



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

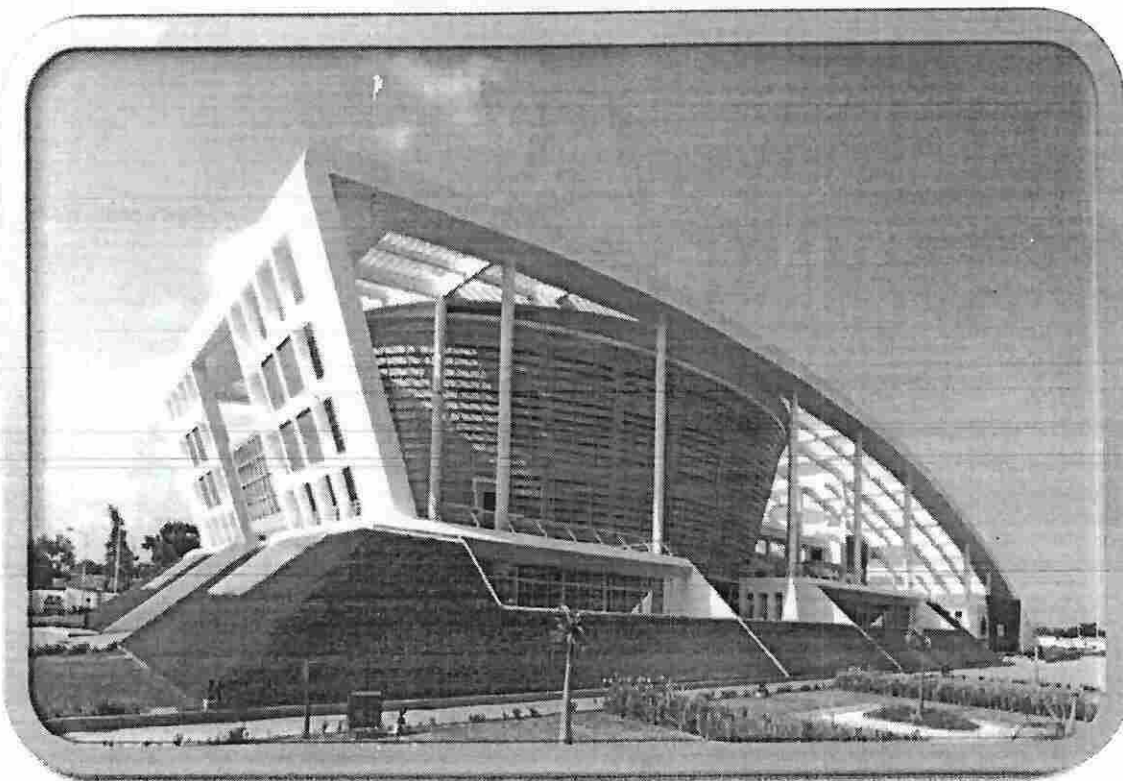
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION – FIRST MEETING

MONDAY 25th NOVEMBER, 2019

SESSION – 2019



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: III

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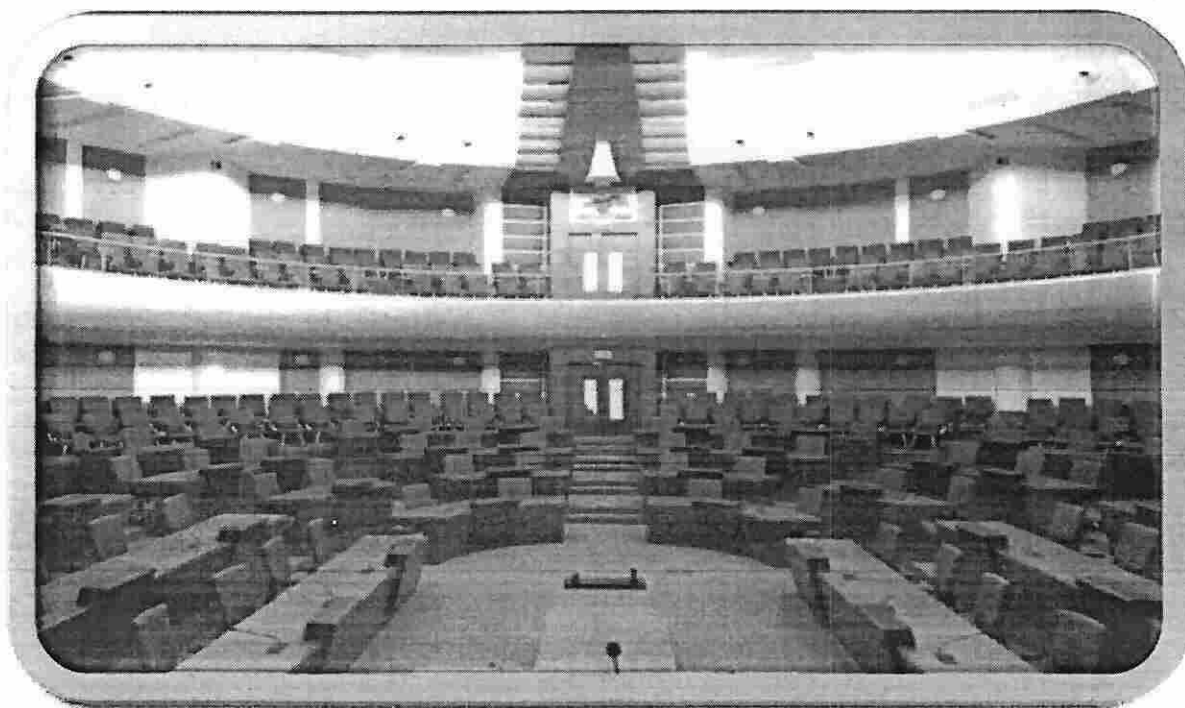
First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Fifth Assembly
Of the Second Republic of The Gambia.

Proceedings of the Sitting Monday 25th November of the House,
2019.

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- 1. Prayers**
- 2. Records of Votes and Proceeding of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 18th November, 2019**
- 3. MOTION**
Consideration and Debate on the Draft 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of the Gambia

MORNING SESSION



THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

**FOURTH SESSION – FIRST MEETING
OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Monday 25th November, 2019

1. Prayers:

[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, Read the Prayers].

[The House met at 10:00 a.m. in New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane, Banjul].

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

The House was called to Order

2. Correction of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 18th November, 2019.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Records of Votes and proceedings of the National Assembly sitting of Monday 18th November 2019 is before us for consideration and adoption. Can someone please move that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly sitting of Monday 18th November 2019 be considered and adopted?

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: I so moved, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]: I so seconded Madam Speaker.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any issues or observation from the Honourable Members? I believe the records are with you. Can we take corrections starting with page 1? Let us confirm the attendance on page 1. Page 2, page 3, thank you and page 4, yes.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: When you go to communication from the Chair in the second paragraph where you have gazette we put "the Gazette" with 'G' in

small letter and the 'G' should be in capital that is how they used to write it. And then when you come to the line before the last; Members carefully, you should put a "to" there before carefully, so that it would read "Members to carefully", yes page 3.

THE SPEAKER: Anymore on page 3? We are all satisfied with page 3. We can take page 4 from Lower Fulladu West.

ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you. The first paragraph in the second line where you have National Assembly Sitting of Friday 4th October, 2019 be considered and adopted instead of approved.

THE SPEAKER: That is the wording of the new Standing Orders. Anymore on page 4, 5. I think that way we are all satisfied with the record.
Thank you.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Correction and Approval of Record of votes and proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 18th November, 2019 has been adopted as amended]

3. MOTION

Consideration and Debate on the Draft 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of the Gambia.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members will recalled that on Monday when we came and the Standing Order came into effect, there was a communication from the Chair that some provisions of the Standing Orders cannot be implemented immediately because they came into force that very day. Honourable Member for Serrekunda may I just appeal that we will sort that out just give us a little bit of time. You were not here on Monday that is why but I want us to proceed Honourable Members with the deliberations.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: I want to make a Motion.

THE SPEAKER: It has been explained to you am not denying you of the right to make a motion, I was made to understand that is with regard to the Standing Orders.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Standing Order 53 (m) *a motion to move any stage of an Appropriation Bill or a Supplementary Appropriation Bill*; I know Madam Speaker.....

THE SPEAKER: you are on page 28.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: I am making the motion on the Standing Order 53 (m) which is at page 28.

THE SPEAKER: Can you start reading from page 27, motions which may be made without notice so that we will follow the agreement.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: So Madam Speaker, the Standing Orders provide for effective oversight and recalling that the reason why we transformed the Standing Orders is to ensure that we commit to exercise effective oversight. Taking note of Standing Order 81 Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the Standing Order aimed at this procedure to be adopted that is submissions to be made of the Appropriation Bill documents presentation after submission and then consideration by the this august Body before we go to the Committee of Supply.

I would say Madam Speaker that Standing Order 84 states very clearly what should obtain. It says that: *"upon being laid, those parts of the draft budget relating to the matters or ministries for which they have responsibility shall stand committed respectively to the relevant committees"*.

Even though some parts of the whole budgetary process are already overtaken by time this particular provision is not taken over by time. And Madam Speaker, it is not only urgent but it is also necessary to ensure that we exercise effective scrutiny.

Looking at the preparatory process, it becomes very clear that our Standing Orders had made it possible for us to exercise the type of scrutiny that we want by ensuring that the Committees engaged the Ministries and gather information from them in order to feed the Finance Committee and even if we have to do away with that at least the Committees will be able to give a report and then debate will proceed.

Madam Speaker, I did look at the constitutional provision which provide for days in order to review, consider and adopt the estimate. I am convinced that if you allocate even today or allocate tomorrow even one day of proper scrutiny will enable us to carry out the oversight that is necessary so that ultimately, when we approve this estimate, we would have done so based on our mandate of effective oversight. I, therefore, move that this august Body agrees with the provision to adopt a resolution to actually put Standing Order 84 into cooperation by ensuring that the respective Committees take charge of the various allocations in the draft estimate.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, we have to follow procedure, there is a motion on the floor of the house so it needs to be seconded and if there is any counter motion then we can take it but as for now the proper procedure to be followed is for the motion to be seconded. Any seconder?

HON. LAMIN FM CONTA [KOMBO EAST]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that we proceed under Standing Orders clause 84 which deals with the role of the Assembly Committees and if I may read; *"Upon being laid, those parts of the draft budget relating to the matters or*

Ministries for which they have responsibility shall stand committed respectively to the relevant Committees”.

[Question proposed]

THE SPEAKER: But may I just draw a word of caution that we have to abide by the timelines. We have 14 days within a week to do it so may I proceed that the Committees start working immediately. I am not sure we can get the different Ministries today it may not be possible but if we can give out the notice immediately for them to come back tomorrow and then we start of. A decision has already been taken so we cannot go back we are ready....but I am just being reminded that, in such case, we may have to seat over the weekend to make time for what we are losing just to make sure that we do things properly. So we adjourned for Wednesday for a debate proper to start but in the meantime, please Table Office and the Assembly Service, can we contact the different sectors for them to come in tomorrow 10 o'clock.

[Question Proposed Put and Agree to]

[The Assembly stands Adjourned Until Wednesday 27th November, 2019]

Adjournment



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

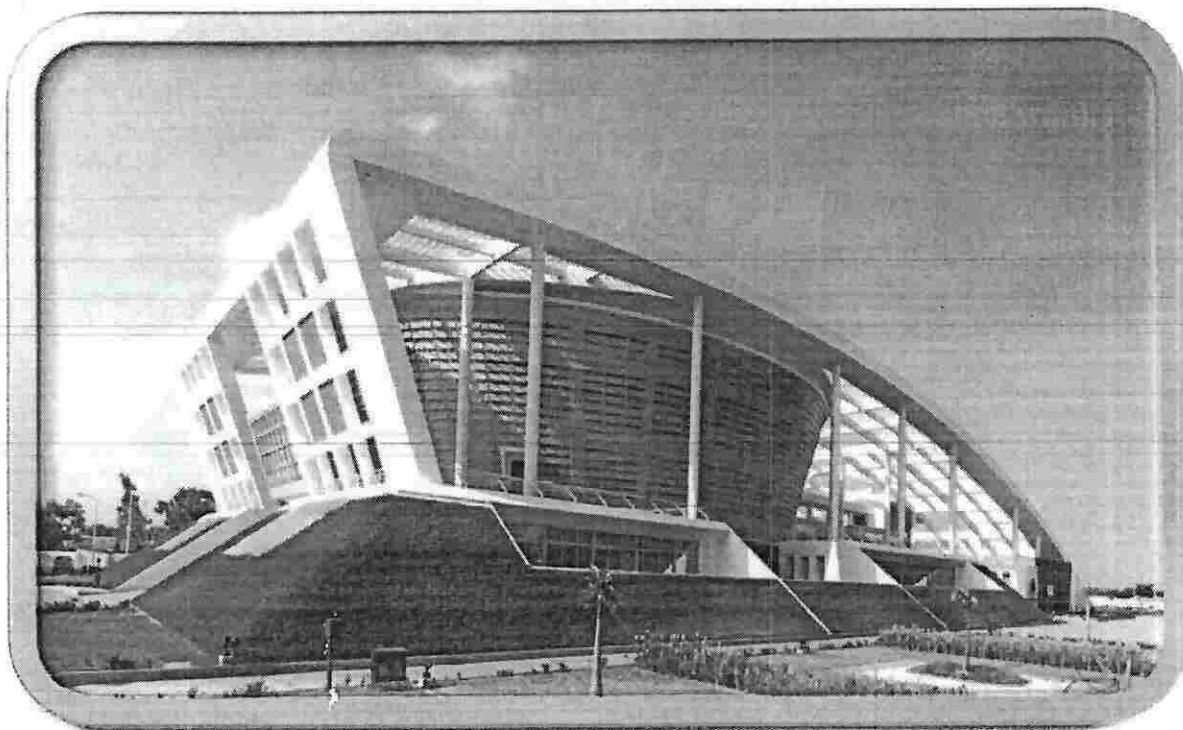
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION – SECOND MEETING

WEDNESDAY 27th NOVEMBER, 2019

SESSION – 2019



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: IV

NUMBER: V

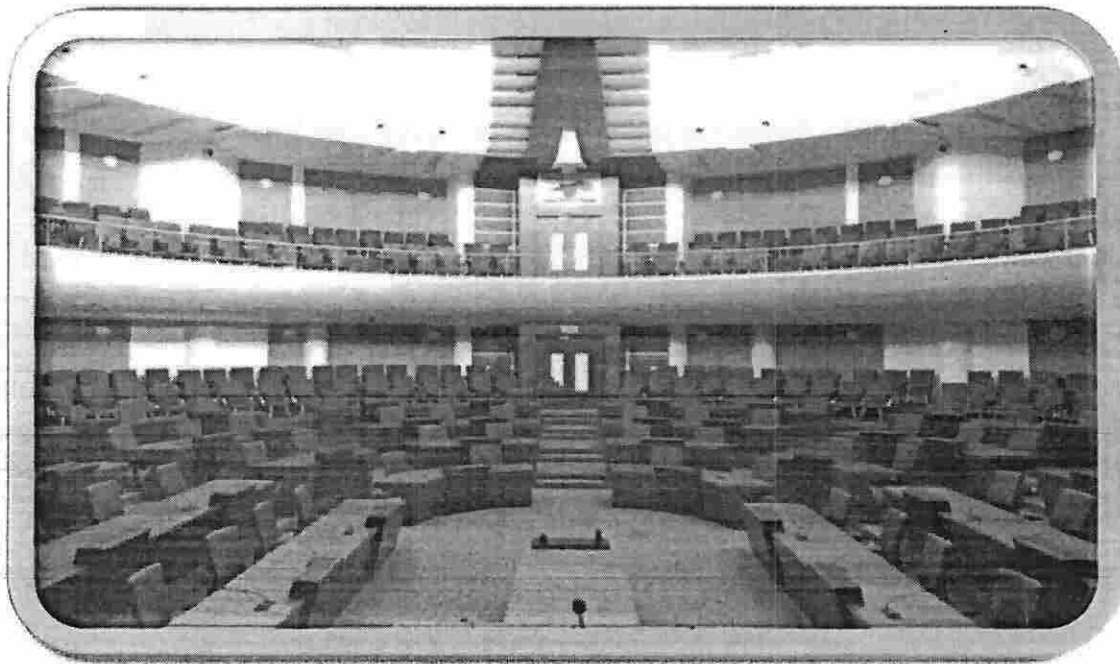
Second Meeting of the fourth Session of the Fifth Assembly
Of the Second Republic of the Gambia.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House on Wednesday 27th September 2019

Content

- 1. Prayers**
- 2. Communications from the Chair**
- 3. Correction and Approval of Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 25th November, 2019**
- 4. Consideration and Debate on the Draft 2020 Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of The Gambia**

MORNING SESSION



THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

**FOURTH SESSION – SECOND MEETING
OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Wednesday 27th November, 2019

1. Prayers:

The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, Read the Prayers].

