRA, Gambia Ports Authority and Gambia Civil Aviation Authority, these are our power houses of revenue collecting bodies in this country. If these three entities put their houses in order government can collect 85% or 90% of the tax. I am telling you Gambia will be a Singapore of Africa. However, people must change their attitude if we want this country to move forward.

Honourable Speaker, my contribution as far as this report is concerned, I am still banking on what I said that the recommendation should be fully implemented. I, personally, want to give a recommendation that is going to be my own recommendation to the NAO which is the National Audit Office. In order for the office to conduct more training for the staff who are working there. I have seen that they have awarded contracts to businesses that have not registered with GPPA. Is that a norm or they

did that deliberately or they do not know? So, that is why I said if possible that training should be organized for those personnel who are working at that department. Also, the 32 million dalasi that is unaccounted for is the imprest that was given, I think only 2 million was recovered.

Honourable Speaker, all those who are found wanting, we need to know their names and where they are. If they put this money into good use, they have to come and explain. If they do not put it into good use, remember public funds must be put into good use and accounted for. Public funds should be used in order to address the needs of the Gambian people. So, all those who are responsible should come and explain before FPAC come up with a resolution.

Honourable Speaker, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to share my views.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West, you told me that you are just going to contribute few minutes and you raised my hopes but it did not happen to be so. Honourable Member, clarification on the Auditor General's Report, the Auditor General is not usually audited by any Internal Auditors, but by External Auditors appointed by the National Assembly, and for those who had not retired their imprest, it is the Assembly to request. If you request it, there is nothing secret for Assembly Members. If you request for the name and the compilations, it will be made available to you.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would like to thank the chairperson and the team

for a work well done. Though, it is late but as the saying goes, 'goodness is never late'.

Honourable Speaker, this report has shown to us that there is high corruption in the country as manifested in the report. Abuse of office, mismanagement, nepotism and favouritism are manifested, even if it is not manifested but can be sensed in the report.

Honourable Speaker, responsibility is very key, trust is key when people give you the trust to carry out the responsibility, you are expected to deliver.

Honourable Speaker, when you look at Page 4, it shows a lot of gaps of the money that serve as liabilities from the grants that were awarded or given to the country or received.

Honourable Speaker, as it has been said by other Honourable Members in this Assembly that by the end of the day, we must take a motion to demand for the differences to be made available within a timeframe. FPAC did a great job, but most of the recommendations are not time-tailored in a sense that if you are recommending an institution to perform or do something, it must be time bound. So, I see a big gap in some of the recommendations like for example when we ask Auditor General to do A or B or Ministry of Finance, we need to have time frame attached to some of the request in the recommendations.

Honourable Speaker, they made mention of State -Own Enterprises which were unpaid for and also not recognized in the financial statements. Which ones in specifics are you talking about? Because it will be very important to know them so that follow-up could be done or in our quest for more evidence, we can be able to trace them out.

Honourable Speaker, the report also went further on Page 4 to state the net worth of State- Owned Enterprises which was reported to be at a tune of **D5, 389,000000** in the financial statement, but could not be confirmed because the Audited Financial Statement of SOEs were not provided for proper consolidation to be done. Why was it not provided Honourable Speaker?

Honourable Speaker, going to the analysis of the key issues and conclusion, they are arranged through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or NGO agencies and are delivered directly to the affected sector.

Honourable Speaker, if people do not trust you, would they give you their funds? So, among the NGOs, if there is a particular NGO that can carry out the work effectively and efficiently, why should we give it to the State- Owned Institutions that are corrupt. So, this money is not Gambia Government's money, I am a partner, I am interested to work with CRS or any other institution if I trust them. They are the people that I will give money for them to implement. So, this is about trust, our institutions must live to expectation, they must become Caesar's wife beyond suspicion. but if I suspect that you will not judiciously use the funds, why should I give you my fund. So, I do not think there should be any string attached to that.

Honourable Speaker, going to Page 5, FPAC is concerned about persistent adverse audit opinion over the years because of the misstatements involved, especially when no plausible explanation has been advanced by AGD or efforts made to reverse this unfavourable trend.

Honourable Speaker, these are all evidences of corruption in our system which need to be immediately address if we want to work as a nation. It has been alluded by all of us from different background.

Honourable Speaker, another evidence of corruption in our system is in the Finance and Public Accounts Committee's report on Page 6. FPAC had an audience with the Accountant General on the status of the repayment of outstanding imprest issued to Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

Honourable Speaker, we need a list by the end of the day. They need to bring this money within one-month period wherever they are on earth they have to pay this money. If I take a bank loan for example if the loan is not paid there are sureties and my immediate families are there who will be pursued to pay this money. This is taxpayers' money Honourable; we want to be serious, and we have gaps, we want to do some developments, we want to buy medicines, we cannot have such pending funds with the individuals. We are saying we do not know how to trace them, which is not possible. Even if they fly to the moon, we have to go and get them. I can fly to the moon give me a tract.

Honourable Speaker, going to Public Finance Act, it was highlighted that the Act needs to be adjusted. Honourable Speaker, sometimes I get discouraged with these Acts. So many acts to be formulated or adjusted at the end of the day but you do not see them appearing again. So, since your time as the Majority Leader of this Assembly, you have been working on so many Acts, we found them here but now you look at the people, the attitude of the institutions sometimes get one discouraged about the Acts. Not that those Acts are not good but anytime you come,

you want to change Acts. If you want to adjust Acts and those Acts can still serve their purpose, although, some are outdated but you have numerous of them that are still good and they can be able to hold our people accountable and we are not implementing them. So, I am sometimes discouraged about the Acts. Sometimes, it could be waste of fund and energy.

Honourable Speaker, going through Page 9, on the findings; there is something that we need to look at as Parliament. The first issue is the rampant sale of pharmaceutical products by unlicensed persons in public which is another manifestation of corruption in our system.

Honourable Speaker, corruption is a canker worm and once it is not address, it will eat the fabric of our society.

Honourable Speaker, how can this thing be happening and where are the institutions responsible? Every corner you move, there is a pharmacy, we need to find out what is happening. Where are the regulations and the laws? So, this report tells us a lot Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, going to the second point, which is the issue of money laundering and terrorist financing, this is very serious and as a country, if we want to get more funding from outside which we all depend on, knowing that we Gambians, we do not produce but we are receivers. So, if you want to receive more, we must combat against money laundering which is all corrupt practices done by barons or the cabals you call them who have different names in different societies and they always get their support from the government, they do not operate alone, they operate with governments. So, the government must be serious to fight against money laundering. These are set of organized

people Honourable Speaker. If we do not fight them right now, our country is going to have a problem. They are here, and they can do all kinds of things necessary to get fund and at the end of the day, they do not care to take people's lives in order to get money or for their business to go on. So, these are the people that we must all be ready for. So, all hands must be on deck to fight against them. Our police must be in action Honourable Speaker to investigate issues. to be able to identify them in their hides. These are organized people who can be anywhere, they can be in the Assembly here and we do not know.

Honourable Speaker, going through the report on Page 10, analyses of key issues and conclusion of 2018 and 2019, first paragraph, second and third line, FIU was operating on a very tight budget and the funds were not forthcoming, erratic release of quarterly allocation grossly affects their operational efficiency. Honourable Speaker, how do you expect them to be independent when they do not have their funds on time. How do you expect them to perform? Honourable Speaker, these are some of the things that need to be fixed.

Honourable Speaker, it went further to say that the Central Bank of the Gambia carries out oversight over the Financial Infrastructure of the country, this explains that it continued connection with FIU.

Honourable Speaker, regarding Central Bank, a lot is expected from them but if they are not free from Executive interference, they will not perform. This is one of the key things that are affecting our institutions. Executive interference is too much in our institutions.

Honourable Speaker, regarding 2016 / 2017 talks about the revenue collection, we have to say kudos to GRA for the collections being made. But there are gaps as highlighted in the report.

Honourable Speaker, considering the impact of border closure between Gambia and Senegal, both the Committee and Management of GRA expressed similar concerns and observed that this issue required strong political commitment between the two governments.

Honourable Speaker, border closures do happen but at the end of the day Gambia is losing a lot. We have lot of perforated borders or ways and means through which people do lot of smuggling in the country. So, the GRA and the security must be really resourced, and they must be very firm in the crusade to fight against smuggling which is one of the key areas where we lose lot of revenue Honourable Speaker.

It was also highlighted that the authority was also advised to request for a judge at the Judiciary to administer tax tribunal for tax defaulters. So, it means we do not have a tax tribunal here or what is it? The mover of the motion or the Chairperson can try to elaborate on this because I do not understand a nation you are recommending, or you are saying that the authority request the judge at the Judiciary to administer tax tribunal for tax defaulters. So, it means that they are defaulters all through out since 2016 to date without redress. As a country, Honourable Speaker, this is something that we want clarity on.

Honourable Speaker, the report of the National Audit Office, has also highlighted that the contracts were awarded to suppliers which were not registered with GPPA on Page 12 second paragraph in violation of

procurement regulations. Honourable Speaker, this is not accepted and it is another gate way for corruption.

Honourable Speaker, National Audit Office was rated 85% which means they are not fully compliant with procurement rules and regulations. Who rated them 85%? Honourable Speaker, I am not comfortable with that rating. I think the mover will be able to tell us what yard stick they have used to make this rating Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, NAO budget for 2016 was tempered by the Ministry of Finance without the knowledge of the National Assembly. This was considered a violation. So, there must be a penalty for this action Honourable Members. "charity begins at home", lets act now for audit to know that National Assembly is also serious in their work. Let us have punishment for some of these actions let us not leave them free. If you have the culture of leaving things to work like this, it will never be fixed. Who will be there to bell the cat? It must start from us these things need to be regulated.

Honourable Speaker going further, NAO was found to be biased, this is serious, an institution that we expect to perform an imperial responsibility is getting biased which is serious. Only few or the same Audit Firms were awarded. Who knows whether they are getting kickbacks? Why are you using only one firm? There is a fundamental question to ask, and we need fundamental answers for this Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, the Auditor General clarified the above queries and assured the Committee that the aforementioned concerns were subsequently addressed and will be captured in 2017 report as well as his audit paragraph to the National Assembly. Was this fulfilled? We need to be told.

Honourable Speaker, there is a page on consultative meeting that the Committee had with CRC outlining some of the concerns that they want to be part of the draft. Now, the draft is in the grave. I do not know whether the question I am going to ask will be relevant before wasting your time because I know you cannot answer such questions for the dead draft.

Let me move to Page 14 which talks about the review of the Public Finance Act. Honourable Speaker, there are numerous sections that have been quoted by the committee with so many recommendations as far as the Finance Act is concerned. Do you not think there is need for holistic Approach by the Committee to look at it or do you expect them to fulfil all these things within what timeframe? This page also needs to be looked into.

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, as I said, 'To whom much is given, much is expected'. This Committee is the most important committee in this National Assembly, and it will not be business as usual. We need to be very firm and ready to serve the Nation. The Standing Orders give the Committee the power to do anything, just like the power of the High Court. So, let them start taking actions or the Supreme Court will start doing something in our favour and they will get the blessings from the Assembly because we cannot accept our family members dying in the

Hospital when our funds are in the pocket of individuals. When you go to Brusubi or to these new Estates, you can see Government officials building mansions, bungalows etc. Sometimes we can see naked corruption in the Country. So, we must be ready to combat it and I believe Honourable Members and all those who made statements here against corruption, must be ready to combat it. I thank you for giving me the chance.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Central Baddibu. I now invite the Honourable Member for Jarra West.

HON ALIEU BALDEH [JARRA WEST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I also want to thank the Vice Chairperson of FPAC, Honourable Member for Upper Saloum and the entire FPAC Committee for the brilliant job they have done together with their support staff and the witnesses as well. I do want to go far because some of the Honourable Members have dilated on the issues that I want to talk about. I just want to support the report and recommendations, especially on the grants to be consolidated which is very important. The monies is coming for Gambians, it is for the interest of Gambians. So, if it is consolidated, it will be very useful for all the Gambian People. I believe that recommendation is one of the best of the recommendations and I am in support of it.

Also, the recommendation that you have made for the Ministry of Finance to judiciously use its funds instead of relying on budget support which may be coming from outside with strict measures. It is very important as one of the Honourable Members mentioned during the revised Budget. It was because of those lapses that is why we have the

revised Budget. There were some funds that were expected and they never come. So, those recommendations should be put into practice by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. I will also appeal to the committee to make a follow up on all these recommendations.

If some are done or whether they are on the process of doing it, lets us make sure all your recommendations are met because it is very important. It is very precise when I read it and go over it. I was happy because with this, if it is put into practice, I believe Gambia will move forward. So, I thank you people for the job well done.

I move to the Financial Intelligence Unit [FIU] which is a very sensitive unit, and need to be functioning very well because it deals with money laundering and then combating terrorism. So, we need expertise and experienced people in order for it to function very well to tackle money laundering and then combat terrorism.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to support your recommendation for the Central Bank to have a backup system which is very important for a financial institution as it will help maintain the system to work properly and keep accurate data even whereas disaster occurs.

So, on that note, let us just work very hard so that these recommendations are implemented for the betterment of The Gambia. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Jarra West. I now invite the Honourable Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]:

Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Before going further, I would like to make a general observation after listening keenly to every single person that intervened here, you must be mindful that the Standing Orders provides that this National Assembly cannot really engage itself in allegation. We must operate based on facts provided to us.

We must also treat issues based on empirical evidence that is before us rather than alleging people at the border collecting money or alleging GRA staff for building mansions here and there which are all allegations. This National Assembly should not and shall not engage in alleged practices. So, I implore each and every one of us to desist from that practice. The Assembly is too noble for that practice. We should be beyond the realm of speculation. We must put up our case based on empirical facts or empirical evidence provided to us.

Honorable Speaker, I wish to thank the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for being constitutionally inclined. Section 109 of the Constitution does give Finance and Public Accounts Standing Committee reserved rights to look into government books of accounts to make sure value for money is attained.

Honourable Speaker, they have done just that, it is better to be late than never. Unfortunately, they discovered that the majority of officers involved have left service and some of them could not be located. Also, the Second paragraph reflected and captured the grievances disappointments, and anger of Members of the Committee.

Honourable Members expressed their disappointments with such attitude of public officers regarding the mishandling of public funds. The Committee directed the Accountant General's office to take further steps to recover the monies. Every imprest issued by the Accountant General must be given a timeline and must be retired within the timeline, failure to do so should result to sanctions.

I was expecting the committee to really use Section 160(5) of the Constitution, invoking the powers of the National Audit Office, that is, the Auditor General which reads: "Wherever discrepancies of a criminal or fraudulent nature are discovered during the audits of accounts by the Auditor-General, he or she shall immediately cause a report of his/ her findings to be submitted to the Inspector General of Police for actions" So, there is no legal lacuna, there is no limitations.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is it Section 160?

HON BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Yes, Section 160, subsection [5], Page 86. Therefore, I would have expected the committee to really capture this point and instruct the Auditor General to act forth with to make sure that the findings are sent to the Inspector General of Police for further actions.

Honourable Speaker, having said that, I want to quickly go to Page 11 of the report, that is, Gambia Revenue Authority [GRA], under Paragraph 3 Page 11, considering the impacts of border closure between The Gambia and Senegal, both the Committee and Management of GRA expressed similar concerns and observations that this issue requires strong political commitment between the two governments. The Gambia and Senegal as brothers and sisters, sharing almost everything, such incidents need

to be controlled to facilitate, trade and movement of people in line with the ECOWAS protocol.

I want the Select Committee of Trade to take up this portion to further engage the Ministry in terms of compliance rate of these two countries in terms of ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme [ETLS] of which both Senegal and The Gambia are signatories. As a country, we should understand that our advantage in terms of port or in terms of trade is concerned, the country really benefits from re-export trade. A country enjoying from re-export trade, means that many of our goods passed through Senegal down to final destination and Mali being a land locked country really prefers to come and trade with Gambia. Therefore, this is a very serious issue, a serious concern and both the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the GRA and of course by extension the Ministry of Trade should really look into this recommendation to make sure there is proper adherence in terms of ECOWAS protocol and also the delegation to ECOWAS parliaments will own full share out of this to echo it at the level of ECOWAS Parliament to make sure there is compliance in terms of the protocol. Nations have signed the protocol to make sure that the integration of ECOWAS is not at crossroad.

Therefore, it is one thing to enter into agreements and conventions and another thing to accept the nitty-gritty of the legal instruments that are binding on that integration. So, we would take our own full share to make sure we echo it at the regional parliament, to make sure that states are subscribed to this protocols of free movement of goods and services because if it is hindered or abridged, ECOWAS is at cross road and we cannot be at crossroad to avoid the protocols we stand up to. So, in that regard, I crave your indulgence and thank the mover of the

motion and of course the Chairperson for his timely intervention for acting suitably to make sure they bring this to the floor of the Chamber for discussion. Honourable Speaker, I thank you so much for your indulgence.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Kantora and Majority Leader. I now call upon the Honourable Member for Bundungka kunda.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. First of all, I want to thank the previous FPAC for the wonderful job and at the same time grateful for being part of the current FPAC. My colleague has already alluded to what I want to say. Actually, I want to talk about the imprest issue. Out of 31 million, they only recover 2.5million which is a big loss to the state and we should all understand why we are here. As we are all under the same roof representing our people, we cannot be elected by our people, appoint other special technocrats and give them responsibilities, yet, we fail to do the actual work. Whatever the case, we should know that we are accountable to our people.

So, we expect when they bring their budget here, whatever approval we give them, we expect them to implement it accordingly because we have been talking about corruption, what can we do to stop or mitigate corruption? This is very simple and clear. Let us bring the Anti-Corruption Bill and whatever the recommendations are, we must implement them because recommendations are not meant for you to just keep them but to adopt them instead so as to add value or improve standard.

That being the case, the report is here and it is a very good one. There are a lot of recommendations. I am appealing to the general body for us to approve these recommendations, and when we approve it and we find a mechanism wherein at least we can track all these recommendations in various institutions or departments, the government or public officials that we have, those who are appointed based on their expertise, or qualifications would be a step in the right direction. However, sometimes when such reports come here, all the time you see issues relating to malpractice or misconduct. We cannot understand that as members of FPAC. I do not want to preempt but as far as our work is concerned, we need to stick and ensure that we do the right thing because at the end of the day, whatever we discuss here, it is always important that we do the right thing in order to achieve the development of this country.

On that note, I would want to thank all the Members who contributed, because the areas that I want to touch has already been touched. Regarding the imprest issue, how can they give you money? Instead of retiring the imprest, you refuse to retire which is very abnormal and I think we need to do something about it as people's representatives. I want to thank everybody for contributing.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda. I now invite the Honourable Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON. ALHAGIE S DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. The Vice Chair of the committee will come in

to respond to the salient concerns and clarifications that were raised. Let me also join my colleague in the FPAC of the 6th Legislature to commend and thank our predecessor in the 5th Legislature for the wonderful work that they have done. Going through the reports of the respective institutions, particularly the ones that were specifically covered in this report, the current committee considered it wise that this is the stepping stone as far as the country is concerned. If we want to effectively do our work, we cannot put aside this report otherwise you are asking us to inform the plenary as to what extent some of the issues that are highlighted have been implemented. I think that will be a matter of putting the cat before the horse. We can only use this report as an instrument when it is actually adopted by the plenary, that is why we attach importance to the adoption of this report to our committee work that are currently laid on the table of FPAC. It is our hope that when this report is adopted, it is going to add value to whatever work we are going to do and address what may be termed as the stumbling block to address financial malpractice or what people may call it, corrupt practice in our finance sectors.