[The House met at 10:00 a.m. in New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane, Banjul].

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

The House was called to Order

2. Communication from the Chair

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members and Honourable Minister, we are here today to begin the debate on the 2020 Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of The Gambia: 1st January to 31st of December 2020 both days inclusive. As we are all aware the debate and consideration proper could not proceed on Monday the 25th November, 2019 as was initially scheduled. This was as a result of a Motion by this august Assembly invoking clause 84 of the standing orders for this parts of the Draft Budget relating to matters or Ministries for which we have responsibilities to be referred to the relevant Committees of the National Assembly for proper scrutiny.

Accordingly, various Committees of the National Assembly went into session from Monday 25th to Tuesday 26th of November 2019 to consider the estimates of the different sectors. With appropriate time of the consideration state of the estimates at the Committee of Supply, the various committees will report and guide the committee of supply relating to the Draft Estimates of Ministries. This, as far as possible, is in line with the Standing Orders.

Once again Honourable Members, let us all note that the second clauses of the Standing Orders relating to the Draft Budget and the Annual Estimates cannot be implemented immediately due to the fact that the clauses have been overtaken by time and cannot be implemented respectively, particularly clause 84 (2) and (3) dealing with the FPAC reporting. In order to meet this requirement and due to the

constitutional time limit, we will start the debate today and allow all Chairpersons to submit their report to FPAC by Friday for consolidation in accordance with the Standing Orders.

I am happy to report that some committees have already finalised their reports and we commend them for that. The Committee of Supply on Friday 29th December, each Committee Chairperson will guide the Committee on each budget entity for consideration by the honourable House.

Finally, Honourable Members, the agenda for this session has been revised to reflect this developments and other necessary adjustments. Now for the Committee of Supply to consider the estimates in detail properly will start on Friday 28th November, 2019 and Committees will provide their summary report accordingly. If we were able to complete the debate and considerations by tomorrow afternoon we can immediately start with the Committee of Supply. I thank you all for your kind attention.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Speaker, I do not seem to understand well because you are saying all Committee Clerks should submit their reports on Friday and this is what we have agreed on. Now you want us to go for Committee of Supply on Friday. I think the reports should be submitted first before going to the Committee of Supply.

THE SPEAKER: ... submission to FPAC, then it will be consolidated and given to each member. Everybody will have reports of the different sectors. You will be adequately briefed because everybody will have a set. I have indicated earlier that I am happy to report that some Committees have already submitted theirs. So maybe before the end of the day, tomorrow morning, tomorrow afternoon, other Committees would have completed their work. We are constrained by time, we have 14 days as per the Constitution so we have to work ahead of time.

3. CORRECTION OF RECORDS OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SITTING OF 25th NOVEMBER, 2019.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the records of votes and proceedings for the National Assembly Sitzings of Monday 25th November 2019, is before us for consideration and adoption. Can any Honourable Member please move that the said records be considered and approved?

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: I rise to move that the records of votes and proceedings for the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 25th November 2019, be considered and adopted.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: I so second, Honourable Speaker.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Honourable Speaker, I was absent but captured present.

HON. SWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Page 3, last paragraph, second paragraph, "the Honourable Speaker informed that the "sitting" which is spelt "setting". Page 4, the last paragraph in the second line. Move a motion to commit those parts of the Draft 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures relating to the matters "or" Ministries for which "they have" responsibility to the relevant Committees...

THE SPEAKER: We are trying to keep to the wordings as far as possible to the language of the Standing Order and the language used is "matters or Ministries".

HON. SWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Page 5, first line "this august Assembly do commit those parts of the Draft 2020 Estimates instead of "those parts Draft".

Also on the paragraph under that, the Draft 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of The Gambia "was committed to the relevant committees" instead of "committed to the relevant committee".

[Question Put and Agree to]

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings for the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 25th November, 2019 be approved with amendments]

4. Consideration and Debate on the Draft 2020 Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of The Gambia.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Draft 2020 Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure was tabled by the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs and seconded by the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum on Monday 18th November 2019. Therefore, we are to commence the debate of the said Draft Estimates today. In view of that, any Honourable member who wishes to take part may raise his/her constituency tag. However, before allowing any Honourable member to take the floor, I want all of us to remind ourselves of the scope of debate under the Clause [13] sub-clause [1] of the Standing Orders which reads "Debate upon any motion or amendment to a motion or upon any Bill, part of a Bill, or amendment to a Bill shall be relevant thereto except if the case of a motion for debate on the adjournment of the Assembly. In addition, Clause 86 [6] of the same Standing Orders guides us on how to debate on the annual estimates, and it reads, "The debate on the motion shall be confined to the Estimates and the explanatory statement". I would therefore wishes to appeal to Honourable Members to respect and observe the said clauses of the Standing Orders.

HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Honourable Speaker, this is one of the most important sessions as far as Gambia is concerned because it affects everybody. This is not personal, it is for all of us and therefore we have to look at it critically and go

for what favours our electorates. We are not here for an individual but we are here for the people. Therefore let us look at that and move forward.

Looking at the Budget, we are told that the total revenue and grants 2020 is D24 billion and the total expenditure is D30 billion. My question to the Honourable Minister is, where are we going to get these funds from because our expenditure is more than the revenue. Page 18 of the draft estimates 2020: Departmental Overview, I would want to start with Education because it is the key to success. When you look at Education, last year it was D3 billion and this year it has a little increment D3.6 billion. There is a drop on Agriculture which is D2.4 Billion and there is also a drop on Health. All these sectors are very important and the government should invest more on them; Education, Agriculture and Health. The education sector has so many issues and the department is crying a lot, we know that. Notwithstanding, we also have constraints and gaps and we want at least those gaps to be closed. This is why we always advocate for more on Education and Agriculture. Page 37, Office of the President, you would realise that the President's visit to the provinces was D10 million but for 2020 it is zero on that. I do not know whether next year there be no President's Meet the Farmer's tour. It is very sad that this amount is allocated for this and when the time comes they go and tell every Alkalo to pay certain amounts. So what is the essence of this money? So I think it should be reduced since people are contributing.

Honourable Speaker, I will now go to our issues. Parliamentary oversight which was D3 million last year and this year D10 million. This is the most important, for committees to go out and make their findings. I hope you will see the impact of it if we are able to do more oversight functions and I hope there be nothing like there is no fund.

In Agriculture again, when we are talking about agriculture it is not only crop production but animals as well. If you look at the crop productivity on page 76, in 2019 it was D33 million and 2020 is D28 million. On the livestock sector there was a

reduction on that and there should be an increase. Since colonial days this was being said, agriculture is the backbone of the economy. If there is no benefit, try to look at other things. I know that this year the Ministry of Agriculture has come up with the small ruminant production.

On Education also, I have not seen school feeding programme which was 90 million last year and this year there is a dash. It is my opinion, what I see is the way I would say it. So I would want a clarity on that whether there will be no school feeding. On page 85, School Improvement Grant, there is an increment on this. Last year D33 million and D52 million plus this year. There is an issue of late payment on this.

Furniture and fittings, provision of lower Basic, to me D5 million is too small in which 2018/19 there was no budget line for it. If you go to some schools you realised that children are sitting on mats or stick. Another D5 million could have been added to it to make it 10 million.

Health, as I said it is only D2 billion allocated to it which is very small despite so many issues that need to be fixed in the health sector. Therefore Honourable Members, let us try and put more. I know the Health Committee have done a lot but I hope they will come with solutions. Looking at health issues in this country, especially in the rural areas, it is a concern to all.

Workforce Budget, Office of the President, I do not know what they are going to do with 6 advisers. 2 is okay as we are crying of funds. If you look at the same page what special allowance are they talking about? Civil servants skill allowances, cost of living allowances. All these allowances these peoples are creating for themselves. If you come to the National Assembly, we are paying for our own drivers and these peoples are creating these so-called allowances. You know that I cannot drive myself to my working place, yet they are saying responsibility allowances. Who should have a responsibility allowances more than the national Assembly Members. *[Applause]*.

We have no maintenance cost for our cars. Therefore, these so-called allowances should be cut out and look at allowances that are genuine and the keep the rest of the resources or we will not move further.

Honourable Members, this is why I started by saying let us look at what favours our electorates, things that do not favour our electorates let's say no to that. If you look at these allowances some civil servants do have them and some do not and yet it is called Civil Servant Allowances. If we are creating allowance for civil servants everybody should have it.

Defence on page 39, corporal D15 million in 2019 and 2020 D35 million. We want an explanation of all these things.

Ministry of Works, this is also an important part in which all of us are saying we want good roads. Therefore, we have to look at their budget critically and see areas which we know that it needs increment, we increase so that the 400km we are talking will be implemented. Let us try to look at their budget if necessary we increase it. Also our meeting with the line Ministry is very important and this issue should have been done earlier. I know it is very prompt this year but I am sure next year we would be able to do it properly. Sitting with different Ministries and discussing their budget is very important. Also if you look at their process of fuel on page 78 it is D1.5 million, I do not know if new cars are available to them or what. Maintenance of vehicles, in 2018 it was 800,000 and 2020 is 840,000 which is an increase.

Honourable Speaker, one of the most important sectors is Youth but it is very disheartening to see their budget lines. We are always saying here that we want the progress of the youths and we are not putting anything on them. I do not want to reveal what we have discussed, and it is the reason why I am coming up with my own [sic]. The current issue of the Ministry is not favourable, we will change it because we do not want our youths to suffer.

Honourable Speaker, as I said I must thank all Honourable Members. This budget is not for individuals but Gambians so let us look at it critically before we said had I known and had I known shall never be known and it shall never be known. I will also go back on it; paying your own driver, maintenance your own vehicle which led to the annoying of some of our drivers simply because there is no encouragement for them. We can come together and create something for our drivers in terms of workshop which will motivate them rather than leaving them like that. The little resources we have is being pulled from our pockets and given to the drivers, while others are creating responsibility allowances and other forms of allowances. Thank you very much Honourable Speaker.

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, may I say Asslaamu Aleikum to everybody. I have gone through the Budget but really I am disappointed and so embarrassed simply because the content does not favour the right people, especially farmers.

In 2019, water, electricity and sewage was about D30 million and I think that is a joke. After paying D30 million in 2019, I think that in 2020 it will be reduced. Honourable Speaker, if you go to the Ministry of Agriculture, printing cost from January to December is D18, 000. I think the Select Committee should revisit their expenses so that the farmers will enjoy.

I need another explanation in page 65-67, table 1-5 bilateral subvention from 2018 it was D240 million, from 2019 it was D250 million and 2020 it is D500million. What I would say is I think the Minister of Finance and co should go back and do their homework properly because according to the content of this it is not benefitting the poor people and large consumers. Thank you.

HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. My intervention will be primarily based on the

funding. Government plans to spend D30 billion in 2020 and projected revenue is D13.6 billion. This means there is a gap of 16.4 billion Dalasi. I am really concerned and worried about our current states because considering the gap of D16.4 billion mainly for budget support, loans and domestic borrowing. During the laying of the estimates, the Minister informed us that D3.4 billion was presented for 2019 and yet this was not naturalised and he said this was due to slippages. Honourable Speaker, I do not think this is enough explanation. We need more explanation on the causes of these slippages and who is responsible and why does it happen. I think we need those explanations from the Minister. This year if you could remember the Minister wants us to approve D2.7 billion budget support, we need to know why he wants us to approve that. In 2019 D2.4 billion does not naturalise so if we are to approve D2.7 billion on the estimate, it should be explained.

Still on the budget, the Minister of Finance announced we want to raise D620 million on government assets and these are going to be D100 million from assets disposal. What are these government assets? We want to know.

The Honourable Minister talks about external borrowing and he should give details of what these multi-lateral and bilateral borrowings are and their conditions. This is because his statement was not detailed and we need to have a clear understanding of it.

Ministry of Youths, as my colleague has alluded, the Ministry is in the Budget and we all know that youths are the backbone of this country and they should be prioritised. We want to end this back-way syndrome and if youths are not catered for, what can they do unless to go on this back-way journey. On certain issues like National Youth Council, NDA, President's Award Scheme and other skills are all under-budgeted. Last year their budget was reduced to D10 million for which I do not know the reason and here the Honourable Minister should explained the reason. We need to prioritise the youths because we need them in all aspects.

In Foreign Affairs, we have talked about their affairs here last year and yet look at the budget. They are 6th on the list and on the NDP we know which Ministries are prioritised but in the budget the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of the priority Ministries. We also discussed about downsizing some of these embassies. We have talked about it here and we want the Honourable Minister to downsize this embassies. We know it is not easy to downsize the embassies but if we cannot keep budgeting the costs of embassies, is now time to downsize these embassies.

In the recurrent budget, the President's visit to the provinces is a Constitutional requirement and is not in the budget. Is it that this time the President will not visit the farmers or do have other sources? Office of the Vice President is from D1.5 million to D3.5 million and training D25 million to D101 million, the Honourable Minister should explain why these huge increments.

Independent Electoral Commission, purchase of fuel and lubricants from D100 million to D800 million. National Audit office travel expenses under General Administration from D2 million to D14 million. Also, travel expenses under regularity audit from D1 million to D24 million.

The Ministry of Interior under law enforcement and crime prevention, the salary was increase and D6 million but allowances are increased to D62 million. We need explanation on why allowances are increase more than the salaries.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of Brussels, the allowances are increased more than the salaries which happens in some embassies and government Ministries and we need explanation on this. Without wasting much time I think we have gathered much information and when we go to Committee of Supply we will protest on that.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, I am glad that you are cognisant of that fact.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: I would like to add my voice to the previous speakers and give my support to the second most important document after the Constitution. I would like to draw the attention of this Honourable Assembly to page 43, Independent Electoral Commission. I would like the Honourable Minister to explain why we have this huge amount of allocation for IEC when the approved budget for 2019 was D29 million and now the estimate is D41 million. Page 34, National Audit Office from D51 million D101 million.

Honourable Speaker, National Assembly has now graduated from juvenile Assembly to a real Assembly *[applause]*. Our allocation was D13 million and was cut to D3 million, can the Honourable Minister explain why? Under National Audit Office, Acting Allowance, Professional and Non-Practices Allowances. This has never been allocated to the National Assembly. I know National Audit Office is an independent body but let the Honourable Minister explain why the National Assembly is being treated like this.

Under Health, according to the report of our oversight function we realised that maternal death rates are caused by anaemia. So I think the government needs to venture more on health but under secondary and tertiary health care the amount of allocation was D469 million. If I may propose for the Minister to cut from Official Entertainment & Hotel Accommodation under Health which was D3 million and then adjust to D850 million. If we can cut from Official Entertainment and Hotel Accommodation and add it to Secondary and Tertiary Healthcare because we need to strengthen the demand of social service in order to marmot the crises of anaemic patients or maternal deaths.

Development Budget under Ministry of Trade, I had raised a question during the question and answer session here whereby I asked the Minister that the tar road in Tallinding do not have street lights and he gave a promise that it will be captured in the 2020 budget. In the budget line road constructions within the Greater Banjul

Area and the manpower budget nothing was captured in my constituency. Can the Honourable Minister help me to shed light on that?

Last but not the least, Judiciary, Children's Courts in all the seven regions and allocations. I would want the Honourable Minister to explain why we have all these courts Mansakonko, Brikama, Basse and Janjanbureh. I do not know why, do we have serious crime rates of our young ones. On that note Honourable Speaker, I beg to move. *[Applause]*

HON. SAIKOU MARONG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Let me also join my colleagues on the debate of the 2020 Budget. Which we all agree it is the second most important documents of the nation. This is a document that should not be criticized or otherwise. It is a document that needs to be scrutinised very well because our success as a country depends on this document.

Honourable Speaker, we should look at the National Development plan NDP and its priority areas and compare it with the National Budget that we are dealing with today to see whether they are really communicating or not.

We have a policy as a country and the policy we have in place as a country is the NDP. I believe that for a budget to be a budget it should always communicate with the National Development Plan. When you look at the budget, The Gambia as country wanted to spend D24.5 billion, that is what we want to spent in 2020. Looking at that, you find out that tax and non-tax revenue is only D13.6 billion. There is a huge gap and that gap needs to be filled and how are we going to fill this gap is where the question is right now. If we look at our domestic borrowing, we all know that it is an increase. Let's ask ourselves, is it sustainable? The domestic borrowing for 2020 budget stands at D3.9 billion. If you go to the NDP the priority area No.2 says stabilising our economy, stimulating growth and translating the economy. Now are they really communicating, this is what we need to ask the Minister of Finance and that he has to answer that question for us. If you look at our

external debt, and compare 2019 and 2020 there is a huge gap. My problem is the domestic debt in which we are spending so much money on the State Owned Enterprises, for example NAWEC, but what are we generating from them. What we want from our debts is each and every Gambian should feel that there is a budget that is in their field. If I have a domestic budget in ... [unclear], it means that the commercial banks will rather prepare to invest in the ... [unclear] rather than giving loan to individuals that are outside. We believe that government should create a conducive environment for the private sector to perform very well. This is because the private sector can create more jobs and now if the environment is not conducive for the private sector, how are we going to create more jobs?

Honourable Speaker, it is rather unfortunate on Saturdays if you roam in the streets of Banjul and Kombo when government is not at work you will find out that 80% to 70% of our businesses are at a standstill. That means that our private sector are not performing as they should, because if they are when the government is not at work yet still we would see a traffic that is encouraging but that is not happening.

Honourable Speaker from there I will quickly rush to the Ministry of Health budget. Do not say that I am bias but I am appealing to the whole Assembly, because there is this saying that "A healthy nation is a wealthy nation". So please I want each and every one of you to hear me out and give utmost support to the Ministry of Health so that they can realise what they want. Notwithstanding, we do not expect to give you hundred Dalasi and you cannot account for that hundred Dalasi that we give you. If you are given a hundred Dalasi, before demanding a thousand Dalasi, telling us how you spent that hundred Dalasi is very important.

Honourable Speaker, if you look at the budget from January to October 2019 in health, you will find out 90% of the money for salaries and 102% for allowances has been disbursed. Personal emolument, other recurrent and development budget, you will find out that in emolument 96% of the funds had been disbursed. If you look at the development budget, my surprise is only 28% compared to the other one. Are

we really serious in what we are saying? Do we really want to make a differences? There are some hospital in The Gambia that do not have Paracetamol. I blame the National Assembly of The Gambia for this issue. Let us ask ourselves, are we really doing an oversight, are we communicating with our people. It is high time to stop the blame game and do our job. If you go at the Ministry of Health, subvention to the PEs 86%, OC 87%, Consultancy 94% are all be disbursed. Drugs, dressing, medical supply only 30% being disbursed. Disbursement of electricity, water and sewage 86%, Vaccines 95%, and travel expenses 223%. This is what happens in our health sector, where are we going as a country in terms of health. I would like to tell the Minister of Health, he is the only Minister who says that I will travel as normal people are traveling until and unless the problem of the Health sector is fixed then I will join the others. We praise the Minister of Health for that initiative. We know it is a policy for a Minister and Permanent Secretary to travel differently from other, but the Minister of Health is doing it. I travel with him to Kenya and we board the same plane.

Notwithstanding, I want the parliament to help us with the Ministry of Health in having some Korean and Chinese doctors but this will be discussed on the Committee stage. We need your support so that we can help patients with doctors to take care all of them.

I want to look at the allowance, after looking at the budget 2019 we found out that there are lots of allowances that are paid in 2020 which are not paid in 2019. The Honourable Minister, when there was a 50% increment in 2019. We engage you and what you told us is that you are going to restructure the salary scheme, but we have not seen that. All what we see is that increment of new allowances for individuals, why? We want that question to be answered. Let me say it again in the Assembly, you have the knife and the bread, it is your responsibility to cut. Do not cut today and come next tomorrow to start complaining. That is not telling well as a National Assembly. This is a Draft Budget and we have the power to approve or reject it and

the power to cut. National audit Office should not go to bilateral but we have the power to cut were we see it is necessary to cut as a National Assembly.

If you go to the Ministry of Youth and Sport, yes we are still appealing to the Assembly to look at that budget line seriously if we want to make a difference. Let us look at the development programmes that are embedded within the Ministry of Youth and Sport and see how much we can add to their budget. As I said earlier on, this not a matter of just giving us money, when we give allocation we want to see the outcome and the value for money. Value for money is what we want to see in the 2020 Budget.

ICT, under Ministry of Communication and Infrastructure. In 2019 their budget line was D63.6 million but in 2020 the draft estimates stands at D53.6 million. I always say this, whenever one is talking about series of corruption taking place, this edge is not paying this and we only have a solution. Where is that solution? It is through ICT. The ICT sector should be empowered in order to take care all these problems. If that is not done I doubt if we are really going to make a head way. If we want to fight corruption we cannot leave ICT behind. The entire Ministry's budget line only stand at D53.6 million, let us all ask ourselves. I know there are people here who are advocating for Ministry of Agriculture. This is why I always have differences with them. Even if we want a serious agriculture technology must be involved. Agriculture cannot go in the absences of technology, so we need technology. The whole Assembly is here, I am appealing once again please, and you would agree with me that when we have a proper IT system in place most of this corruption we are talking about, the leakage of revenue we talking about, we can easily find solution for them.

If you look at our budget, all that we have on revenue is D13 something billion when we wanted to spent over 24 something billion dalasi. How are we going to close that gap? Our revenue aspect needs to be increased. In our domestic aspect, I would want to give my recommendation to the Minister of Finance on the TSA. During our

pre-budget session at Tendaba we agreed on Treasury Civil Account. Instead of government, MDAs opening accounts in all the commercial banks, they should open accounts at the Central Bank, so that all the moneys collected are at the Central Bank. The issue of domestic borrowing will reduce drastically. The Commercial Banks lend us money with interest and that will affect both private sector and individuals. Therefore Honourable Minister, we would want you to give a timeline that this will be in place as it is important. The issue of domestic borrowing is not sustainable.

On Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we do not have problem with embassies, but how efficient and effective are those embassies. We want our embassies to serve the interest of the Gambian people. In 2019, I said we are learning quick when it comes to budget and we can tell you this time around we have spoken a lot on this budget and when we go to the Committee stage it is not going to be business as usual because we are going to cut where it is necessary. On that note I thank you all.

HON. MOMODOU LK SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. This Draft Estimate of 2020 is indeed a very important document. The document before us is the life blood of this nation as a result as National Assembly Members we have to look carefully look into this document and to make sure that justice is done to the document.

I would start with allowances, the new allowances created from Office of the President to the Judiciary involves all the Ministries in the country. Now this new allowances, I would want the Honourable Minister to explain to us how much is involved in these allowances. You can see starting from the Ministry of Interior, you have a Professional Allowances, Risk Allowance, Transport Allowances, Telephone Allowance, Responsibility Allowances, Special Skill Allowances, and so on in all Ministries. Adding all these allowances together in my opinion I think this takes almost half of this Budget. So I want to suggest that if we know the figures of these allowances as stated in this document, we will be able to do justice. This is because people are required to get allowances but let them get allowances that will not

hinder the progress or development of this country. After having said that I will need to give the budget a support. The Minister in his statement expressed to us that the revenue for recurrent development expenditure for the fiscal year 2020 contribute to that factor and achieve the net domestic borrowing NDP target of 1%. Cross domestic revenue for 2018 was primarily as a result of no disbursement of the budget support from our development partners. He did mentioned D3.4 million was factored as a budget support in 2018 but EU contribution of D25 million was received in respect of 2019 and not even in the 2018. Now this budget support is something very important for our country and it is a projection and it is likely to come and it is not likely to come. I want to find out from the Minister of Finance, what are the conditions attached to this budget support for a country like ours so that we can get this budget support? The Honourable Minister continued to mention 2019 project report support for EU and the World Bank which comprises the bulk of the estimate budget support for 2019 did not materialise at the end of September 2019. He further mentioned that the World Bank budget support is unlikely to materialise due to slippage and for that reason non-realization of certain development policies cooperation. This is another area of concern to me since it is a statement made by Honourable Minister himself.

In view of the statement preferred and above, could the Honourable Minister kindly inform this august body about the measure to be taken and slippage from non-realization of certain development policies and cooperation and what mechanism has the Minister of Finance put in place to ensure that the slippages referred to in his statement are taken care of. It is a very important thing as a Minister of Finance to talk about and make sure slippages are certainly look into. Again what measure could you be able to give to this honourable House that the EU 22 million Euro expected to be received before the end of the 2019 has been received or will be received as expected? What are the measures and negotiation that you will take so that we can have the 22 million Euro from the EU?

The other issue of the medium-term debt objective. The Honourable Minister also mentioned that the net domestic borrowing is expected to be around 2.5% which is 1.5% half than the target. How can this money be raised to 2.3? I would like the Honourable Minister to give an answer to that. On the issue of the above statement could the honourable Minister explain to this honourable House the fiscal consolidation measure that your Ministry have put in place to ensure that we are able to attain the medium-terms debt structure strategic objective, explaining that the net domestic borrowing of 1% of GDP taking into account challenges facing the country with regards to the financial situation. I want the Minister to explain why this is being increase to 2.5% instead of 1% as expected.

After having said that I would go to the Estimate on Ministry of Defence. Honourable Speaker, Ministry of Defence in the 2020 Budget Estimate is 737.603. Going by the development budget for the Ministry of Defence it is 17.100. Having considered the Army, the Army Officers especially the young ones are outside the Barracks on renting. Now in the area of development I would have loved to see something more than this D17 million so that the Army can take construction of their own quarters that will enable the soldiers to stay in their own quarters. This money for development programme for the national Army of D17 million is very small and I think the Minister so build-up something about that because we want to keep our soldiers in the barracks rather than scattering all over in the country. I think that is a note to be taken.

Ministry of Interior has a lot of components of the security, prison, drugs enforcement agency, police, immigration and fire services. All these components are within the Ministry of interior. Coming to their development budget it is 17.100 as the Ministry of Defence. I think this is an issue that we need to look into. Our security forcers especially the places they live is a cause for concern. The prison staff quarters are just very bad as a result I think from this budget if not all are built or properly repaired I think we should do something about it. It is very sad and I have

the opinion that this amount is very small for development programmes of these Ministries.

On Agriculture Honourable Speaker, it is said by everybody that Agriculture is the backbone of this country. Therefore, I think the only way that this country can move forward economically is agriculture. That is my honest opinion and I do not think we should deceive ourselves. We have the potential, the land and the water, what is stopping us as a nation to develop agriculture. With all these loans we are taking, if only we are serious with agriculture and invest on agriculture with irrigation system of farming where we have fresh water, I think this country will be one of the best in the sub-region. The amount of money allocated in agriculture needs to be looked into because that is the only way to make sure that our country is developed. Again as I said, if government really cannot invest in agriculture then I think there could be a way out to get the serious investors that will come into the country to help. This is because the Kafuta farm here is producing every week and what is stopping us as a country.

Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, this time around it is not enough but I think the allocation given to the Ministry is 656.746. It cannot build roads but compared to what they had last year, I think this is fairly okay. Gambians have a problem of building roads and schools but sustaining them is a problem. This is because there is no culture of maintenance in the country. If a loan of D2 billion is invested into road construction and things like that, after a period that road will just wash away and we will think of arranging money or taking loan to rebuild those roads. I think there should be a serious maintenance team to make sure that roads built are taken care of.

Finally, I would come to these allowances again. Under all Ministries there are allowances and this involves a lot of money. If you make a calculation, it takes half of this Budget? Now we want the Minister to explain to the Assembly why all these allowances are created for the various Ministries. The salaries are there and why

creating these new allowances? On that note Honourable Speaker, I thank you very much for giving me the floor.