Honourable Members, the reason why the committee currently did not allow this report to be gathered and endorsed is because we are growing keener and more committed to address the issues that were highlighted in the report, and I want to assure you as Chair of the Committee that we will endeavor to ensure that something fruitful is done after the adoption of the report. It is one thing to lay your report to the plenary for adoption and another thing to implement it. That is why earlier in my introduction, I did say when the report is adopted, FPAC as well as other concerned committees will be fully involved and

engaged in the implementation of this report as the Majority Leader rightly recommended at one point for the involvement of the Select Committee on Trade in the aspect that concerns trade and may also go far to involve any committees that we feel are relevant to function in that aspect of the implementation.

Honourable Members, it is high time we try to implement the stated laws rules in our rule books as expected of us. This is a statement from Bishop Michael Clery in 1993 during a sermon at Kungkujang Mariama who stated that "if you are in public position you are entrusted, if you fail to carry the cross and confidence bestowed on you, you are corrupt". When Sir Dawda was asked by BBC to whom the Bishop was referring to, he said that to all aspects of the society, it is not only government officials that the Bishop was referring to, it is not only the President but the whole aspect of the society in one way or the other. You are entrusted with the confidence and trust. If you cannot actually live to that expectation, if there is any form of foul play or malpractice, you are corrupt. So, there we are as parliamentarians, if we heed our roles and responsibilities following the adoption of this report, we just want to leave it as it is. What the Bishop is trying to say is that the trust and confidence that is expected of us, if we fail to adhere to that, then we can equally be accused of being corrupt not necessarily we were directly involved in the malpractice but in one way or the other, we may be looked into or termed to be aiding and abetting. So, that is why it is important as Members to adopt this report. We do not stop there; we add our weight to ensure it is executed with recommendations embedded in it as well as what may be an emerging resolution that can support the recommendations to enhance the implementation.

On that note Honourable Speaker, I thank you and I thank all the Honourable Members for their support to the motion and finally to the 5th Legislature from the Chairperson right down to every Member for the wonderful work that they have done. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minority Leader and Member for Brikama North. I now invite Honourable Member for Tumana.

HON NFALLY M KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I think my colleagues have said all. So, I will quickly join my colleagues to thank the FPAC, and also the mover of the motion, the Chairperson for his leadership. I also want to thank the FPAC of the 5th Legislature, the entire committee and by extension, the Auditor General for his firm stance in finding out what has been going on.

Honourable Speaker, the area that I want to look into is the grants that usually pass through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs which is very important for the Accountant General and FPAC because most of the grants coming into the country are always difficult to access by people and I think this is simply because the relevant stakeholders are all not in the picture. Coming to our borders also, the government is losing lot of revenues in those areas.

Honourable Speaker, the IFMIS software which is very important should be established in all the Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies because we are in the era of technology. Therefore, this is very important and can help us in collecting revenues and managing them, spending and also controlling revenues. Outsourcing revenue collection is a problem as far as I am concerned, and I think it is

important for chartered accountants to be deployed across all the ministries just to put things in order.

CBG, T43, 24 issue is very important, it needs to be fixed because an institution like the Central Bank of The Gambia, the software is needed by them. So, it should be fixed in order for the operations or works to be done effectively and efficiently.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to thank FPAC and call on everybody most especially the FPAC to bear in mind that what they have done is one thing and the other should be to stand on their feet to make sure these recommendations are implemented. I think this is very important not only for the FPAC but also all of us as National Assembly Members.

We all need to stand behind each other and support to see that the recommendations are implemented. I would also like to thank the Clerks for their steadfastness and the support they are rendering to the FPAC and other committees. On that note, Honourable Speaker, I thank you very much for your kind attention.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Tumana and all Honourable Members. Let me now call on the mover to respond to the issues raised and wind up the debate. Honourable Member for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and thank you very much Honourable Members for the compliments. We were able to come with those reports. It was also not an easy task because we have the Auditor General as key partner and the Ministry of Finance as collaborators in answering some of the

queries that we actually have and that is the reason why if you look at the Auditing report, we do not even highlight some of the queries because the Ministry was able to resolve them prior coming to us.

Now, I am just going to give a summary because it is going to be difficult to give a response to each individual but what is clear here is that we need to follow up with the recommendations made here in FPAC and as far as the issue of leakages and imprest are concerned, I think the biggest problem we have here is the legal framework that we are operating on as a government and that is the reason why the committee deems it fit to make a recommendation for the Public Finance Act 2014 to be reviewed and amended to ensure that those issues are actually taken care of.

If you look at the issue of imprest in relation to the Financial Regulation 2016 it says: "the Accountant General shall not issue an imprest to an applicant who at the time of making the application has in his or her name an imprest due for retirement". We have seen instances where people actually have taken two imprest which is not actually correct. So, we have seen and we already know the circumstances when that was actually done but this is what the law says and must actually be respected.

Honourable Speaker, in another development regarding imprest, an officer holding a larger imprest may after obtaining the approval of the Accountant General deposit the imprest in a bank account, opened specially for this purpose which is also another issue. So, another one also says, an imprest shall be retired on or before the last day of the

financial year or on such earlier date as specified by the Permanent Secretary when authorizing the imprest.

These are all legal issues that we actually have in our documents that is why we are recommending for those things to be changed so that there will be no loopholes. As far as I am concerned, the FPAC should have visited the Accountant General's Office because in previous years' audits, what we realized was there were lot of issues dealing with missing vouchers, so what we did was, we went to the Accountant General's Office and sat with them to understand really why every time there are queries of missing vouchers but you will appreciate and understand that if a ministry is in Kombo for example and that very ministry does all the procurement processes, including all the documentations and post the transaction for payment, at the end of the day, if anything is missing, the AG is held accountable. So, what they are trying to do now is to automate meaning that each transaction would be attached with all the documents, so that when you click on a transaction you will be able to see all the documents that are part of it and which is one of the improvements that the Accountant General is actually doing right now. We have gone there, we have verified, we have seen it in person as a committee. So, they are not just sitting downbeat, but they are actually trying to improve on what they are doing. So, we want to commend them for coming up with those innovative solutions.

Now with the issue of grants not going through the Ministry of Finance, you know if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actually agrees with any other institution or international organizations for grants to be given to the Gambian Government, instead of having the Ministry of Finance to take charge, they go directly to that particular sector. This is exactly where

the problem is. It is like they are not reporting because they do not know, and have not seen it. That is the reason we are saying that all grants going forward must pass through the Ministry of Finance so that the Accountant General actually can have a record of those grants that need to be captured in the financial statement of the government. However, if grants do not go through the Ministry of Finance, there is no way they will know and that is the reason of the 'adverse opinions' of the Auditor General because these are huge amounts involving about billions. So, it is not like somebody has taken the money. It does not actually mean that they have not captured it in their books of accounts. So, all those things were part of the recommendations that should be sorted out

Now the Member for Wuli East actually did ask a question saying that those lapses need to be closed and that is the reason why the previous year's audit queries have been followed up with the Ministry. He also asked about the issue of debt equity ratio. When you talked about the debt equity ratio, you are really talking about the company total debt divided by the total shareholders' equity, what that gives you is the debt equity ratio. The lower the amount, the better which means that you are in a better position to pay. But with the issue of Central Bank, I think the Member was here when we were told by the former Minister of Finance that they are not being properly capitalized.

In fact, I can remember, 100s of millions have been given to the Central Bank of The Gambia to ensure that they are properly capitalized. So, I think the issue of the equity ratio is not really a big deal to them because we already know they were not properly capitalized and National Assembly has actually approved 100s of millions of dalasi to be

given to Central Bank so that they can have enough capital for their operations. Now the other area that the member also asked about is the issue of non-current assets. You know when we talk about noncurrent assets, you are talking about assets that cannot be easily convertible into cash in that particular financial year. So, the less you have with that the better. So, you could say that they had more in the previous year which means now it has gone down and whatever they actually have can be easily converted into cash in that current financial year. Regarding Imprest, I think there is also a general agreement on the issue with imprest that those people who have not retired their imprest must be held accountable, and I think that is a general agreement and I concur with all of you that I actually said so.

So, I think FPAC has summoned the Accountant General. In fact, he has given us a list of everybody that actually has imprest which was not retired, and it was from that list that we instructed him to do whatever it takes to ensure that those people retire their imprests. He went back and was able to get people to retire. With the issue of imprest, we need to be careful here, it is not like somebody has taken the money just like that. Some of them have retired but it was on a manual way. You know you can retire in the system, you take imprest, sometimes we may have system issue and they may retire manually so that reconciliation was done between them and the Auditor General. What we need to do at the level of FPAC is to get the latest. What actually have they done and who are the people that are still remaining? Some actually have done a partial retirement meaning all the document they need to submit is not done, so we need to follow up with the AGD to ensure that we have the

latest list showing who owes what and who has done what? So, from there, we can really take up what we want to do.