[The House stands suspended]



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

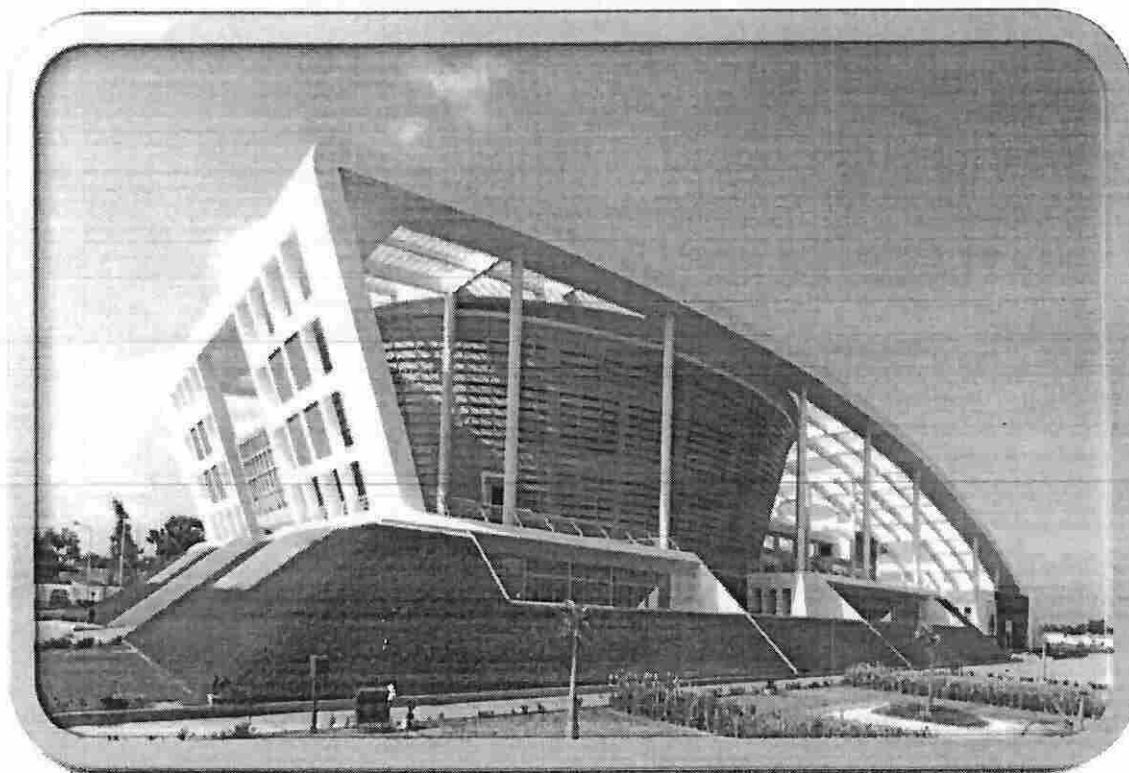
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION – THIRD MEETING

TUESDAY 28th NOVEMBER, 2019

SESSION – 2019



National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane, Banjul, The Gambia

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: V

NUMBER: VI

Third Meeting of the fourth Session of the Fifth Assembly
Of the Second Republic of The Gambia.

Proceedings of the Sitting Thursday 28th November of the House,
2019.

CONTENT:

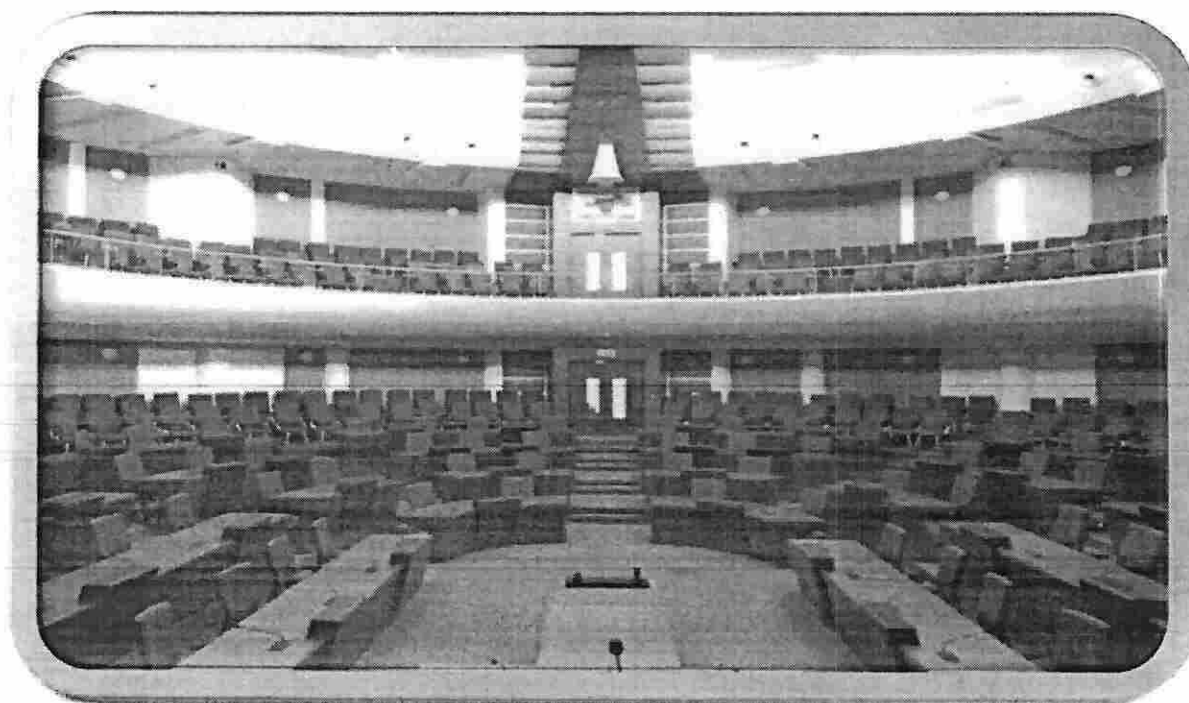
1. PRAYERS

2. Correction and approval of Record of Votes and proceedings of the National Assembly Sitzings of Wednesday 27th November, 2019

3. Motion

Continuation and conclusion of the Debate of the Draft 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of The Gambia -01st January to 31st December, 2020[both dates inclusive]

MORNING SESSION



THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

**FOURTH SESSION – THIRD MEETING
OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Thursday 28th November, 2019

1. PRAYERS

[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, Read the Prayers].

[The House met at 10:00 a.m. in New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane, Banjul].

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

The House was called to Order

2. Correction and Approval of Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday 27th November 2019.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you! Good morning Honourable Members, good Morning Honourable Minister and team, welcome to the Assembly.

Honourable Members, the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday 27 November, 2019 is before us here for consideration and approval.

Can any Honourable Member please move that the said records be considered and approved?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and good morning to this August Assembly. I rise to move that the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday **27th November, 2019** be considered and approved.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Any seconder?

HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]: Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to second the motion.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed]

Thank you. It has been moved and seconded that the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday the 27th of November 2019

be approved. Any issues or observation from Honourable Members for correction, we start with page one thank you.

Page1, 2, 3, continuation of the attendance page 3

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Page 2, communication from the Chair, the second paragraph, the second line. The appropriate time of the Committee of Supply, each "committee" not "committees" thank you.

HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: I know he is not here but on behalf of Alhagie S B Sillah, he has made it known and help a lot time and time over again that the clerk is omitting the "E" on his name.

THE SPEAKER: Table Office, you take note of all these things thank you. People are very much particular about spellings including me and I offer apology. Anymore on page 3, Page 4, 5?

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Thank you Madam Speaker. For consistency purposes, right from page 2, number 28 on the attendance, Honourable Fatou k Jawara is recorded for Tallinding and if you go to the Member who took the floor on number 4, is also captured as Honourable Fatoumatta k Jawara Tallinding Kujang for consistency. I think we need to take note of that.

THE SPEAKER: Continuation on page 5, 6

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes page 6, motion and at the top Standing Orders and then where you have the most hardened you say the motion **[Not Clear]** you say the motion fail I do not know whether you used "fails" or you used "fall" and therefore the Assembly will not continue sitting....

THE SPEAKER: When the motion fails, automatically the provisions of the Standing Orders is, adjournment at 6 o'clock.

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [KIANG WEST]: the same page "Standing Order" not "Sanding Order".

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Any more correction? You can proceed.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed To]

[The Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday 27th November 2019 has been adopted as amended].

3. Motion

Continuation and Conclusion of the Debate on the Draft 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures of the Republic of The Gambia – 01st January to 31st December, 2020 [both dates inclusive]

THE SPEAKER: From where we stopped yesterday. We still have some Honourable Members on my list but that notwithstanding, if any Honourable Member wishes to register now can do so by raising his or her constituency tag. That is just to ensure that I have everybody on the list thank you so much. As we said yesterday with the Honourable Member for Nianiya.

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIYA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and good morning to everybody. Honourable Speaker being the first person to take the floor today and this is the **2020 Budget Estimate** that we are debating here and I just want to thank the Honourable Minister and the team for fulfilling their constitutional requirement according to the 1997 Constitution as well as the Public Finance Act of 2014. But first of all Honourable Speaker, during our budget retreat in Tendaba, I was fortunate to visit my constituency Nianiya and then I gathered some few opinion leaders within the Constituency and asked them what is their opinion in the 2020 Budget but unfortunately, some were telling me that the budget is only meant for you people the civil servants, is there any salary increment for you people or other things. So, I took time to explain to them no this budget is for everybody and every Gambian; being a civil servant, being a farmer or whatever is for all of us.

So, the first thing that they put to me was that, I hope construction of our main road is captured in the 2020 Budget and the second thing that they told me was, I hope this

budget will be able to address the inaccessibility of our women to their rice field. The other thing is healthcare services, will this budget address the needed healthcare that is of access quality and available to the doorstep of every citizen of Nianija and the Gambia at large? The other thing that they highlighted was, water supply because still now we have some communities within Nianija that are lacking clean potable drinking water.

So the last but not the least that they highlighted was the issue of youths because there is no facilities for them within the length and bread of the constituency. So, definitely those are the things they highlighted and then being their representative, I think it is important if I also take the floor and highlight some of these issues.

Honourable Speaker, I think the budgeting process as we have learned this year, we are improving. So, based on the New Standing Orders I think we have the opportunity in the coming years that is in the new constitution, we will have adequate time for National Assembly Members to do necessary consultations not only within the greater Banjul area but also to our constituencies to ask them what they definitely need to see reflected in the estimate.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the budget revenue in 2018 that is the 2019 budget, the revenue forecasted was 11.8 million dalasi that is for this year 2019. But this year we have seen an increase in the revenue forecast which stands at 13.6 million. So, my question is what has led to this increase? Are we increasing our tax base or are we increasing our tax debt or are we trying to tighten some of the linkages or some other means that will definitely realize more revenue because we definitely need revenue for the up keeping of the country and also for aspect of development. The other thing is how much of the 2019 revenue GRA was able to collect? It was forecasted that we have 11 Something million and then how much have we realized in reality? The other thing is what should we do that is both of us, both the Ministry of Finance that and also the National Assembly here, what should we do? So that we can increase our revenue because without enough revenue definitely all that we have been talking here will not be feasible because we need money to run the affairs of this country. We need money

for development of this country especially Nianija Constituency which is one of the poorest areas in the country.

Honourable Speaker, the other thing is what mechanism we should employ to minimize the leakage by all the collecting agencies. I realized that it is not a hidden fact and it is not only GRA that is collecting revenue. There are other ministries departments and agencies showing that they are collecting. If you go through the budget, you will see the item for collecting agencies. So, definitely what should we do to make sure that we have maximum revenue from all the sectors including the Health Sector? I know no matter how small it is, we are collecting revenue because I learned from the Health Committee engaging with the EFSTH that when the Health Minister in the current government was then Chief Medical Officer at EFSTH, when he was in that position, he employed some mechanisms and realized that there is a particular department that was collecting every month 20 thousand to 30 thousand in the services that they do conduct. But when they brought up new ways, they were able to collect nearly 1 million plus per month. So definitely, I think that is a welcome move by the then Managing Director. The Chief Executive Director of **EFSTH** and I think this should be replicated in all MDAs to make sure that we have maximum revenue collection across the sectors because we all know man and money. If I am collecting money, I may be tempted. For example if I am collecting let say 100 dalasi and I am thinking back home that I do not have fish money, definitely I might be tempted to use some part of it to take home. But if there are measures where you have less contact with the monies, you just deal with numbers then you have your everything imputed and I think those are welcome moves that we should all be thinking in that direction.

Honourable Speaker, the other think that I am also interested to know from the Finance Minister is that in 2018 when the budget was presented here that is the 2018 Fiscal Year with the policy pronouncement that there will be tax free on rice, what is the statues of that still? In this 2020 budget, are we still continuing on that and if so what impact does it have still? Because speaking from a local point of view, all of us thought

that there is free tax on rice. But have you been definitely fair with the ordinary Gambians.

So, definitely these are questions that we need to ask ourselves though, coming from the constituencies where we grow our own rice, we eat our own rice. If I tell you at my house in Nianija, we do not buy bag of rice we get it from our forest. The whole year round 12 months I do not buy bag of rice and if I buy one is because I am in the kombos. But in the Kombos here, I am also a Gambian and there are other Gambians who are still not feeling that tax free on rice because the price of rice if not increasing is still at the same rate.

So, definitely Honourable Minister, these are issues that I want you to help us understand. Is there still tax free on rice or have this tax that is being waved on rice been returned there.

Honourable Minister, the other thing that I am interested to know is, what means are also factored in this 2019 budget to improve the productive sectors of the economy? We have all seen in your statement that there are flaws in the Agriculture Sector, likewise in Tourism due to certain reasons that you have highlighted. But what measures have you to make sure that if such things happen in the end of 2020, hope it will not have those impact on the economy and if you forecast in that direction, definitely I think it will help us to plan because failing to plan means planning to fail.

The other thing that I would also like to know is how are we going to build our dying [SOEs], that is State of Enterprises because the essence of creating these state of enterprises is for them to be paying dividend to Government and also give services to the ordinary citizens but going through the budget, I have only seen 1 or 2 hoping that they are expecting to pay dividend. I understand they are in a critical situation based on past history and the like. But what are we doing so that we bring them out and bring them forward so that we can start saying the positive effect that they can contribute to the economy and also the positive effect that they can contribute to the ordinary citizen

of the Gambia. Definitely you should be thinking in that direction and I think Honourable Minister can help us on that.

The other thing is like the Honourable Minister highlighted yesterday that is the duty wavier at the ports. It is interesting to know that based on the Ministries and departments, how many duty waivers have been issued? Because once you do that, it means you are decreasing revenue in other words. So, how much of that has been done in 2019 and I hope there are measures to make sure that some of the duty wavers at the port will reduce based on reason.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the expenditure, last year's budget we expected to spend 28 billion and this year there is an increase of 2 billion that is 30 billion. What should we ask ourselves is the bulk of the expenditure is going to debt servicing because if you look at the debt service **41%** of this expenditure is going in to it, that is 9 billion. I am also interested to know because if you compare it with that of 2019 and you look at the figure of debt servicing was something like 4 billion but now it is increasing to 9 billion and I think we are talking of restructuring some of our debts and also coming up with some means. So what has led to this? Are we just closing our eyes and say lets pay our debts once and for all. In the layman point of view, I think it is better you help us with that Honourable Minister.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the Ministries' budget, as has been said by my previous colleagues. Looking at the budget part of the Ministries, the bulk of the monies have been allocated to recurrent budget and that is common sense. We cannot afford not to pay the services rendered by our civil servants as we have to keep the state running.

So definitely Honourable Speaker, the recurrent budget is very high but we have to also invest in the development aspect because as a country guided by the National Development Plan we are all singing. I think it is very important you look at the development aspect – we want to be countries like Singapore, United State of America and the like. But we cannot be like those countries if we are not investing in

development because for me personally and others, I want to see my constituency be like Banjul or any other constituency within the greater Banjul area.

Honourable Speaker, if you also look at the combined GLF loans and grants, we are still spending more on recurrent which is 21 billion and then the development is only 13 billion. Going to the sectors' budget, I have this question for the Honourable Minister, what we should ask ourselves is, did the budget reflect the needs and aspirations of the electorates in 2019? How was it spent according to the various committees of the National Assembly? Like the health, how was the 2019 budget on health spent, that will definitely interest every Honourable Member because it is one thing to privatize a department or agency and a Ministry but if they are not spending based on the priority needs of the citizens definitely I think it leaves much to be desired for them to prioritize again. We have to put in measures that if we put in money in a particular Ministry we have to see the positive effects reflecting on our electorates, because that is why we are here. So, Honourable Minister, I think it is important for all the Ministries, departments and agencies to know how much they have spent their 2019 budget otherwise it would not help us in our prioritization.

Coming to the Health Sector, if you look at the National Development Plan, every Ministry has their target indicators. Now coming to the Health Sector, it has its own indicators based on the National Development Plan that they do wish to achieve and I think this budget is aligned to the National Development Plan. Now what we should ask ourselves is how they are doing in those various indicators based on the NDP. And if you ask me regarding Health, I will only tell you that the only positive one they are giving out is on delivery and immunization services but if you look at other indicators, let us look at maternal mortality, you all know it is not a hidden secret it is on the increase and definitely it is not acceptable. So what can we do as a nation to make sure that these things are tackled?

Honourable Speaker, like I said earlier, let us all look at the sectors based on priority and then mentioned their targets according to the National Development Plan, because that is the guiding document, the guiding policy document that we have for that matter.

If we spend not based on priority and whatever, definitely I think we should look at how we allocate resources to each of them. Honourable Speaker, in essence whatever we are doing here regarding the allocation of resources to respective Ministries and departments or whatever, we should base it on the priorities of the National Development Plan. They are highlighted and very well defined there and we have to take them based on that and now henceforth, speaking from the point of view of the Health Committee, what we intend to do is, at the end of every quarter we will collaborate with Finance for them to give us how the expenditure on each budget line of the various ministries, how have they been spending their allocated resources? We then call them on board, discuss with them as to where they are going and in which direction so as to see how best we can address that before waiting until the end of the year only to realise that we are spending too much on travels and whatever. That will definitely help us in oversight functions.

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, this is a National Budget and this is a budget for the whole country and it is not a budget for individual or for the president only. This is our own budget, If it is bad I am affected and somebody is affected. We are all inclusive. So what we should do here is to come up with positive thinking and positive thoughts and ideas to see how best we can make this document one of the best and everybody is inclusive. It is not about pointing fingers at each other in every corner. But I think the way that some of the Honourable Members are addressing some of the issues, I think it is much to be desired, you just cannot point fingers, you say Office of the President no you cannot do that. Office of the President is one thing, it is the office in the country like the National Assembly here. Let us take an example here if we are not well resource to do our oversight, it is not always easy to operate let us look at it in that direction. We have to allocate resources based on the responsibilities we have. If there are any budget line in the National Assembly that does not mean that it is not justifiable, let us scrutinize everything including that of the president likewise others but not just pointing fingers at one thing.

Honourable Speaker, in short, I think that is what I have and I do not want to repeat what others have been saying since yesterday. I think it is the starting point for this new dispensation. We have to thank the Coalition Stakeholders and all of them for coming up with this thought by bringing everybody together to change a government and now in this government everybody is inclusive. You have to contribute your quota and I contribute my quota and we see how best we can develop this country.

Honourable Speaker, I think that is what I have. If I go further I might be emotional or whatever thank you.

HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. When I got my copy of this Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure for 2020, I was concerned but I was more concerned when the Honourable Minister came out to lay the budget before us and concluded by saying that he remained convinced that this budget will be useful in our drive to achieving sustainable microeconomic stability. The government's primary objective of reducing poverty and improving basic service delivery to all is feasible If we will all be committed to strict fiscal discipline. I was concerned because I have very high regard for the Honourable Minister and I ask myself if I am coming from the Private Sector, what kind of financial expert or specialist would come and advise this board that this budget would actually make your company progress and address some of the issues as far as poverty eradication and better service delivery are concerned. But then when we break into committees to have a bilateral with relevant sectors, that is when I realised what kind of constraints the Minister is under in trying to satisfy all these sectors with their huge demand which sometimes are not viable if I may say.

I will take the Minister's advice that if we are not committed to strict fiscal discipline by further supporting him, maybe he cannot say no to some areas but we are in a position where we have a short responsibility and we will help him to make sure that this budget is further taken at the level of the Committee Supply to make sure that it is reflective of our needs as a country today.

Overall if you look at the budget, you will see that the government priorities in as much as I want to say but the need to develop as a country is not prioritised. Of the 30 billion dalasi that we plan to spend, even whereas our revenues are dropping, it is still not a primary balance budget because if you take the interest element from the 9.4 billion dalasi that we have it is not balance still.

So on that note the government plans to spend over 27 billion dalasi on recurrent and only 2.7 billion dalasi on capital therefore, very small development. So, I will start my contribution with the centralize services Honourable Speaker and if you go to **page [71]** on the budget, we have under centralize services 1.1 billion dalasi but I just want my Minister to clarify certain things here for us because we need to unpack this bundle. We have under code 2216104 contingency for the charges, 30 million dalasi, arbitrations and court awards 100 million dalasi, can you please inform this august Assembly which arbitration and court awards are we expecting to pay and what is the difference between that and settlement of confirmed debts. This is another 300 million dalasi. And in the same category, you have subvention to Non-Financial Public Institute or Cooperation. Last time I think this was not clear as we want to see on the budget regarding which particular institutions these are. But here is very**not clear**... I cannot say for sure what AC means or what other codes means. So we would like to know the difference between the settlement of confirmed debts and the arbitration charges. We want to know what this contingency is for and I am sure the Honourable Minister will do justice and will come back and defend these claims but we have to know what we are actually ratifying. So, going from there, we go to our financing gap, I remember 2017 when we came into office, we had to revise our 2018 budget which was financed over about 4.7 billion dalasi, but we have to revise not to bring it down under 1 billion dalasi about 921 million If I remember. All because we want to tighten our belt to realise less borrowing so that we can address our debts as a country. But since then, we have seen our debt portfolio going up and up to a point where for every 100 dalasi that we receive as revenue, we are paying over 41 dalasi on that as debt service alone and as a country now we ask ourselves what will we do with 59 dalasi to

pay our recurrences and develop family? This issue of our debt has to be addressed and we have to stop relying on debts so that we can come out of the woods and begin top progress.

Honourable Minister, you promised on the last budget session that we are going to address the law that they passed on the new vehicle policy to ensure that the policy is implemented, I want to know your perspective if this policy is not implemented and why are we in fact planning to spend another 50 million dalasi next year to buy new vehicles?

Regarding the travel band the Honourable Minister plan this year, although it is cut down from 3, 35 million last year but is down to 216 million. But I remember was it in August, October or this year, I think there was a claimed from his office that we are spending too much on traveling at the tune of about 239 million which he had the belief he needs to put moratorium to make sure that this is cut. So, in that case I will suggest and recommend to the Assembly that we need to bring this number down further as a country since we do not have much money. We have to look at what priorities we have to give and if travelling cannot be without travel allowance it is understandable. But because we have other areas that are of priority and I think we can put the number down to 200 million dalasi to start with that and see how it will go. That should go to every institution or sector so that they will be ready to prioritize as to which travels are needed and which are not needed and that will also help his office to make sure that particular vote is control in our end.

Now we talk a lot about Agriculture, Health and Education as it should be the priority, yes the reason why the Gambia subscribed to this declaration or protocol if you know, like the Maboto Protocol on Agriculture, the Abuja Protocol on Health and the Nairobi Protocol Declaration on Education; it is because it came as a common understanding in African Countries that the only way we can uplift ourselves and meet our commitment to the SDG for example is to come with our own budget to this sectors so that we can eliminate poverty. Now you will see that the Ministry has claimed that there are about 2.4 million dalasi out of 376 million is paid for by the government but the rest is coming

from the donor partners. Now last year the donor partners inclusive of Government GLF spent 3.7 million or budgeted 3.7 million but you tell me what have you gained in these sectors? Which rural player in these sectors have you seen to have made it at an admirable level as far as Agriculture is concerned or as far as Aquaculture or fisheries is concerned nothing? So we cannot depend on donors to up lift us from this level. We have to commit to these issues and that is the same with Health, Education, even though we have seen some increase now here and there especially in the Education it is still far below what it should be.

Having said that, we now come to Defence and Security, I am a member of the committee and I think we had our bilateral with certain institutions or sectors across the board, but whether it is defence and Security, Youths and Sport, they come and claimed that they are even under-resourced or have a very less factor in this budget. More so to do with what they have in their pocket rather than what they will do to contribute and complement the Security Sector Reform that is very much needed. I do not have a problem for people being paid more because I still think that in the Gambia, salaries level are very low but where do we stand as a country? We have to ask ourselves as to whether we can afford it and we also notice a very big gap in the whole coordination of the budget cycle. The gap is this, the Minister of Finance would realize that the budget cycle whatever they want to call it the Ministry of Finance will now give them a ceiling but 9 out of 10 the Ministry will always surpass that ceiling so that they can have a room to defend it and bring it down to a level that they like. But what is more worrying is that, they are more concerned about their allowances than subversion under the law and they are the implementers of this policy. If you look across the board, especially Ministry of Youth and Sport, Defence, there are more money given on allowances than the sub vented institution that sometimes have 5 million, 9 million or even less and in the budget execution they even sometimes have less than half of that. And these are the people who really go under the ground to implement what is agreed at the policy level. So again, I agree with my brother in the Security Sector or the Youth and Sport Sector. There are policy level the Ministers and their experts have to take

care of but these sub vented institutions have to first and foremost get the source to be able to implement their polices.

Again coming back to the Security Sectors, we have seen in certain areas from 0 to 45 thousand increment in certain areas but I just do not understand where this coming from is? The Minister made a point that most of this is to do with the policy from PMO, that has overnight increase certain allowances from 650 dalasi to about 2000 dalasi per day and this was supposed to be implemented this year. But the Minister refused to do that but it was not budgeted for number 1, and number 2 that he is more than happy not to bring out much here. But they have this – just like the Maboto Protocol Declaration, just like the Abuja Protocol, just like the Nairobi Protocol, these are also policies that we have not actually agreed to. We have to ask ourselves this question, do we actually have to give priority to this PMO policy over those policies?

The Honourable Member for Serekunda mentioned yesterday about balance. I understand we can allocate all the right places to make sure that this budget is sound and reflect the true use of the people. But after here they can go and do whatever they want and it is still lawful because the Public Finance Act, section [24] give authority to even increase allocation by 100%.The Honourable Member for Banjul North was even talking about it for even essential services to non-essential services. So since that is a problem the Honourable Member for Serekunda mentioned that Section [151] Subsection [6] of the Constitution is a provision that supersedes any act because it is a constitutional provisions. So, I think the Minister can rely on that for now to make sure balance is control to a degree that is affordable.

Then we go to another institution that I have in heart, when we look at the Ministry of Trade for example they have quite a substantial amount allocated to develop but that is **....not clear....** But for example GIEPE, in the promotion of our trade and to address our trade deficit, we have a trade deficit of about 25 million dalasi but this is an institution which if you look at their subvention, government is not committing to anything like sense of a dollar to actually capacitate that institution to make sure that our trade deficit is addressed in the right manner.

Then you look at something that I mentioned here last year and I believe that when I mentioned this many people did not get it out of context and though maybe I have been very subjective. I refer this to section 155 subsection [3] of the constitution, where it says that; " *No loan shall be raised by the government on behalf of itself or any other person or authority other than to buy for under the authority of an act of the National Assembly*". So last year September when I saw a letter from the Office of the President, it was actually September the 13th sent by one Yankuba Saidy to instruct Minister of works that a contract is awarded to an individual company to rehabilitate Banjul. I asked myself who is this gentle man? Who has the authority over GPPA which is enacted by this Parliament to conduct the same duty. We as the National Assembly do not have the expertise nor does any Ministry or Office of the President have the expertise to conduct good procurement procedure over anybody, to make sure there is value for money and to make sure there is transparency and accountability. So, when I saw that I got concerned and I raise it here. But I think my views were taken as subjective. Then I saw a Financial Contract Agreement which again is a violation of this particular provision that I read before and also violation of Section [36H] of 2014. So, I said to myself I need to engage somebody to make sure that these laws are respected before it comes to us to pass in this budget. I have said this and I had an engagement with the Minister who confirmed that he has even stopped to address it better so that we all look at it together and address it and then when it comes here we pass it.

So my point on that is, if we have institution like for example GTB Board that comes to us and has an issue comparable to GPPA and we take them to tax. Why should I not address this one too? Then what moral ground do I not have to actually challenge them out for not fulfilling the GPPA Act. So, here I am, I want to ask the Honourable Minister, this Banjul rehabilitation should be done 10 years ago but since it is done now I support it. But I want it to be done by law. So is the procurement compliant to GPP? And if it is, I want us not to punish them with the GPPA Certification. Regarding this loan agreement between the contractor and the government, is it a loan? And if it is a loan, I want the Honourable Minister to tell us if this was approved by the National Assembly.

If not why? That is basically all I wanted to say for now because I think the rest of the issues have now been addressed since yesterday. But these are areas that I have a concern about. I believe that if any unlawful act comes before this National Assembly without notice, we can either put the person or the Minister in trouble by being unaccountable to the National Assembly which we do not think is the case. But we want him to enlighten us about some of the lapses about this Banjul Project because I have been to so many capital cities in the world but the last one I visited wasunclear.... just hope Banjul is like...unclear...and by making sure that there I value for money. I believe the people of Banjul might get more than maybe what is specified in the contract. This is why the GPPA would have done that justice not only for the amount of money or who get the contract but also about making sure that what is agreed upon is what is delivered.

So on that note Madam Speaker, I rest my case here until we get into committee room.

HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Madam I can remember in 2017 when this new government came to power and when we returned to this parliament, the then Minister of Finance was here for us to reduce the allocated budget for the Office of the President and we did that. Yesterday some people talked about the advisers at the office of the president which I will also talk about. When you look at the allocation on the Office of the President, you can see two advisers in 2019, the two of them were to give or – there was an amount which is allocated to them, that is 5 hundred thousand, but this year in 2020, it has increased to 1 million dalasi. I do not know where did they get that or how did they come up with that figure? I think to get an adviser is not a problem but then it is always important to get the adviser whom you know he has the knowledge as to what he will advise you on. But you cannot pay tax payers money to somebody whom you know does not have a background knowledge of what he should advise, that one is not fair.

I want the Honourable Minister to help us explain the reason why that amount from 6 hundred million is increased to 7 hundred to 7 million at the Office of the President and

yet they are saying that there is no money. They are increasing the amount of allocation for the Office of the President.

The National Assembly Madam Speaker, last year in December when you talked about the staff of the National Assembly, I think you can go throughout the Gambia it is only the National Assembly where you will come and see staff working from 8am up the following Morning 4am and we talked about 100% increment which we all agreed here still the year is almost ended but even 25 bututs was not added – you see this year or next year's budget there is nothing like such and I do not know why. I want an explanation.

The other issue I wanted to talk about is just to appeal from my colleagues to make sure that we cut the allocation of the Office of the President and we cut the allocation for the Ministry of Defence, Minister of Interior and the Decentralize Services. We are the coordinator for Youth and Sport and maybe we will also add something for our own staff here thank you very much.

HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Where we are now as National Assembly Members? I can remember when we were cutting our budget on celebrations and all those things. But to me, I do not think it is mindful. We were saying no to celebrations with the thinking that there are relevant things that need to be prioritized. Anytime I talk, I always talk about prioritising, planning, strategizing and you name them and we all know those that we are supposed to prioritize, there is no need for me to stand and talk about it because everybody has talked about it and I do not want to repeat myself. So, I think the issues of prioritization is very crucial. You go to the hospital there are no good laboratories sometimes you go to the hospital even to see the staff at the lab is a problem. And still you are doing what we are doing since I think I was not born for 52 years now. What is the essence now? I want to know where we are heading to and is it that we are fooling ourselves? We all know what we should do. We are all here we all know what we should do and we all know what is the essence of budget in our companies. We have our fish-money and all those things you name them. So, if you misbehave or you give

me a Fish-money then I take it and then contribute it on "Ousoso", do you think people will eat? They will not eat and these are things we really need to talk about. This budget allocation is just like the budget that we are eating in our company or in our home, we all know that. If I know that I am going to take a loan and if I take loan I am going to buy a car and then I take this loan and people invite me to naming ceremonies you name them and I put the money into that, When default comes, how can I pay? I would not be able to pay. I think this is why we should really sit and think thoroughly as to how we will manage the little that we have. You know in the Gambia, you are saying that Gambia is a small country and we do not have money, we do, maybe we are not strategizing. We are just using it as we like. So now it is high time for us the National Assembly to do away with our political bills, our partisan bills and then we come over and see what we can do as far as the Gambian and if I say the Gambian, those who are in the Nianijas as my Honourable colleagues just said and those people who are in the Wulis we all know that those people are vulnerable. Do they know anything about the budget? We are not even training them to know anything about this budget and then at the end, you will say good is good just keep on praying. We are praying and you are not doing the right things, how can you say that God Is good and what we need we will get it.

Now from there Madam Speaker, I will talk about the subvention. The subvention that we are talking, what is it now that they are saying about this amount that they have put into the Ministry of Women and Children? That is true! But how? What is the breakdown? Is there anything for people with disability? Is there anything for Social Services? I think the NGO Affairs Agency, all the NGO's are paying every year. They have subscription every year but where is that amount going to? Honourable Speaker I would like the Honourable Minister to tell me where is that amount going to because we know that the NGOs are paying the government but in return what is the government doing for the NGOs? They are paying every year including the Organization of People with Disability. Everybody is paying the government, where is that amount going to and to what benefit because if you look at people with disability progressing, it is because of

the NGOs. It is true the government has created a conducive environment and we thank them for that. But what about the rest? Go to the Department of Social Welfare, what is there? Some of them are saying that they are catering for people with disabilities but only the physically challenge and even that is not enough. There is no enough wheelchairs for them, there is no....**unclear**...the machine they are using are getting old and they are donated by some philanthropist in the 80s and now that building is about to collapse. Some of them just decided to abandon it because anything can happen.

And we have been talking about it since time memorial up to the time when we are in this National Assembly we were talking about it. That being the case I think the**unclear**...of a decentralized service. I think we really need to see what we can do. Sometimes people will travel and they know that when they come they should do this but they ignore and put all the files in the cabinet to gather dust. I think these are the issues that we really need to think and talk about as we all know the amount that are put in place and we all went through the budget but when we come tomorrow to the committee stage I think we should really sit and think about it. This is not witch hunting or to do something that other people would not like but what will be good for the country. We all travel and we all know what is happening in the other countries so why can we not do it in our country. I think we are fooling ourselves and then sorry for saying this but we will all go to our graveyard and when we go Allah will ask us.

Thank you very much.

HON. FODAY GASSAMA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor.

Madam Speaker, the value of the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of the Gambia has established a sovereign state for the people of the Gambia.

Section 152: Request the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs to lay before the National Assembly Estimate Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of the Gambia at least 30 days before the end of each financial year. This is a constitutional requirement,

the same 1997 constitution according to section 101: *also request this august Assembly to ratify any bill lay before this august Assembly by the Executive.*

Madam Speaker, if you look at the Annual Estimate Appropriation Bill, like the youth sector the amount that is allocated for the youth sector is 140 million. Madam Speaker this is not promising because the youths are the backbone of this country in terms of development. If you look at the population they are 65% out of the total population of the country so they are very important institution though all the institutions are important but the youth should be the key in terms of development.

Madam Speaker, if there is going to be any adjustment, the youth sector should really be the primary objective. This august Assembly have all the powers to securitize this budget carefully as it is our responsibility. Let us be constitutional and more concern but not unconstitutional. We have to be constitutionally inclined which is the priority of this house to deliver. It is important that we need to know our importance and value. We have all the powers to ratify the bills much more of the land. We are the Law Makers but we are not Policy Makers but we have the power to scrutinize the budget and give consideration at the end of the day. So, we really have a very important role to play.

Another point that I want to talk about is the Ministry of Agriculture. If you look at the amount budgeted for that is the D394 million even that is small considering that Agriculture is the backbone of the economy. I want to say that we are empowering Agriculture and Youth but for Agriculture if we are saying that we are empowering it, we have to implement it not only by mere words. We have to be creative because the creativity is important. Try to get it and the ability to invent and develop new and original ideas. You have to be creative so it is important. You cannot just say I am empowering you have to deliver that is the most important part of it that is why the whole world is going. If you go to China and compare it to the Gambia you will see a big difference. China is going, this SDG Sustainable Development Goal is important we have to achieve that of which Agriculture is part of. Let us just try to be serious of what we are doing it is really important. This is not promising and I think if there is need for adjustment we need to adjust areas like Agriculture, Youth and Health. These are very

important sectors though all the sectors are important but these are key in terms of development it is important. Let us speak the truth nothing but the truth. We now move forward as a nation it is important.

Madam Speaker, I have another point before I take my seat. I have a point here where the Minister of Finance will shed light on that. That is the GDP of the economy. If you look at the 2018 it was 6.5 now it goes down to 4.0 something like that it is seriously going down. So I think the Minister will be in a good position to shed light on that because I think if you see anything there must be a factor responsible for it.

Madam Speaker, I just want to advise my colleagues as parliamentarians that we have a very important role to play.

I) First role is to monitor the government system

II) To ratify the bills

III) To give consideration and debate the process

That is the last stage so we have a very important role to play so as I rightly said before let us have the concept that we have to be constitutionally inclined that is important because Gambia is bigger than any of us here. We should see Gambia first before anything. I hope we will deliver what is really expected from us.

Madam Speaker, on that note thank you very much.

HON. BAKARY NJIE [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I will first start my interventions on page 5. Madam Speaker, I think there is a serious mistake there. Page 5 Expenditure Budget Funding Overview Dalasi ('000). I think if that is the case we will be talking about trillions and I do not think that is the case. I think that ('000) should be out Honourable Minister.

After having said that Madam Speaker, I believe that the Minister and his experts did very well, they try their level best to come up with a budget for us meaning they did their work and it is our turn now to do our job. Honourable Minister from the budget

estimate you present, we can see that on page 1 Net surplus/Deficit is 00% meaning there is funding for every item in the budget but Honourable Minister, I believe debt restructuring is a non-payment that needs to be structured. I do not think that should be revenue.

We have debt restructuring of 2 billion and this 2 billion I do not think it is a revenue. I do not know why it is put there for it to be considered as a revenue. Honourable Minister about 42 to 45% of the budget, I want to believe it is about grants we are expecting if you look at the total grant we are expecting. I think it is about 45 to 42%. And I want to know if this budget we are expecting/grant we are expecting how sure are you that we will get this grant which form a huge part of our budget because you told us that in 2018 the budget support you were expecting you could not get it in 2018. But in 2019, before we approve this budget we want to know whether you are really sure that we are going to get this grants that we are expecting Honourable Minister?

Madam Speaker, the debt interest also has increased from 2 to 7 Billion to 4 billion and if you look at this, it is very serious because we know that debt service create only problem for economies and the type of economy we have, this estimate that is presented to us, we have a deficit of 5.5 Billion and that means we are going to look for or borrow 5.5 Billion to actually accommodate for the total standing of 30 billion that is projecting and which should be spent in 2020.

If you look at this Honourable Minister, I think this project is not realistic. We want to build our economy, we do not want to do anything that will bring hardship into this country. I know your ceiling when they come to....bilateral but I think by tomorrow we will also put a ceiling for you so that for the 2.2 Billion, I will appeal to my colleagues for us to have a ceiling for the minister so that the budget deficit will not be more than 2 Billion because to me we cannot afford to spend 5.5billion deficit after looking at the main services that we are doing. If we do that next year what are you going to do? Are you really thinking about how we can rebuild our economy and we have to start somewhere. We have to tell the Gambians the realities on the ground and when the

whole of the Gambia knows about it and we start from somewhere even if it is going to be hard for us to build our economy but we cannot just close our eyes and come with figures yes! Budget is about figures but not only figures we are expecting the budget to make impact on the lives of our people and the way we are moving is not going to make any meaningful impact instead it will increase hardship on our people which I do not think we can allow.

We all know where we are coming from and if you look at the domestic harmonization Honourable Minister that is from -3.803 to -2.85 which is also on the increase. When I look at the budget funnily for me what we were crying for and complaining about is furniture and fitting that is coming every year and most of them have been scrapped but it means everything is being hidden under allowances which is on the increase. Honourable Minister, I think tomorrow we are going to look at it together to close our eyes where actually it is necessary we do add to release this because as a budget deficit of 5.5 billion, we cannot be blindly increasing our own allowances as if we do not care.

Madam Speaker, going to page 48 that is the Ministry of Interior shortly before we start the budget session, I was going around in my constituency-I called it a constituency agreed tour and to my surprise the Kanifing where the Police Headquarters are Stationed in Bundung and in this divisional headquarter there are 19 police station under them and none of them have vehicles. They have a constraint of vehicles that is to patrol at night to secure us while we are sleeping but I was amazed when they told me that they did not have a single vehicle to patrol. In fact that fire incident that happened in Kanifing I was told that they have to go and look for a private vehicle to mobilize their men to go and secure those areas.

So, if for the Office of the President we are allocating 2.5 million for vehicles, I do not know. I think the former President left a lot of vehicles at State House. I do not know why we need to buy more vehicles then. If you look at their budget under administration they have vehicles. Sometimes they just want to change their vehicles but all men on the ground like Law Enforcement and Crime Prevention Agencies, there

are no vehicles, zero allocation for them so, what impact is this going to make for the people in Bundung or in that administration? I think we are going to look into all these things. We...unclear...them the vehicles they want to purchase. We bring into these items and I was also told that for each prisoner, only D5 is allocated for them for their feeding for a day I was told by the police commissioner and I was shocked when I look at their food and food services and I saw their 26.6 million. I wonder whether the amount that is going to them is actually not going as expected or this food and food services have something else Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I think these are things we should look at to make sure the budget reflects and make an impact on the tax payers who are paying taxes to make sure that their lives are changed. Also Honourable Minister we want to know this 2 billion of that restructuring and which lying agreement was ratified here that has been restructured so that we know that these are the debts that has been restructured.

Honourable Minister regarding tax, the way our country is and we all know that we are highly dependent on tax but I think we have to be very careful the way we tax and I think there is more of tax leakage that we should be concentrating on than to be levying more tax on our people which will make them poorer by the year because we all know that when the government concentrates on domestic tax or domestic borrowing this increases tax rate and instead of banks loaning their money to people obviously they would just fold their hands and put their monies in treasury bills.

And Honourable Minister if you look at it somebody mentioned that the World Bank has a treasure of domestic borrowing which is 1% and our domestic borrowing has grown up which is more than 1% and as a serious government if you do not have serious financial discipline, I do not think donors and those giving us budget support will take us seriously. We have taken ourselves seriously first so that other people can take us seriously. We have to have a serious financial discipline because this is the only way we can make a headway.

Somebody mentioned Banjul Project and in the budget we saw Greater Banjul Area Road Project. Honourable Minister we will be glad if you can tell us whether this Greater Banjul Road Project is part of the Banjul Project because we saw 376.5 million that is allocated for you and I do not think this august Assembly will be able to allow something in the project that we do not even know about or even see the design of it. I do not think we will approve Government tax payers money who entrusted us to make sure that we do a proper oversight to enable and allow taxes to be used on project that we do not even know how it came about. We do know even know what is really involved. So please make it clear for us whether this Banjul Project part of the Greater Banjul Area Road Project.

And also the OIC Project which is 12 million. By this OIC Project Honourable Minister, are they projects that have already been approved because I also want to know whether they were brought here for ratification and whether in this year we will be able to get them?

Honourable Minister, if you go to page 111, this one I think my colleagues have done with that let me jump that. If you go the National Assembly Madam Speaker, I have seen 60 million for vehicles and we know that we requested for vehicles. For us to really do proper oversight Madam Speaker, I think our colleagues whose vehicles have been completely destroyed are having a very big problem in trying to come and go to work/do their work as expected. They are living in a nightmare to come to work and go home and even to reach out to their constituencies. This people are without a vehicle and we were expecting the National Assembly Authority to look into their plight to make sure that they are mobile. I mean we have seen in other departments where junior directors are having vehicles and a whole Honourable Member with a whole constituency have no vehicle and we think that is normal. I think their conditions need to be looked at. I think they deserved to be mobile so that they can also do their work properly. But it seemed that we are all closing our eyes on them and in fact just last year the clerk of the National Assembly got a new vehicle and in fact he was having another vehicle but a new vehicle was given to them as a matter of necessity and this

Honourable Members within us their vehicles have completely destroyed and nobody seems to say anything about it and we all kept quite. We do not even want to know how they go and come/how they are able to reach out to their people as expected from them.

Madam Speaker, I think we need to try and look something for them so that they can also be mobile.

Madam Speaker, the rest I believe have been done with my colleagues, therefore, for that being the case I would also like to stop here till tomorrow and I would like to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity thank you once again.

HON. FODAY NM DRAMMEH [TUMANA]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. Madam Speaker, I am happy that I live to witness this day to take part in this debate.

The total revenue of this country last year was 25.2 billion Dalasi and this year it has dropped to 24.4 billion Dalasi the expenditure and the net lending of last year was 28.8 billion Dalasis and this year there is an increment to 30 billion Dalasi. So we are having a revenue of 24.4 billion but we want to spend up to 30 billion and that means we are not cutting our coat according to our cloth.

Madam Speaker, the debt payment in this year's budget last year was 2.7 billion and that also increases to 4.6 billion. I believe Honourable Minister as an expert in his job, I think he knows what are some of the implications of this debt interest payment. It has lot of implications on the economy of the country.

Madam Speaker, last year the domestic borrowing was at 3.5 billion and the foreign borrowing was 1.2 billion but this year it has been increased to 5.5 billion and the foreign borrowing has also increase to 3.9 billion and if you compare the domestic borrowing of this year/2020 and the foreign borrowing, it is 5 times more than that of last year. I think we have to look into this and consider that the Gambia is a developing country and we need to look at this as a country.

From there Madam Speaker, I have a question to the Minister and the question will be looking at the deficit. Can you just explain to this Honourable House as to where is the source of this deficit? If we are to pay, where is it going? I think that has to be explained. And again as a parliament, I think we are also demanding for 2020. We want the quarterly budget report so that we will monitor what is happening in terms of allocation, disbursement and how much money has been spent that will be very good so that we will monitor it as a parliament.