With regard to the issue of treasury bills, the Member for Wuli East stated that when the government competes with the private sector in terms of taking treasury bills that will actually make the treasury bill rate higher evidently because it is about the laws of demand and supply, but if you look at the past 4 to 5 years, you are going to see that the government's appetite of taking treasury bills has gone down a bit which resulted to the rise of treasury bills going down from double digits to single digits. So, you are going to see that their appetite has gone down a lot. The issue now is what the Commercial Banks can do to ensure that people have money especially the private sector to be able do business. During the Covid-19, I think the Minister of Finance worked with Central Bank of The Gambia to reduce the credit reserve ratio. This ratio basically as a Commercial Bank or a Financial Institution, when people make deposits in the bank or micro finance institutions, a percentage of that deposit is actually lodged at the Central Bank which cannot be part of the loan or overdraft. So, what the government did is to work with the Central Bank to reduce that amount of ratio, meaning there will be more money available to the banks to be able to give out to the private sector and that has actually yielded dividend because if I could remember, it was going to yield more than D200 million that will be available to the people to borrow and that was during the Covid.

Perhaps, we need to find out what actually is the latest whether the ratio has been restored by the Central Bank or not? Or what else can the Central Bank do to ensure that commercial banks are able to give more money to the private sector.

Also, about the money laundering issue, I think the same Member did ask a question about it. What we are trying to show here regarding the Financial Intelligence Unit, they normally receive something they call suspicious transaction reports from the financial sector such as the banks which are actually generated by all commercial banks. The suspicious transaction reports are reports that are sent to them to evaluate to establish whether this is something that they need to do more investigations. An example of it is like, if you open a bank account in any of the banks, they do what they call [KYC] which means to Know Your Customer and there are forms that you fill so that they can understand who you are. So, when you state that your salary is going to be D100, 000 for example, then all of a sudden, the bank receives D2million dalasi into your account that will be a suspicious transaction. So, that transaction is sent to the FIU to do more investigations to establish whether it is about money laundering or any other things. Those are the things being done. So, they receive those SRs, but to have a system that will actually help them do more analysis that is what we are asking for. They need to have the kind of system to help them do more analysis on those transactions. I think I have answered this one, the one for Foni Jarrol is also the same thing, he is part of the committee and made recommendations for the committee. I will try to avoid answering to political statements. I cannot do that. I will only concentrate what the report says. The Member for Bakau was on the same line.

Now, I think there is also an issue relating to this figure: **fifteen billion six hundred and eighty-eight million [D15, 688,000,000]**, you know this figure alone can make the account to be unqualified, and

actually be rated adverse opinion in relation to the transactions. After the audited accounts are done and the Accountant General realizes that there are some adjustments that need to be made in the accounts, obviously, that will affect the end of year balances and automatically the opening balance of the coming year will be affected. So, this has a lot to do with the adjustment they made. If you look at the audited accounts, you will realize that the Auditor General has made them to do lot of adjustments in terms of reconciliation especially like the embassies where the effects raised may actually be a little bit different. So, actually it has a lot to do with that but we need to come with terms to find out when exactly are they going to stop to ensure that is captured properly.

Honourable Speaker, with the issue of the Accountant General, I think some of you were talking about the timeliness of these reports. I think they have done very well. In 2017 as you know, FPAC, was dealing with 2012 accounts, we were dealing with accounts 5 years or more before, but right now as we speak, this last weekend, the Auditor General told us that the Accountant General has submitted their accounts for 2020 and has also completed 2021. So, I think they have to be commended for that because there was huge backlogs and they work through to clear it, even though, they still need to do more adjustments. We will wait for the Auditor General to look at that and the Auditor General has promised that the Account for 2021 will be completed by next year but for their part, what needed to be done was already done.

The Nominated Member Honourable Fofana, asked for clarification about the previous year's queries inherited? Yes, FPAC actually has tasked the Auditor General to look at the previous years' queries regarding what happened previously whether they have been resolved on a date later

than 2021, if I may read Honourable Speaker, this letter addressed to the Office of the Clerk captioned: "Follow up Review of Supporting Documents on the Previous Years' Audit Matters and Findings Contained in 2016, 2017 and 2018 Management Letter of the Government of The Gambia." It reads: The Public Accounts Committee has requested the Auditor General to review and verify supporting documentations and evidence submitted by the Accountant General on the previous years' audit matters and findings contained in 2016, 2017 and 2018 Management Letter. The request was made on the 26th April 2021. We hereby provide undercover the mischief of our findings following the conclusion of the review exercise". So, they have given us the report of the previous year's queries that they have done in 2016. They showed that some were resolved but some are still outstanding, and for 2016, there were transfer of funds amounting to 40 billion from treasury main account to other bank accounts based on the directives issued by the Office of the President Payment Authorization. Then another one was their contingent liability totalling D360,000,000 million. One reconciliation was also performed by the Internal Audit on unconfirmed arrears. So, there were series of things we have restored by referring back to them.

[Point of observation]

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you very much Deputy Chair. I think to avoid any doubt with regard to what the Member for Central Baddibu was saying, you are talking about unreconciled differences and a payment of D40 billion based on Executive Directives. Can we know where those monies were going and the unreconciled balances so as to be on the same wave length?

Moreover, if there should be a follow up mechanism, we should know where to concentrate. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. Let me just access my library here. Honourable Speaker, if you give me just a minute to see if I can trace this particular 2016 Audit Accounts. In this audited accounts under 3.1.3 fund refer on directives, Section 20 of the Public Finance Act stipulates that: “a government bank account shall be opened only by the authority of the Accountant General and that the Accountant General shall at the close of each financial year supply the Auditor General with the list of all government bank accounts opened and are in operations”. The Auditor says we noted instances where funds totalling D40 billion were transferred from the Treasury Main Accounts to other bank account based on the directives issued by the Office of the President. We were very concerned that details of this account were not provided to the Auditor General as stipulated in this Act. Neither the Accountant General’s Department nor the Minister of Finance to provide us with any documentary explanation as to the purpose of opening these accounts and the subsequent transfer of funds as shown below. So, these are accounts that the Accountant General is not even aware of, but funds were moved there.

On the 20th of July 2016, payment of transfer of funds to Mobilization Account at GT Bank amounting to D22million and another one 17th May 2016, payment of transfer of fund to Security Account at the Central Bank of The Gambia amounted to D80 million, these two actually form the D40 million, that is still outstanding, so we need to get to the Accountant General to tell us exactly the steps they take to ensure that

these monies are recovered because these moved from the Treasury Main Account to an account that does not belong to the government according to the audit report.

Then another query about the...

Point of observation

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: I am still confused because whenever there is a given hand, there must be a receiving hand. So, if bank transfers are made, obviously it is coming from one hand and another account is receiving it. You said in 2016, there were ghost transactions that we do not know where the monies were deposited. I am really confused, if at all you do not have the evidence to be provided, then I think I will urge this Assembly to pass the resolution so that we can get to the Accountant General to get to the bottom of that. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and colleague Honourable Members. From our investigations with the Accountant General, we have been clearly informed that the D22 million that was debited from the Treasury Main Account on the 20th July 2016 was indeed transferred to the APRC Account at GT Bank Account No: 1546753110 with Basic Bank Account Number [BBAN] No: **005101105**.

On the 17 of May 2016, the payment transfer of funds was actually done to the Security Account lodged at the Central Bank of The Gambia and

that was on Account No; **1101003565** which is from the Auditor General and it was also confirmed by the Accountant General. I hope that is okay. The Member also asked about the unretired imprest which I think I have actually answered properly. The Member for Jeshwang was trying to find out the difference between the National Audit Office and the Internal Audit. The Auditor General is created by the 1997 Constitution Section [158] and the function of the Auditor General is clearly indicated on Section 160 of the 1997 Constitution, and their mandate is very clear. They are not under the direction of anybody, but their main responsibility is to ensure that all government accounts are audited, and reports send to the National Assembly. In fact, they can even go further where government has a major stake in any institution in this country. They have a right to audit those accounts. In terms of the Internal Audit Directorate, it is actually a directorate or unit under the Ministry of Finance, and they are created under the Public Finance Act Section 67. In fact, you can call them. Internal Control meaning they look at the transactions that happened in each of the ministries or agencies before they go for final payment and that is the reason why if you look at the recommendations in the Public Finance Act 2014, we are saying that they needed to be given more powers because the more powers they have as far as Internal Audit is concerned, they will be able to check every single transaction before it goes through for payment. At the end of the day, anything that happens is the responsibility of the Accountant General. So, we were saying that we need to give them more powers to ensure that they are able to do their work because they are present in each of the ministries, departments or the agencies.

One of the recommendations put forward regarding the Accountant General's Office as the pay master general is that, they must not be reporting to any Permanent Secretary. We believe they cannot be reporting to any vote controller because there could be a conflict. So, we want them to stand alone but to be reporting to the Minister instead of reporting some matters to the Permanent Secretary.

The Member for Upper Fulladu West has also said that people must take ownership which I am completely in agreement with. Honourable Speaker, the issue of State-Owned Enterprises, especially, when the audited accounts are being prepared by the Accountant General, you know actually belong to the government which means that any money they have in terms of assets or liabilities also need to be captured into our accounts as Consolidated Accounts, but where their accounts are not audited, it is going to be difficult to incorporate them into the audited accounts, and we know those in the State-Owned Enterprise or the PEC, most of their audited accounts are not up-to-date, especially, NAWEC and others. So, now the question is what do they do? Does the Accountant General have to wait for those State-Owned Enterprises to be audited first before they incorporate them or they just submit what they have? That is up to us to decide what we want to do but I think that is a big challenge unless the State-Owned Enterprises do their audit accounts on time and submit to the Minister of Finance to be incorporated. We may find it very difficult to ensure that the adverse opinion is actually reverse, because it is really material.

So, Member for Upper Fulladu was also asking for the list of imprest holders which we think we have. I think it was all about commendation

unless I missed something, a Member can let me know but I think I have covered most of the issues which I actually have.

Honourable Speaker, with recommendation.

[Point of observation]

HON. ALHAGIE S DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH AND MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, I want to observe the Honourable Member. I think there is one left out which is the question that Honourable Nominated Member did ask regarding who the third party is in the securiport levy at the airport?

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much for that reminder, the example I can give is the securiport collection at the airport. The Office of the Accountant General is mandated to collect every penny that belongs to The Gambia Government. So, there is nobody that has authority to make any collection on behalf of the government unless and until you have been delegated to do so by the Accountant General. So, we as the National Assembly, we must ensure that rights must not be taken by anybody from the Accountant General's Office. This is by law from the Public Finance Act 2014. If somebody is collecting on behalf of government, it is wrong. So, they need to correct that as soon as possible to ensure they take charge of the duties that is given to them just like what they are doing at the Senegambia Bridge.

HON. ALHAGIE S DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH AND MINORITY LEADER]: But the actual question is who that third party is? I think that is what the Honourable Member is asking for.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: The only thing we are told is about the Securiport. So, we are not sure about the local company here or who is collecting on their behalf. We do not know, maybe we need to do more investigations in order to ensure that we get all the questions answered. But based on what we have, there is no indication to show or tell us that this is the agency that is collecting. We do not know whether it is The Gambia Civil Aviation or Ministry of Finance. We are not sure, and we have not been told in the reports.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH AND MINORITY LEADER]: So, that is to say as far as the committee is concerned, we are yet to establish the third parties which could be another action point that we should endeavour to find out.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, I raised a question regarding Page 15, if you could remember. I think one of your recommendations is about the temporary investment whereby you want the Permanent Secretary to invest elsewhere in The Gambia.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable. I am sorry, I left that one. Now, you see when you talk about the Consolidated Revenue Fund, it is not only the funds that is in The Gambia that is part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The Gambia Government actually has money outside The Gambia in USDs, in Euros etc. So, if the government through the Minister of Finance realizes that the money that they have in the UK or whatever bank is needed for immediate use, they can actually invest it and make profit for The

Gambia Government. So, those are the ones we are talking and that is the reason.

If you look at the Public Finance Act, it gives the PS Finance the lead way to be able to make that investment on monies that is not immediately needed by The Gambia Government. If you know this import covers that we are talking about here, sometimes you may have 6 to 7 months or so to import covers, and these are monies that are in our current accounts somewhere and those are the monies that they can actually be used to make some investments even locally in the country if there is need for them because here in the capital markets, you realize that banks can actually borrow from for about 24 hours or 2 days if there are money in the Consolidated Fund, and they do not need it immediate. So, that is the leverage that they are given instead of having the money to lie down there. If you look at the commercial banks, they do interbank transfer, where one bank will borrow the other bank for 24hours or 48hours for monies lying down in the Central Bank and they do not have immediate use. So, they are given lead way so that the Ministry of Finance can do that in case they have extra money.

Honourable Speaker, I think there is one thing I have also forgotten about, that is, the GPPA which is rated **85%** by the National Audit Office. The rating is not done by FPAC, it is done by GPPA. You know GPPA actually has criteria that when they look at any institution that comes to the National Assembly, they come and give a rating based on the GPPA Act and also the regulation they have whether they are compliant with the procurement rule or the procurement regulation that they have. So, based on the activity you have done whether you send your report on monthly basis or whether you reached 3rd quarter or 4th

quarter value for money, they rate you on all that aspect. So, what they rated the Auditor General's Office was about 85%. So, the rating did not come from us but from GPPA.

[Point of observation]

THE SPEAKER: Lower Saloum what is the problem?

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you. I want things to be clear here. The Nominated Member did not make it clear to us here on his submission. The transaction that was made in 2016 from the treasury to the APRC bureau, and on his submission, he said, the Auditor General would make sure that money is recovered. How can this money be recovered by the Auditor General?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I think the question I was answering; I am not too sure if he was here. It is the previous year audit queries. What exactly are we doing as FPAC? So, what I said is we task the Auditor General to go back and work with the Accountant General to ensure that all these issues are resolved and that is exactly why this query is still outstanding since 2016, and it is not only that one, I think I read about 4 or 5 queries that are still outstanding as far as 2016 is concerned.

Also, in 2017 you will see that some queries are still outstanding, but what we realize is that, if you look at the original queries from 2016 by the Auditor General and now, you will see that some of the queries have been resolved. So, we are going to continue to do that until everything is resolved which is exactly what I was referring to.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I do not know whether we are going to debate the questions and answers. Yes, Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Is the Honourable Member saying that they have outstanding queries? Can he help the Assembly to compile them so that at the end of the day, we pass it as a form of resolution? The other observation I have is that, he mentioned the State-Owned-Enterprises that the government guaranteed them to have loans, I would like to get the names of those State-Owned-Enterprises.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry! Honourable Members, to ease all problems, we have requested the Honourable Member to bring us names of those people who have taken imprests and have not retired them, and those State- Owned-Enterprises that were also given loan and they have not paid.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I concur with you in a form of resolution not only by saying it here.

THE SPEAKER: I do not understand you; do you want Assembly to make a resolution?

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: To who?

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: There are numerous things that we outlined. What I want is I do not know if the mover is willing to compile them together because we do not want at the end of the day, we come again and have these sorts of problems.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not think, we can prepare the resolution or to extract them now. For us to do it, ask the Honourable Member and his committee to tell us what you want, and you prepare a motion that you will market to Honourable Members for adoption and ask them to bring it. I do not think there will be problem for Honourable Members to request the names of the parastatals that are owing and those that have not return their imprests. If we have any further development to act on, we can put that in a form of a motion.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. In fact, we are doing just that we are trying to come up with a resolution on some of the key recommendations that all of us have literally agreed to come up with so that we can present it. I am not too sure whether today or tomorrow, we cannot give timeline to those recommendations. So, I have given it to the Table Office and they are working on it right now. To answer this last question, maybe the Honourable Member has forgotten but there was a loan that was given to GGC and also NAWEC which The Gambia Government was a guarantor and in the supplementary appropriation we put some money there too to be able to pay because they could not pay. So, The Gambia Government had to take up those responsibilities and pay.

THE SPEAKER: Are those the only two?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: I can only remember those two.

THE SPEAKER: If they are the only two, you should have helped us by just mentioning the names. I thought they were many, but Honourable

Members, let us request from him and they will present it to you. Yes!
Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

[POINT OF OBSERVATION]

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I have an observation to make, he is saying that we allow them to work with the resolution. I think right now, we need to pass the resolution here because we cannot allow them to go and work on it. When are they going to bring it? So, he should read the resolution that we have and if Members have anything to add on, we add on and we pass it at a better time.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, he has not prepared any resolution.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: No, he did prepare but ask him first.

THE SPEAKER: He stated that he asked the Table Office to prepare and hopefully he will bring it. He has not prepared, but we are here until Thursday or Friday. So, let us see what can happen. We should work together to come out with resolutions from both sides of the Assembly. If you just decide, we have the Majority and the Minority Leaders who can iron out the problems.

Honourable Members, let me thank the presenter, the Chairperson of the FPAC, and of course, the Vice Chairperson and Members of FPAC for a job well done. I also appreciate the contributions of Members which really enriched the report to the extent that we are talking about extracting resolutions and doing a lot of other things. I thank you all.

Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable Assembly do adopt the Consolidated Report of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for the period 2019 to 2021. Honourable Member, the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, what is the period because 2019 to 2021 does not seem to correspond with the content of the report?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: It is 2016 to 2019.

MOTION:

Be it resolved that this Honourable Assembly do adopt the Consolidated Report of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for the period 2016 to 2019.

[POINT OF OBSERVATION]

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I think we will adopt the report but we will adopt it with amendments.

THE SPEAKER: Amendments in what form? Was there any specific amendment to the report?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, all the recommendations that are suggested by Members will be incorporated in the report and they are the amendments.

Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[That the Assembly Session Be Suspended Until 4:00PM]

THE ASSEMBLY RESUMES

Report of the Gambia Delegation to the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Fifth Pan-African Parliament held from the Period 27th June to 7th July 2022 in Midrand, Republic of South Africa [By: Honourable Alhagie Mbow, Head of Delegation and Member for Upper Saloum]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please go ahead and table your report.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. We the Five-Member Delegation of the National Assembly of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), herein wish to sincerely thank the Speaker and the Honourable Members for the confidence and trust that they reposed in us and equally acknowledge the efforts, support and encouragement of the Clerk and the entire staff of the National Assembly Service. The delegation would also like to recognize the warm reception and the tremendous support of the Gambia Embassy in Pretoria, South African.

BACKGROUND

The Pan-African Parliament which is the third organ of the African Union, was created in 2004 and comprises 270 MPs selected by their respective parliaments of the Member states in accordance with the provisions of Articles 4 (2) and (3) of Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Pan-African Parliament which states: "Each state shall be represented in the Pan-African Parliament by five Members, at least one of whom shall be a woman, and such representation shall reflect the diversity of political opinion in each parliament or other national legislative bodies."

Pursuant to the above-mentioned provision in entirety, the National Assembly of The Gambia selected the following five National Assembly Members (NAMs) as delegation to the Pan-African Parliament: Hon. Alhagie Mbow (NRP), Hon. Suwaibou Touray (PDOIS), Hon. Sulayman Saho (UDP), Hon. Salifu Jawo (NPP) and Hon. Maimuna Ceesay (Nominated Member).