Madam Speaker, I think yesterday the Honourable Member for Banjul North mentioned about the 2020 estimate relating to the allocation entities/sectors, honestly this is devastating and is worrisome. I believe as a country, we are not serious in a sense because how much are we allocating to the Ministry of Agriculture? In fact last year it dropped. It has dropped and if we are saying that, we are contributing let say 400,300,500 million and that is a huge amount of money compared with other countries. But we want to cut our coat according to our size but to me it does not make sense giving 3, 94 million Dalasis to Ministry of Agriculture. What are they going to do with that money?

And again we are requesting from the Honourable Minister to give us the breakdown of the centralized services because looking at the amount of money that is going into centralized services and we see that centralized service is far more important than the Ministry of Agriculture so we want a breakdown of that centralized services.

Regarding the President's visit to the provinces, I have gone through the budget and I did not see it anywhere. I want you to tell us whether there will be no further visit or whether it is hidden somewhere. We want to know the amount if it is there? Last year's budget as the Honourable Member for Jimara said, we all agreed that the allowances of the National Assembly staff need to be paid but I think the Minister just ignored it and do not want to implement that. We want him to look into that.

Honourable Minister, coming into the ministries, starting with the Ministry of Health, we have a problem as a country and we need to fix it and nobody can fix our problem

except ourselves and we want to start with the president this year by making sure that the needs of our people are solved because the whole country starting from URR, CRR, North Bank the Fonis and kiangs everybody is here. Whatever decision we take here means we are taking the decision on behalf of everybody so we want to make the records straight.

First of all looking at the budget allocated to the Ministry of Health, to me it is small in the sense that, starting with my constituency Honourable Minister, I am telling you access to health centers in my constituency is a problem and is still a problem. It has never been addressed and I am seeing that this government do not want to address it. We want the money that is allocated to the Ministry of Health to be increased at least so that issues of access to Health can be addressed and in fact I have been saying this here access to Health is not a privilege but a right. We always want to demand for it please can you put this into a consideration? A pregnant woman coming all the way from Sarreh Alpha, Bwiam, Dueba-Sillah, Dampha Kunda, you either go to Fatoto Health Centre or you go to Basse.

From my own village 28 kilometers away, pregnant women are very unpredictable human beings, we need to give them their due as they have been suffering. We have to put them into consideration. This budget is not for ourselves but the people. These monies are not meant to enrich ourselves but to make sure that the basic human needs can be satisfied. We have the budget why are we putting into areas that are not necessary, increasing the allowances of ministers from D80,000 to D180,000 what for are they there to enrich themselves or are they there to work for the country?

Maternal and Child Health Delivery; in my constituency, it is a problem and let me take you through the 2013 to 2016 G-Boss Report in the Gambia Maternal and Mortality Rate was estimated at 700 and 6 death for every 1000 live birth in 2016, is this not a cause for concern to a country? Why should we be dying like flies when we have the money to put it into this sector?

The 2013 Population and Housing Census estimated 35 out of every 1000 children born alive will not live to celebrate their first birthday. Is this not a cause for concern as a citizen from this country and as a decision maker? Please Honourable Members, can we look into this issue? Everybody cannot come all the way from Upper River Region and come to attend some of these issues. And to my knowledge we have only one doctor in the whole of Upper River Region with a population of 200, 000 people. Is that fair enough? While every 63 out of every 1000 will live to celebrate their 5th birthday and again is this not a cause for concern? Are we not seeing Health as a right? I think we just see it as a privilege. We all have equal rights when it comes to the equitable distribution of state resources.

Reducing maternal and child mortality Madam Speaker is one of the priorities of this country. The International Community have indicated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda that is improving the wellbeing of mothers, infants and children is also an important public health goal for the Gambia. One of the outcome of the NDP-National Development Plan 2018, 2021. It is to strengthen quality service delivery for the reduction of maternal new born, infant, child, adolescence, morbidity and mortality and to improve the health of adolescence and youths. If this is what is in our National Development Plan, why are you not paying attention to it?

Do you know that HIV and AIDS in this country is on the increase and related diseases like Sexually Transmitted Disease which is badly affecting the young people in this country? Do we want to leave everything in the hand of **...unclear...** what about if they do not intervene? What are we going to do as a country? This is a cause for concern because if I am not affected today, tomorrow I might be affected. If I am not affected as an individual my brother might be affected or my neighbor.

Coming to Agriculture Madam Speaker, we all say that Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of this country. I said this to the President's Address to the Nation when I was trying to call for the Minister to look into the issue. The GDP of Agriculture at some point was contributing 33.3% to our economy. It dropped from 33.3% to 25% from 25% to 22% at that point. I told the Minister that come next time you are going to tell

us that it also drops from 22% to 18% and this is what we are in today. Agriculture is contributing 18% to our GDP. We are taking the sum of our budget and put it into the security that is Defense and Interior. We think Defense and Interior are more important than Agriculture. Why are we putting that huge amount of money into Defense and Interior because we want security. Do you not know that food and security is one of the biggest challenge that this country can ever face. Food and Security increases crime rate. When people are hungry they are capable of doing anything just to survive and this is what is happening. This is the reality on the ground. Imagine as a youth I go without even a D5 in my pocket, what do you expect me to do? And this is one of the areas that employed 70% of our youth or the entire population. Are we putting this sector into consideration? What do we want to do as a country now? We all knew that extension farmer ratio in this country is so terrible as every 200,000 farmers they are given one extension worker. Is that realistic that is not. I was with the thinking that this budget is going to address this and you want the Agriculture to move, How can Agriculture move when all what they need is not given to them. Before, farmers were producing, there is this mixed farming centers they were 24/7 operational and farmers were going there having some of these things like farming implements, small farming implement, the public services were there. What is happening today? I as a farmer if you come to me as an extension worker, I do not even believe in you because I see you once in a blue moon. Do you think with anything that you come with am going to even listen to you I will not.

What about the farming implements when the people of CRR are going into Senegal the southern part of Senegal that is Cassamance to go and pay for tractors to come and plough their farms. Is that fair? These should have been captured in the budget.

I said it regarding the mixed farming centers, are we not committed as a country to look into the conditions of the mixed farming centers. How many mixed farming centers are lying down there in my own constituency? There is no single mix farming center from here up to Basse town or you go to Kantora. The one in Kantora is now been occupied by the military. What are we doing to most of that issues? Still this budget

have to address this and it is not addressing it. So I am urging all National Assembly Members to look into these issues if we want Agriculture to move. Then we have to give them what they need.

Access roads is one of the biggest issue in this country. If you are sitting down in the Kombos here you think all what is happening in the Kombos is the same thing that is happening in the Upper River Region, Honourable minister. I want you to go and make a tour of the whole country and see the conditions in which we are living. We are dying and suffering and we are part and parcel of this country nobody can take us out of this country and we are suffering if you go down there you will think that government is not putting this into consideration especially access roads to our rice fields. We want Agriculture to produce but we do not want to give them the money how are they going to produce with their weakness?

Markets produce and we are going to give them money to produce then at the end of the day, where are those people going to sell their produce? It hurts me. Sometimes when I go to Upper River Region especially Basse town my chest sometimes is full of anger but there is nothing I can do about it. When I see my people spreading their mats and selling their goods and they come and kick them out because they leave all the way from the Tumana constituency to come to Basse and there is no space for them. Are we not thinking in that direction? The women are suffering as the Honourable Member for Sandu said it here yesterday. 50% of all vegetables produced by the people of Upper River Region are produced by my constituency. Why we are not treated fairly?

We should be given market so that we can sell our produce and people can come all the way from the Kombos and buy directly from the producers. This will prevent the involvement of middle men because when they are involved the money that we gain from our own produce is very small and is not even enough to take us anywhere. Are we not looking into that direction Honourable Minister?

And again the most important thing is value addition. As you go out there how much in terms of quantity of watermelons are lying down there in the streets because of lack of storage facilities. What are we doing about that Honourable Members? We are not adding any value to it. We should be having some of this kind of factories that we are adding value to our watermelons that we are producing so that the farmers can produce more. This is going to serve as an income for them and they are going to pay taxes to the government. Our revenue base is going to be raised but are we going that way?

I think I am telling every National Assembly Member in this Chambers especially for those that are coming from the provinces to make sure that farmers are respected in this country. We are not adding any value to their produce. What about the mangoes that they are producing now? In fact because people know that there is no value in mangoes and cashew, they are cutting it and producing charcoal. This also have a negative impact in our forest. We are expecting people to be planting trees but instead they are cutting them. We have what to produce but how are we going to produce them Honourable Minister? I want you to think in that direction. Farmers are suffering so we need to help them.

In the area of youths Madam Speaker, looking at this budget you will know that there is small amount of money for this government to have any policy and programs on youths. We took the sum of the population as youth if I do not speak up here if I die today I will go to hell looking at the amount of money that is allocated for the Minister of Youth and Sport. Is this fair? Let me tell you if we want our youths to be responsible and be patriotic citizens, their needs and concerns need to be reflected in this budget but it did not happen. What is happening just tell us where the problem lies? So that we just go if there is need we just pick it and throw it somewhere.

The youth of this country are suffering as the crime rate in this country is increasing every day and the people involved in it are the youths. If we want to downsize the Ministry of Interior which is responsible for the internal affairs of this country, let us create employment opportunities for our youths. If we create employment opportunities

for our youths then the crime rate in this country will be a thing of a past. But this is not happening because this budget is not reflecting the concerns and needs of the youths.

And again I challenge the Ministry of Youths and Sport to come up with clear programme and policies so that the problem of the youths will be addressed in this country once and for all. Are we thinking of the number of youths in the Western World who are already victims of deportation. The crime rate of this country is already high, jobs are very limited and if they come out they need to feed their families, feed themselves, shelter and their medication. If there is no job do you expect me to be living in peace in my house when these people are struggling every day on the street.

Honourable Minister, let us be honest with ourselves. We look into some of these issues and make sure that we address these issues otherwise this country will not go anywhere. If you employ 1000 youths you make sure that they are given the right salaries or incentive or allowances because when they receive salaries they are going to pay to government coffers in the form of taxes. Those taxes will be collected by the government and put into some of the issues that we are talking about today.

Madam Speaker, on Education, the Honourable Member from Kiang East is here he is the head of the Education Select Committee and last month I sent him a video in my constituency where you see their children having their classes under trees in Lower Basic School. We have an engagement with 120 **...unclear...** there are no classes for them. They have to sit under mango trees in an open place. At this point in the country, if you go to Upper River Region you cannot open your eyes because the wind is blowing everywhere. Are we treating these people equally? Where is the equitable distribution of our state resources? Where is it going to? Furniture and fittings yes! But this is not happening in our Primary Schools. Are we not looking at it in this direction? Gambia did not only stop in the Greater Banjul Area. You have to go beyond provinces starting from Brikama up to the last village in Koina. So, we have to look into that direction. If you go to Banjul here you see student sitting under mangoes having their lectures that very day that issue will be addressed.

Where is the equitable distribution of our state resources? Where is it going to? Furniture and Fittings, yes but this is not happening in our Primary Schools. Are we not looking into this dimension? Gambia did not only stop at the greater Banjul area we have to go beyond. Provinces start from Brikama up to the last village in Koina, so we have to look into that dimension. If you go to Banjul here and you see students sitting under a mango trees having their lectures, that very day that issue will be addressed. So, if you are from the URR that should not be addressed? Okay, it is very interesting. You go to our tertiary institutions, go to the College, when I was going to college we struggle to have a chair to sit in a class. You go to university right now, the same thing is happening. Last semester I had my examination under a mango tree, is that fair? Even to have a projector to conduct your class is an issue so the country is moving? The country is moving? We are moving in an anti-clockwise direction instead of clockwise.

Honourable Speaker my last point, I am sorry for taking the time of the Assembly but this is what we are here for. Access to potable drinking water Honourable Speaker, when we came into this Parliament in 2017, I have gone through the budgets but I do not think there would be any potion in the budget where he will tell you that you know the government of the day have dug any borehole for the people in this country and it is there constitutional right. Section 216 Subsection 4, with your permission Honourable Speaker let me read "The state shall endeavour to facilitate equal access to clean and safe water, adequate health and medical services, habitable shelter, sufficient food security to all persons" so this has a relation with this access to potable drinking water.

Honourable Speaker, I wish I could invite you into my constituency. As I am to talking you, see the way and manner women of my constituency are suffering, the type of water they are drinking. Sometimes when I think about this I feel goose bumps. Honourable Speaker, this is unacceptable. The change of regime does not only stop at good governance. Honourable Speaker, I think we should look into this issue but Honourable Members I am challenging you. This is our role and responsibility to make

sure that the clean drinking water is provided to each and every individual in this country. Our people are drinking from open wells, we do not even know whether they are contaminated. Are we not looking into these issues? You go around the Greater Banjul area up till now people are forming queues just to fetch water. I was told one Honourable Member here wanted to take a bath, he had to go to another Honourable Member's House by 4:00a.m. just to fetch water to take a bath. Are we not looking into this dimension, Honourable Speaker?

Honourable Speaker, we are not just here to speak just for the sake of speaking but we are seeing what is happening so that is what we want to translate into this Parliament so that those that are responsible will know or feel what we are feeling or know what we know. Our people are suffering, people coming all the way from Wuli Foday Kunda, Musa Kunda, Kanape, Baja Kunda, Tintinto, *...[unclear]...* they are suffering. Honourable Speaker, please can we look into this? On that note, thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable. Honourable Members, considering the fact that we started a little bit late, I think we started after 11, I am suggesting that we complete the interventions, we continue and go for lunch break. I suppose the coffee break we had yesterday was after 1 so may I suggest we go around 3?

The questions are not very long we can finish it within two hours. I am sure but I cannot tell how long. It is not within my purview, I can only give you the floor that is all I can do. Yes, let us see how it goes. Then okay, very well, Honourable Member for Brikama South.

HONOURABLE LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, do not worry, my intervention is going to be shorter. Anyway Honourable Speaker, you have some National Assembly Members that are very good in mind reading and if you happen to come last you are left with no option but I think I will use my political dimension to create an escape route and say something.

HON. SPEAKER: Let me interrupt you, we also have to appreciate that somebody has to be last.

HONOURABLE LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you on a more serious note, Honourable Speaker mine is going to be only a few concerns for clarification by the Honourable Minister. If you look at the 2020 budget, the expected revenue stands at D24.4 billion and as a government we intend to spend D30 billion thereby creating a budget deficit of D5.5 billion. Again, we also intend to spend D4.6 billion on debt service only on interest. Honourable Speaker, I just want that Honourable Minister to explain certain areas like last year the GLF component of our budget 2019, GRA is expected to collect D11.8 billion. I just enquire whether actually that has been attained. If you look at the itemized commitment and expenditure report of warrant holders this was given to us during our Committee engagement. If you come to the budget balance we still have some significant and this was printed as 26 November, 2019 so we have significant amount of some budget balances in certain areas.

Nonetheless, if you look at 2020 the GRA is expected to collect 13 billion 600 million and if you compare this to 2019 there is a surplus of 1.7 billion. Honourable Minister, how do we intend to achieve this? Is it going to be by issue of increasing tax, Infact do we have the potential revenue capacity to collect this amount of money? Anyway I need an explanation.