Generally, the Pan -African Parliament performs consultative and advisory functions as stipulated in the rules of procedure. Also, in accordance with the provisions of Articles 3, 11 and 18 of the Protocol, the Parliament shall:

- a. Facilitate the implementation of policies, objectives and programs of the Union and oversee their effective implementation by the various organs of union.

It could be recalled that PAP MPs, during May-June 2021 session, had a protracted and acrimonious dispute among themselves over election of the new PAP Bureau. Consequently, the Africa Union (AU) suspended the activities of the Continental Parliament in order to find a lasting solution to the deadlock over the PAP leadership.

Thus, the resumption of parliamentary activities follows the Executive Council's Decision and subsequent policy decisions and consultations which resolved the impasse that transpired among parliaments during the proceedings of the plenary on 31st May to 1st June 2021 as the PAP was looking to elect the president and Vice- presidents of its Bureau.

Now I am going on to Page 4, the Fourth Paragraph, The Pan- African Parliament, the third organ of African union (AU) has its Bureau and 11 permanent committees." The Bureau is composed of a president and

four vice- presidents, representing the five AU Regions, and is responsible for the management and administration of the Parliament”.

Subsequently, Hon. Senator Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbia from Zimbabwe was duly elected as president of the Pan-African Parliament succeeding Hon. Rodger Nkodo Dang from Cameroon. He overwhelmingly won a hotly contested race to head the PAP Bureau as the Northern Region’s candidate declined to contest for the presidency and he was, therefore, given the 1st Vice President Position.

In accordance with the PAP Rules of Procedure, each of the five regions formed their respective caucuses of the bureau headed by chairpersons. Accordingly, Honourable Alhagie Mbow (Head of the Gambian Delegation) is the new Chairperson of West African Regional Caucus Bureau, Honourable Pemmy Castelina Pamela Majodina of South Africa is the elected Chairperson of the Southern Africa, and it is the elected Chairperson of the Southern Africa Regional Caucus Bureau. Hon. Jaynet Kabila of Democratic Republic of Congo is the Chairperson of the Central Africa Regional Caucus Bureau. Honourable Senator Azzeddine Abdelmadjid of Algeria is the elected Chairperson of the North Africa Regional Caucus Bureau, and Honourable Terrence M. Mondon of Seychelles is elected Chairperson of the East Africa Regional Caucus Bureau.

Finally, the permanent committees finalized and adopted workplans in line with the AU theme for 2022 which is *"Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthening Agro- Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development."*

On Page 7, furthermore, the operational procedures and structures of the PAP were explained to the new parliamentarians. That is during the orientation when all the new Members actually went through the orientation because the Parliament consists of 270 Members from 54 countries. So, the plenary is the main decision-making body of the PAP. The Bureau is the Political Executive of the PAP and the Five Regional Caucuses are the regional groups of the Pan-African Parliament which played vital roles in making decisions at the plenary.

In the official opening which is on Page 9, Mr. Gali, Acting Clerk of the Pan- African Parliament welcomed the Honourable Members to the chamber and read the communication from His Excellency Macky Sall President of the Republic of Senegal and incumbent Chairperson of the African Union who was in Germany for the G7 Summit but delegated His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat Chairperson of the African Union to open the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Pan-African Parliament.

In delivering the opening statement, His excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat (Chairperson of the African Union Commission) observed the presence of the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, the Honourable Parliamentarians, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace & Security of the African Union, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. With great pleasure and solemnity, he greeted all in the brotherliness ad warm manner. He said that the large number of MPs in this session should not be underestimated as it indicated the seriousness of the moment and the hopes for a definitive solution to the leadership crisis. He added that the Pan- African Parliament is where the voices of the African peoples are expressed, so the actions of the PAP MPs should at

all times be dictated by the noble mission of Article 2 of the protocol which established the Economic Community adopted in Libya in March 2001.

MEETINGS OF THE FIVE REGIONAL CAUCUSES

Nomination of the Interim Caucus Bureau

In line with the rules and procedures, West African Caucus Bureau, like the bureau of other regional caucuses, shall consist of three persons who shall occupy the positions of the President, Vice President, and rapporteur. In view of that, the caucus unanimously nominated the following to serve as the Interim Regional Caucus Bureau:

1. Hon. Muntaga from Ghana – Interim Chairperson
2. Hon. Baloki from Togo -Interim Vice Chairperson
3. Hon. Suwaibou Touray from The Gambia- Interim Rapporteur

Now, considering the draft agenda for the regional caucus meeting was consensually considered and adopted by the Honourable Members present. **Nomination of the Caucus Representative in Ad-hoc Committee for the Election of the PAP Bureau.**

Nomination of Candidates for Election into the Bureau of Pan African Parliament (PAP)

Accordingly, the West Africa Caucus nominated the following MPs as candidates for election to the Bureau of Pan African Parliament (PAP) for the positions of President and Vice President.

1. Hon. Alhaji Mbow of The Gambia was nominated by Hon. Salifu Jawo from the Gambia
2. Hon. Dr. Dawda Mamadu Martez of Niger
3. Hon. Bala Na Allah from Nigeria
4. Hon. Mariam Traore from Cote D'Ivoire
5. Hon. Lucia Maria Mendes Dos Passos from Cape Verde

So, these were the Nominated Members.

So, guided by Rule 15, subrule (1) nomination which states that the nomination of the president, a region may present one candidate and for the nomination of the Vice President, each region shall present two candidates, ensuring equal representation of women and men; the caucus had a protracted debate on the modalities of selecting the required number of candidates from the list of nominees which generated three suggestions.

At the end of the day, we went with the first proposition which states that the caucus should just go ahead and vote among the three male nominees, and then vote between the two female nominees. Now an election was actually conducted for the male nominees.

MALE NOMINEES

1. Hon. Alhagie Mbow of The Gambia had 15 votes
2. Hon. Dr. Dawda Mamadu Martez had 20 votes
3. Hon. Bala Na Allah had 6 votes

Therefore, Dr. Dawda Mamadu Martez was the candidate for the Western Caucus for the Position of the President.

FEMALE NOMINEES

1. Hon. Mariam Traore had 19 votes
2. Hon. Lucia Maria Mendes Dos Passos had 24 votes

So, essentially, the two actually have gone for the election of the President and the Vice President.

At the Closing Session of the 4th Ordinary Session of the Fifth Pan-African Parliament.

Hon. Senator Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, President of the Pan-African Parliament, thanked Honourable Members of the PAP as well as the invited guests as the day marked the end of plenary sessions, but committee meetings would continue until 22nd July 2022. He gave a framework of business after the closing of plenary. He urged the MPs to conduct themselves in the most Honourable manner and respect PAP since according to him, 90% of the parliamentarians denigrate the Pan-African Parliament against other parliaments. Besides, he stressed that extraordinary and historic sessions started afresh and no room to drift back.

Designating the Caucus Members to the Permanent Committees of PAP

The West Africa Caucus specifically designated the new Members together with the old Members who wished to change their Membership to the various permanent committees based on the Member's qualifications, experiences and interests expressed, cognizant of the fact that, an MP cannot be a Member of two or more committees, and no two MPs from the same country can be Members of a particular committee. So, below are lists of the caucus Members per committee. I will just highlight our own Honourable Sulayman

Saho Committee of Rural Economic, Agriculture and Natural Resources and Environment.

Honourable Salifu Jawo is also a member of the Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters and Honourable Maimuna Ceesay is a member of the Committee on Gender, Family Youth and People with Disabilities. Hon. Suwaibou Touray is on the Committee of Justice and Human Rights whereas Honourable Alhaji Mbow is on the Committee for Transport, Industry, Communications, Energy, Science and Technology.

General Recommendations

The delegation to the Pan-African Parliament recommends the following:

1. The Assembly should liaise with the Government to lobby and /or advocate for The Gambia to also host the Ordinary Session of the Pan-African Parliament because hosting it fully helps boost the economy of a country.
2. The Assembly should think of outsourcing the services of our Hansard transcribers to the Pan-African Parliament. This initiative will help a great deal in the advancement of our National Assembly.
3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Gambians aboard should do their utmost to sign MOU with South African Government to allow Gambian with Service and/or Diplomatic Passports to enter South Africa without requiring a visa.
4. The Office of the Clerk should ensure that the Members of PAP Delegation use shortest possible route to South Africa instead of

going through 5 to 6 countries before reaching as well as to ensure that the said members reach Johannesburg 24 hours in advance. I thank you all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you mover. Any seconder?

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I rise to second the motion and would like to contribute a bit to the report.

Honorable Speaker, let me first of all thank our Gambian Delegation to the Pan-African Parliament and also the Member for Upper Saloum for definitely taking the position of the West African Caucus.

Honourable Speaker, on Page 3, we are informed that the Pan-African Parliament had a protracted and acrimonious dispute among themselves over the election of a new PAP bureau. Consequently, the African Union suspended the activities of the continental parliament in order to find a lasting solution to the deadlock over the Pan-African Parliament.

Honourable Speaker, I think this could not have actually happened because the protocol that established the Pan African Parliament is actually very clear on Article 12 which reads: 'there shall be a Bureau of the Pan-African Parliament which shall be elected on a rotational bases among the five regions of the African Union' and I think if the Parliament could adhere to this provision, they could not actually go for a form of a deadlock until they are suspended for derailing their work.

I think what they refused to adhere to is, if you look at the deliberation of the AU Chairperson that is Moussa Faki Mahamat, on Page 13, the

second paragraph when he made his presentation, Mr. Faki concluded by saying that exceptional situation call for exceptional solutions, and the decision adopted by the Executive Council and approved by the Assembly Head of State of the African Union has to be respected and applied in the Election of the Bureau of the Pan African Parliament in a principle of rotation. I do not know what had actually happened that they could not agree with respect to the provisions, so there was a deadlock and for a number of years, they could not go and actually represent the people they were supposed to represent.

I wanted clarification because it seems that there is a contradiction when it comes to the election of the current president in the report. We are informed on Page 4, the last paragraph that, Subsequently, Senator Chief Charumbira from Zimbabwe was duly elected as President of the Pan African Parliament succeeding Rodger Nkodo Dang from Cameroon.

He declined Nkodo Dang and that means the Southern and the Northern Caucuses were the people qualified to contest, but we are informed that the Northern Caucus's candidate actually declined, then Charumbira have to be the President. If I can read through the report, on Page 17, where you have the election of the president of the Pan-African Parliament, he said the entire election was conducted and managed by Legal Counsel of the African Union in a closed-door session. The modalities set for the peaceful conduct of the election were first clearly spelt out to the Honourable Members before the actual voting process began. Only the registered Members would be allowed to vote where a Member would be entitled to one vote. A Member may choose to vote or abstain from voting. Then we were informed that a total of 203 eligible voters were peacefully voting in a secret ballot and Honourable

Charumbira had got 161 votes. There were 11 invalid votes, and 31 Members abstained from the voting. Thus, Honourable. Senator Charumbira was duly elected. I am just trying to march it with the first paragraph that indicated the withdrawal of the Presidential candidates of the Northern caucus.

Then the other issue Honourable Speaker...

POINT OF OBSERVATION

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Member of Niamina Dankunku. I know you have doubt by reading the first page and the other one. You know election is a process even if candidates withdraw the process has to be completed.

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you very much. Maybe the mover also will elaborate more about it.

Honourable Speaker, on Page 8 of 27, when the Honourable Member from The Gambia, Honourable Sulayman Saho, did ask about the issue of insurances, I was very shocked when I read it. Sometimes, you see what bad leaders can do. When I was in the Pan African Parliament, we were having a very healthy insurance even from The Gambia here. If you are sick there are certain hospital that were designated for you to go to present your card and you will be given a medical treatment, and even where it is necessary for you to go for an overseas treatment. When it is not beyond 25 thousand Dollars, you will be evacuated. It is all from the Members of Parliament. But sometimes leaders just come and handover powers because of the bad leadership at the Pan African Parliament that resulted even to the issues of non-acceptance of rotation that is spelt out in the protocol. So, the Pan-African Parliament

lost this important insurance which is all blamed on bad leadership, and I think these issues will be avoided. I do not know what mechanism we should do in order to make that Health Institution to come back to the Pan-African Parliament. If I could remember the name of the company is called Cigna, it was a very healthy insurance but because of the issue that was happening at the Pan-African Parliament, they have lost that institution. Honourable Speaker, on that note, I thank you very much

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Report of The Gambia Delegation to the Fourth Ordinary Session of Fifth Pan-African Parliament held from the Period 27th June to 7th July 2022 in Midrand Republic of South Africa]

Any Honourable Member who wishes to take part in the debate may do so by raising his/her tag.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, may I also join my colleagues in commending the Pan-African Parliament Delegation that represented the Gambia in the Pan-African Parliament. I also want to thank the Pan-African Parliament and the African Union in general through our delegation. The way in which the issues surrounding the Pan-African Parliament had been resolved peacefully, and how business is normalized is commendable. The Parliament is now on the verge of regaining the trust and confidence of the African Union and that is how it should be. It happened as indicated in the report in the last year session which was from May to June. Their worst impasse emerged in the election of the bureau Members in diverging positions. A good

number of the Members are with the opinion that it should be rotational, and others are with the position that it should be rotational in as much as it is in the protocol.

It has to be applied to the Rules of Procedures that will require amendments and which was not the case at that time in 2018. In principle, that was the agreement for there to be rotation in terms of the presidency in the bureau, but we further agreed that it will require amendments before these can actualize. Unfortunately, that was not the case until the end of the tenure of the former president, then we got ourselves in the elections in controversy and division. There should be rotation but it will require amendments of the books which was not the case. Now, can we take it that way and we go ahead with the elections and make a commitment that this time around, we should do the necessary amendments.

The Northern and the Southern part has never benefited or were not privileged at any time to lead the Pan-African Parliament, and have insisted that they are disadvantaged. If we are to go for election and they therefore insisted on no election without rotation, when the ballot box was already put in place for the delegates to come and cast their votes, one of the referees from the Electoral Commission Members grab the ballot box that there will be no voting without rotation. There was exchange of words and actions were taken at the end. We could not resolve the matter and there was that suspension on the activities of the Parliament and matters were taken to AU and it took them up to 1 year to resolve it finally to conduct the election on rotational bases. I want to believe that this should be a learning point, now that, the bureau is in place. What remain to be done and the necessary

amendments that should qualify in principle for the rotation to be in place should not fall apart anymore.

Honourable Speaker, I want to seize this opportunity to thank the President, His Excellency Chief Charumbira, who was my candidate in 2018. The Gambia campaigned for him, unfortunately, he lost but this time around, he succeeded in becoming the president. We thanked him for being elected as the president. Honourable Jallow, stated that the Parliament went under bad leadership, of course, that could be the case because of the things the Parliament used to benefit from a lot of support that the Parliament used to be getting from donors. All gradually faded and I think this time around under the able leadership of Chief Charumbira, that trust and confidence will be restored and this continental Parliament would not be a tooth-less bulldog even whereas it does not have the legislative power, it has an advisory mandate that will carry weight when it is put in the right perspective.

Having commended and thank the presidency and indeed the entire membership of the bureau, I would also like to thank our Gambian Delegation in one way or the other who were elected to the respective positions in the Pan African Parliament from the bureau to the committees and in particularly the head of the delegation who is now the Chair of the West African Caucus. The position that the then head of the delegation was acting at the time when we suffer the impasse, I had no doubt that this position will go to The Gambia because Pan African Parliament look into Gambian Delegation as people who are very principled, very committed, very honest and dedicated and that is what everybody in the whole of Africa would talk about the Gambian delegation. The day they step in Midrand, they will be there for business

until the last day. Unlike other delegations, if they are there, after the opening ceremony is done, and there is no issue of elections in the next two days, they are gone. But the whole continental MPs commended the Gambian delegation for their steadfastness and commitment to duty. This has been recognized and that is why anytime there are issues that need to divide people, they look onto the Gambians to try their best to bring the people together. Even the absence of Honorable Sidia S. Jatta, I have no doubt that anyone from The Gambia would be put in that position and if Honourable Mbow, head of the delegation is given the opportunity to be the Chair of the West African Caucus, I can tell you it is telling a lot about The Gambia, and how Africa perceived Gambia at any continental fora. I thank you Honourable Colleagues for your steadfastness. I observe we also have important committees, the Women Caucus in which we are represented by a female member is also very important because there are a lot of opportunities in terms of programs such as capacity building, trainings and exposure. If the Honourable can capitalize on that, she will gain lot of experiences through this very important caucus for The Gambia, not only for herself but for the National Assembly of The Gambia as well.

I also realized we have Gambians in other committees as well, the like of Honourable Saho and others. Similarly, you can also venture and tapped a lot from this particular committee. I am not sure whether we have established Youth Caucus in the National Assembly of The Gambia, and if No! you can open the way for the National Assembly also to have its own established committee. There was that move in the 5th Legislature but it could not go ahead. However, now that you are in the

Continental Youth Caucus, please make sure you endeavor to have a vibrant Youth Caucus in the National Assembly.

On that note Honourable Speaker, and Honourable Members, I want to seize this opportunity to thank the delegation for their timely and swift response in terms of presenting report anytime you have an engagement outside The Gambia. This is what is expected of all the International Delegations. Whenever you represent the Assembly, you need to report. So, you have set the pace and I hope all other International Delegations will follow suit and be reporting at the right time. On that note I thank you all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader. I also want to congratulate The Gambian Delegation and the leader for being elected as Chair of the West African Caucus and all of you for earning The Gambia Admirable name in that Continental Parliamentary Group. May I now call on the Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I may have been silent but I must ask why I am silent. I cannot in this situation because Pan Africanism is not just a concept, it is a concept that should be inculcated into the heart of every African, and it is a good cause which calls for celebration.

On that note, I want to thank the Gambian Delegates for their achievements, especially Honourable Mbow, Honourable Suwaibou Touray and Honourable Saho. Africa is looking up to you, and Africa has great hopes on you as Pan Africans. We want to develop our continent

in any form that is best for Africa. We should try and inculcate the Pan Africanism and its concept into every African child. I was listening to you keenly, and you did mention about The Gambia hosting the Pan African Summit. I want to ask politely as to what The Gambia can do for it to host the Pan African Summit. We should know what is expected of us, so that we can work it together. As we represent The Gambia in any forum, we should always put at the back of our minds that The Gambia is looking up to you and after coming from Pan African Parliament, the expectation is not for you to come and sit down and fold your hands, demonstrate it at least, and inform the people about what your achievements are. I went through everything, but I could not actually know what the aims and objectives of the Pan African Parliament are. Nevertheless, if you can also explain to us what the aims and objectives of the parliament is, it will be of utmost importance to us. I am very happy indeed that we have a Pan African Parliament like any other Parliament in the world. What is expected of us to continue this stylist call for Pan Africanism and also for us to call for a compensation from those who did colonialize us, for colonialism requires compensation.

Applaud

They took our resources and everything from us. They left us naked as we are today. In fact, intellectually, we are robbed. This is why our contribution here in the Assembly at times is meaningless, only what we learn from them, but we cannot initiate anything. So, we are calling for compensation from those that colonize us. The Pan Africanism is not a movement that is going to stop, it is going to continue as long as we live on the surface of the earth. We must call for unity in the African continent and in fact, I do not know why we have to go in for a visa

before we go to South Africa. I think the Minister of Foreign Affairs will definitely be interested in these as we are moving to South Africa. If you are in Africa, you are not a foreigner, you can only apply for visa if you are going to other parts of the world but not Africa. South Africa is part of the Pan African Parliament so, still when we want to go to South Africa, we have to apply for a visa. I cannot understand that and I think we need to stress this issue and Members of Pan African Parliament as well because someone who is coming from the Arabian Peninsula can move freely into Africa without being asked for a visa or anything, and if you come from Europe, America or any other part of the world, you can come to Africa freely and we are the only people that are restricted in our own continent which is sad.

Applaud

The fact is Africans should not be foreigners in Africa, wherever you may come from, you are not a foreigner in our own continent and it is high time we understand the realities, and we call for the unity of Africa so much so that if you see a Fula man coming from Guinea Bissau, you do not label him as a foreigner. Pan Africanism spirit does not accept such move. Let the black race love and embrace each other in unity where our strength lies. But if we bent on segregating among tribes, regions, countries is not helpful. In fact, for the Senegalese that are coming here are labeled as Foreigners. Africans are not foreigners in Africa, and I want this to be put across so that everybody understands that Africans are not foreigners in Africa.

From now on as you move out from this Assembly, never see an African and call him a Foreigner, take note please. Also, I want this to be very

clear, if Africa has a problem with another guy from other continents, we should favour the African the most which is not the case because those from Asia, Arabian Peninsula have money and can bribe us to accept them rejecting our own, which is painful. This is why Africa is not moving as a continent. So, when you move into Zimbabwe, one has to move freely as an African and when Zimbabwean nationals go to any African country, they should also move freely as Africans. That is what we should inculcate in all Africans, and I wish the day comes when this could be introduced. I do not know in what form the book will be written. But the book should be written so that every child that lives in Africa will be proud of being an African and I thank you all for your kind attention.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai. From now on when you move out of this Assembly, do not call any African a foreigner, and I think that is a good point for the Members of the Pan-African Parliament to take note. Thank you very much Honourable Member. May I now call on the Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I just want to add and throw few lights but before that, I want to thank our predecessors, those who were in the Pan-African Parliament before us. If you see all the successes that we registered within this short period, it is because of the efforts of our predecessors who were there before us. So, we thank them in the name of Honourable Sedia Jatta, who is not with us here, but we have Honourable Alhaji Darboe and Honourable Samba Jallow, who are also Pan-African Parliamentarians and Honourable Alhagie Mbow as our head of delegation.

Honourable Members, it was too challenging as the reports show that we found the Parliament in serious disarray. But due to common understanding and the decisions made by AU that resolved the entire conflict. Some may wonder why the article says there should be elections and why AU is coming with this idea of rotation. It is because when you say elections, sometimes there is no fairness in elections, but the problems were solved amicably. For The Gambia, we happened to have a head of Delegation who is conscious, modest and dedicated to the course. Honourable Alhagie Mbow was one out of those members who the Pan-African Parliament trusted so much and they gave him this responsibility to be the Chairperson of the West African Caucus. So, Honourable Member, congratulations once again for being the leader of the West African Caucus and you have started well, may you end well too.

Honourable Members, as the Honourable Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader mentioned in the report that, the youths are captured. Henceforth, Pan-African Parliament has lot of passion for youths, particularly Youths and Migration, Youths and Agriculture. These are some of the things that are high on the agenda, and they will make sure that every activity for the youths should be mainstreamed.

Now coming to Pan-Africanism and what do we have for Gambia or for the continent? Pan-Africanism or Pan-African Parliament has its own Aims and Objectives which the Chair will buttress on, but it is about the unity of Africa, how to develop Africa? How to come together as one people? As you will say colonially, we were dominated by Arabs, Europeans, and they imposed certain cultures upon us. They took away lot of things from us, but with the coming of the Pan-Africanism,

restitution efforts are in our plans to make sure that things that are taken from Africa to come back. It is high time to promote our culture, the way we talk, and our language is key that is why "Swahili" will soon be recognized to be a lingua franca". But as I say, 'charity begins at home,' whatsoever we do for ourselves in The Gambia here, the youths should come out and we should make sure we promote our local language as you said in our National Assembly. We only speak English. If you speak other languages apart from English is seen as not parliamentary. So, I think, henceforth, we need to come up to see how to make sure that we have our local language. If we cannot have all but the key ones that could be understood by all should be used in the Assembly. So, I thank everybody for your kind attention and I hope the confidence that you have in us "Inshaa Allah" [God's Willing], we will live up to those expectations. Thank you!

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Central Baddibu. May I now call on the Member for Tumana Constituency.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I am very much delighted to thank the Gambian Delegation for their tremendous achievements. What they have registered according to some of them within this short period was, of course, thanks to the Delegation of the 5th Legislature that were there before them. I think they have laid the foundation which formed the basis of these achievements. The suspension of the PAP activities as a result of that rancor that happens there, I believe it is normal. Sometimes misunderstanding must have come through, but the most important thing is we have to come together and solve it, because of that I would like to thank the AU and the African Heads of State, the

idea of rotating the leadership is very important and of course a very welcoming one, and everybody will partake in it.

The point that made me to raise my tag is the Parliamentary Youth Caucus. I think one of my colleagues asked whether we are working on that or not. Yes! I will say on behalf of my leaders that we are working on that. We have just held our last meeting on Friday, but I think communications will come through so that you know we are working on it. On the issue of visa which is very important, the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of The Gambia and our delegation should work on this so that there will be no visa issues between Gambia and South Africa, and help in trying to shorten the routine because that also is very important.

I have to congratulate all the Members, again for being in the PAP Committees, because these committees are very important. So, if you manage to be in the PAP Committees, I think you need to be congratulated and that being the case, I say congratulations to you all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Member for Tumana, in the absence of any contributor, may I now call on the mover of the motion to respond to issues raised and to wind up the debate.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, and thank you very much Honorable Members and members of the Delegation of the Pan-African Parliament and our able Clerk, Kawsu Jarju who in a record time, was able to produce such a report which is really commendable.

Our stance now as far as Africa is concerned , and as for the Member for Dankunku highlighted, the issue of the dispute really is more than Article 12 because Article 12 itself is clear, but what follows Article 12 is

the one that actually cause discrepancy because we are told that there shall be a bureau of the Pan-African Parliament which shall be elected on a rotational bases among the five (5) regions of the AU. Then number two (2) says: The Pan-African Parliament shall elect at its first sitting by secret ballot from among each member and in accordance with rules of procedures, the President and four (4) Vice Presidents representing the five (5) regions of the AU. The election shall in case by simple majority of the members present and voting at least two of the Bureau Members to be women. You see this year along with many has caused that confusion about this rotation. The Members like myself were saying since last year, that we want to do rotation, but we must have the legal backing or legal framework. If you look at AU itself, the parent organization they are not doing that. Moussa Faki has been there for too long, so if the parent organization or the parent body is not actually doing this rotational leadership, do you expect other organs to do the same thing? There will be some issues and again some people like me that is really what we are trying to say. Let us start from the top, let us ensure it is done right and when we go back to the other organs which comprises about 11 and that brought some of the issues, but finally we were able to put it aside and then solve it.

Now, in terms of insurance, he is right because actually I carried my insurance until 2022. But the issue, perhaps I agree is about leadership problem. The insurance budget actually has been removed from our budget, and it is either that the AU budget comes to the PAP, we debate on the budget, make recommendations, but when it goes back, our recommendations does not make anything. So, essentially, I think it is an issue of leadership, but hopefully, we are going forward now. We

have the right people in the right places to ensure that we get those insurances back in place. The Member for Foni Bintang Karanai expressed happiness that Africans in Africa cannot be called foreigners. I like that so much and we should stop calling the ECOMIG troops in The Gambia Foreign troops. I totally agree with him. I told many Members here that I do not like people calling the Senegalese, Nigerian or Ghanaian, foreigners.

Honourable Speaker, just to move right along, you know I quite agree because the notion of the African Parliament is about One Africa One Voice, that is what we are trying to do. We need to ensure that the African passports that have actually started giving out, I think they need to extend it so that every African can have their African passports instead of having a Gambian passport or a Senegalese or Nigerian passport. So, we have one passport for the African continent. Also, you know traveling is not easy and not only the Pan African Parliament but also civil servants going to South Africa for various things. They will have to go to Dakar to apply for a visa and come back, when the visa is ready, going back to collect it takes so much time, energy and money. So, I think perhaps we need to make a resolution on this one as well because we are aware as Members of PAP that the South African Government actually has given us MOU to sign so that those Gambians with Diplomatic Passports or Service Passports would not require a visa to go to South Africa. Maybe, we need to make a resolution to ensure that the Minister of Foreign Affairs signs this before the end of this year because this MOU was down for almost 2 years now. I think that is all we have in terms of clarification, and once again I want to thank everybody for the comments you have made and to ensure that we do

the right thing. Hopefully, Honourable Speaker, other International Delegations would present their reports. Thank you!

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Upper Saloum. I want to thank you sincerely and all those who contributed to this very important motion, and I hope that the advice from the Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai and that of the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum will go down well. I am sure the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu is taking note of all those things. Thank you very much!

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to].

[Be it Resolved that this Honourable Assembly do adopt the report of The Gambia's Delegation to the Fourth (4th) Ordinary Session of the Fifth (5th) Pan-African Parliament held from the period 27th June to 2nd July 2022. In Midrand South Africa.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Assembly be adjourned until Tuesday 27th September 2022 at 10:00 AM Prompt]