Honourable Speaker, in 2019 it was D25. 2 billion that had been approved. I just also want to enquire how much is attained from this. What is the actual as at November 2019. Nonetheless, if you look at the Honourable Minister's report it is emphatically clear that the anticipated budget support was not realized thereby closing of the net domestic target of 1% was not met and here if you look at it also this 2020, the government intends to spend 4.05% on net domestic borrowing. I think this is just an

exorbitant amount and if you look at that you will understand that the debt financing that is D5.5 billion is primarily concentrating on domestic and external borrowing but domestic stands at 4.05% which I am very much concerned about because if you look at that level what is government going to do? I understand that we are going to be selling treasury bills and if you look at the private sector the commercial banks need to be private sector driven so if the commercial banks are sitting they only go and put in their money at the end of 6 months or 1 year they get there high interest without even sweating so they felt very much comfortable. If the private sector come to them to get even a simple loan there are lot of conditions and again Honourable Minister I understand very well the interest rate is also going to be adjusted that might not be conducive for the private sector, so this issue of domestic borrowing is a major concern are we trying to go back to the olden days? This I my problem.

Also Honourable Speaker, by virtue of our 2019 experience which you make categorically clear, the budget support and the project grants this year is D8.1 billion and the budget support is D2.8 billion. In a scenario, in you do not receive these things, do we have any other alternatives? How are we going to implement our 2020 budget? So these are few issues that I am very much concerned about.

Honourable Speaker, I do not want to go into the allocation per Ministerial sector but for Agriculture that has been spoken by almost every National Assembly Member that spoke before me. But I went through the budget to look at allocations I do not know what is your chart of account but there is no item call budget in agricultural implements, there are agricultural inputs but if you look at the allocation I cannot even believe so I am even trying to look at it where this agricultural implements are in the chart of account because I cannot see it in the budget.

Secondly, if you go to centralized services, page 71, you have input subsidy that stands at D1.5 million, is that the subsidy for the fertilizers? I need a clarification because it is nowhere in the Agricultural budget but in the centralized services there is input subsidy

that stands at D150 million. I do not know whether that is the subsidy for the fertilizers. Also Honourable Speaker, as I promised that I did not intend to stay but you have a look at it the expenditure aspects why are we always interested in spending when we do not have that revenue capacity. You look at part 1 in the workforce budget from the Office of the President and all the line Ministries there is lot of significant adjustments specifically in the President's Office. People spoke about this thing, the social advisers to the President. I want to believe that we have a lot of advisers for the President. All these Ministers are advisers of the President in terms of policy of their sector but 4 special advisers are increasing to 6. What actually are they even telling the President when we are always in a stateless state? You can imagine 2 additional advisers I do not know whether this is a mistake there salary emolument up to D1.5 million. I do not know maybe this is a typographical error but if you look at it you will see it there. So for me I am even thinking of downsizing the number of unnecessary advisers we cannot be concentrating on spending right now. Honourable Minister, as you are the expert in the area of advice when we come to the budget, the income and financial adviser to the head of state, I do not know actually whether they are even taking your advice. I can see you are working on a very uncondusive environment honestly it is not easy. No, he understands these things and if you look at what is reflective in the budget, is very difficult. I am not comfortable with that honestly.

Finally Honourable Minister, if you go to page 111, you look at the GLF component. This Banjul project is coming again. Anyway, Banjul is our capital and we want to see our capital city glittering as expected but if you look at the whole procedures of awarding this contract and now it is reflecting in the budget coming as GLF. If you can provide us the project design document we go through it and see whether it has met all the requirements, I am not opposed to Banjul glittering as a capital city, it deserves to but we need to see this thing. Let the procedures be followed. I think I have to stop here much has been said I do not want to go into the line budget items to be taking about other issues. On that note, I thank you so much Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, a lot has been said about the budget and I believe I am not going to focus more on the first page which deals with the projects, grants, domestic borrowing and foreign borrowing and capital revenue but in short we have a deficit budget which is challenging and which is a task ahead of all of us. I know as my colleague rightly said the Honourable Minister is representing the whole country and almost all the institutions that submitted their budget to him are sometimes difficult to work under certain situations, but I think there are certain things that are not realistic and they are going to be very difficult to achieve if you work with this kind of budget or with this kind of conditions.

Honourable Speaker, my first observation will be on the development budget. University of The Gambia, the campus project and in 2019, D70 million was budgeted and 2020 it has been reduced to D23.9 million. I want the Minister to explain why the deduction because I believe that project also should be completed by now since the students at the UTG are suffering, they do not have a place. They are perambulating from Faraba to MDI from MDI to Brikama and it is not cost effective to students. So I want to see why the reduction and can the Minister update us about that project whether they have other international funders who are coming in or not.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the OP under the development budget, last year there was a budget line which has D40 million. I think this was on development buildings and this year there is another budget line which is D9.6 million. I want the Minister to inform us, what type of construction is taking place in the State House? And we would like to know, as the Committee of Monitoring, so that we can see the level of its implementation.

Honourable Speaker Basse-Fatoto-Koina road project, D41 million has been put in the budget. I want the Minister to explain to us this D41 million. Is it on compensation or is it on what? Because we learn that some people need to be compensated which amounted to almost D55 million. So, is this part of that lot or how are you going to compensate people who are affected? I want you to consider that budget line, land compensation. If there is a need, we try to increase the compensation to people because their farm lands are affected, their homes are affected and they need to be housed.

Honourable Speaker, the Shanghai Initiative project. Almost all the Speakers talk about youth employment. I believe if investment is done and the Shanghai project could be replicated in other parts of The Gambia, there you can address employment. We need to train people on skills and those skills can help them to be self-employed or they can be employed by other private sectors. So our budget should be job-oriented, our budget should be focused on recruiting or developing the skills of the people or the minds of the young people so that they can be employed.

Honourable Speaker, if you come to certain Ministries like Fisheries, Tourism, IT, Agriculture, I believe these Ministries can help us to reduce unemployment in this country provided that we make necessary investments into key sectors. Honourable Speaker, we have our river lying down there. This Parliament came into agreement with Senegal, China and EU now they are fishing in our waters. What of our own Gambia people? How can we ensure that we create employment in that river, which is a question? This is what we should look at as a country and we should focus our budget on those areas.

Honourable Speaker, Tourism and Culture in dying in this country we only focus on Senegambia and its environments what of rural Gambia? So, what do you have for their budget? Not on recurrent but in the development budget. James Island is collapsing and we believe people in the North Bank Region make a lot of income from James

Island, how many tourists were coming there? The road is horrible, the place is threatened with coastal erosion and what is the Ministry doing? We posed this question to the Honourable Minister of tourism here. There was a particular year, there was a budget line for rehabilitation of James Island, we did not want to be informed as House where is that fund? How was it spent and what do you have for them this year? If you want to create employment for young people this are the areas that we need to look into so that people can come, private sectors can come in.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the Health Ministry almost all these Speakers talk about health in this country and we say a healthy nation is a wealth nation. Our health is in a serious condition. I spoke here last time, I said Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital is more of a waiting center for your death. If you are referred there, no hope for you. The next minute your people will prepare for your burial. So I think the budget that we have before us, how much are we investing into health? We need to consider and primary health care is dying here. Honourable Speaker, in this country if you look at our budget we have a budget line for second and tertiary health institutions but what of the primary health in this country? They are there and I think we need to invest more into those areas.

Honourable Speaker, coming to the new Ministry of Women and Children under the budget code, the budget percentage for that Ministry is very small and we all know that our women are vulnerable they are suffering. They need support, they need to be helped, and their health conditions are falling down. I am with the view that the Members should try and increase the allocation for that Ministry. Moreover, we talk of social protection. We have old ages in our society, these people need to be helped. They need to be supported. Do we have anything for them in our budget? How are we going to ensure that they have a better healthcare? How are we going to ensure that at least they have an allowance at the end of the day? Those old people need right, they also deserve the right to survive. You have to know that they also served the society. One day, Honourable Jatta will be old. He will need assistance so the budget needs to

care for him. We have to start right now, so let us not allow these people to be only watchmen or watchwomen in our homes. We need to cater for them they are human beings, it is their fundamental right to survive and have a better life.

Honourable Speaker, climate change is real and I believe our national budget must have commitment to our environment and to the climate change. Whether we care about our environment or not the environment will care about us, so before the environment comes to take care of us we need to do something. Honourable Speaker, the Deputy Speaker made mention of prisons. I believe in this budget we should see a budget line for construction of new prison but you are only focusing on people who are outside. Those inside deserve better life therefore I am recommending there is a budget line at State House on building or construction let it be taken to that side. Also State House also have to buy new vehicles D8.5 million, let that money be put somewhere either under social protection or constructing a new prison for our brothers and sisters who are in the jails. They are human beings and it is their right to live in a very good condition.

If you look at the environment, the environment is very poor. It is not conducive so they can easily get or acquire diseases within that environment. I am recommending for all of us to look at that area so that this year we have something in our budget not on personnel and salaries but we need to have a new prison.

Honourable Speaker, mental health is on increase in this country. Young people are getting crazy every day. I believe this area need to be supported we need a serious budget line for mental health. We need to do research to find out what is responsible for our young people getting crazy both day and night or getting sick or getting mental imbalance. We need to do research on that, this area need to be supported so that our young people are under good care. If you look at our society, most of the time these people are not under good care. Where they sleep is very poor, the cloths that they put

on is very poor. I believe we need to do something to ensure that they also enjoy their fundamental rights.

Honourable Speaker, under the budget line I have seen the rehabilitation of Friendship Hostel D1.1 million. I want the Finance Minister to tell us what revenue does Friendship Hostel is yielding for the country and if there is would that not be enough to use for maintenance rather than we have it here in the budget line?

Subvention to Councils Honourable Speaker. I went through the budget but I could not be able to trace it out. I want the Honourable Minister to inform the august gathering about the subvention to the Councils. This time we want to see timely delivery of their subventions because this is what they use to do some developments in their communities. If we want to get real rural development, decentralization has to take place. This is what we mean by devolution of powers, everything cannot be centralized. You have to decentralize it, we have to ensure that they have fund to do some of their operations.

Honourable Speaker, you have what we call enhancing value addition in the groundnut. Our groundnut is serving as the primary export products in this country but we need to do more research in this area. Why is it that the price of groundnut is falling in the world market? And we also need to know why is it that we cannot target the markets within our sub-region rather than depending on European markets.

Honourable Speaker coming to cashew nut, if you have value addition for groundnut what of cashew nut? Cashew nut last year, the price has fallen down drastically and most of the farmers now are into cashew farming. So I think we have to concentrate on these areas of productions so that our economy can be stable. If the production is low, if our export is low, we are importing more therefore our economy is not going to be a stable economy. At the end of the day, there will be nothing like balance of trade, so in

order to ensure that there is balance of trade I think we need to ensure that the productivity goes up.

Honourable Speaker, most of the people talk about the allocation in the agricultural component that is small. For me I am not going to ask for any increment because agriculture if you look at it a lot of funds are going into agriculture. I think it is time to reflect on, it is time to monitor, it is time to see all those projects under agriculture what did they yield for the past years, what were the outcomes of those funds that has been invested into agriculture? Before you allocate we need to know what we allocated how you spent it. We need to know, but we cannot be allocating for agriculture always agriculture we are not seeing that there is effect on the productivity. Food security is still a challenge so why are we cutting, why are you giving more to agriculture when we are not getting more from them? So that means something is fundamentally wrong. We need to find out what is wrong or are you talking about only increasing their recurrent but what of the development budget for agriculture? We need to look into these areas.

Honourable Speaker, I have the following recommendations to all of us and the Minister. Let us cut down all the traveling expenses in almost all the Ministries. Maintenance of vehicles, let us cut all of those in almost all the areas including the National Assembly. Maintenance of building, maintenance of furniture, conferences, workshops, official entertainments, support yes, these areas need to be seriously cut down if you want to move forward. If you want to make more savings because this is what you have budgeted. Please let us cut some areas and send it to other areas but it has to start with us particularly those in our top positions. If we want our budget to be a citizen-friendly budget, it must represent the needs of the people. They must see it but as it is, it favors you and I or some people outside there but the masses, the majority of voters, they will not feel it. If medicine is not available in the hospital they will not feel it and if people die because there is no medicine in the hospital or dialysis could not be done because there are no dialysis machines we are going to be

responsible for their death. So, in order to make our budget a citizen-friendly budget I think we need to cut certain areas.

Honourable Speaker, there are a lot of leakages as far as our revenue collection is concerned. We need to address those leakages in order to make more savings. We believe by now we have enough technicians to move this country economically but if you look at both macro and micro economics of this country, it is sad we are not growing. The essence of having technicians and intellectuals is to liberate and emancipate the country both economically and politically. Politically if you are free economically you are not free, that freedom is compromised and we can only be free when we try to make sure that our budget is a budget that is citizen-friendly.

Honourable Speaker, I believe it is high time as a country. We need to address these situations. We cannot be talking every year the same songs since 1970s we are singing the same song. The children cannot understand what type of songs we are singing. Then there is something fundamentally wrong with you. I think we should graduate from singing now and see how to solve the problem. Honourable Speaker, this is my contribution. I thank you for your kind attention.

HON. SPEAKER: Honorable Member for Wuli West.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]: I don't want to speak long but it seems I will speak long, because the work that we have done this year *...unclear...* the Committees have done with the line Ministries and other Agencies is really fantastic. We have everything that we want to deal with. Tuesday only, I had five meetings. The last was held in these chambers with the Foreign Affairs Ministry. *...unclear...* when we have a discussion here with them the Foreign Affairs Ministry. I mean to say it because I am happy that the Minister is here. If you were at that meeting I will not repeat it but I will repeat it because you are here now. *...unclear...* to announce, for example, that there is a huge carcass that is there to be eaten by wolves who are hungry their little

ones, wolves with their little ones. I want you to listen very carefully to my metaphor. There is a huge carcass that is to be eaten by wolves and their little ones those who are not thinking critically about my metaphor will think that small ones should be left to eat to their fill, but if you are thinking critically about my metaphor the mothers actually require to eat to their fill. If you listen to this, it is not easy for carcasses to come by. And when there are no carcasses it is the mothers that will go and look for carcasses therefore they must have strength to do so. So the mothers must eat to their fill in order to become fast and strong to go around and look crackers for their children. My metaphor is into this: when you talk about budgeting and estimation you have all factors. You will agree with me that some sectors just consume but they are not actual generating revenue but there are other sectors which consume and also generate revenue, that's the mother and the child. Those who only consume but they cannot generate revenue are the little ones. The ones which must eat to their fill are those sectors which must be *...unclear...* and capable of generating revenue. Those fundamental sectors are the sectors that must be strategically addressed in any budgeting and estimation. Agriculture, they have said it here, Fisheries and Tourism... *...unclear...*

...BAD RECORDING...

HON. SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol.

HON. SANKUNG JAMMEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor to contribute to the debate. In fact to start with, a lot has been said by the previous speakers and what they have said are all genuine points. Honourable Minister, let it not take you as a surprise, this is the second of its kind. It happened in 2017 and this time round it is happening. It is just a matter of seeing how best we can all forge ahead. This is why Members are giving you how they feel about the budget. It is not like maybe, as somebody might see it that we are disregarding

what is here. It is not all about that, but what is good for The Gambia that is what we are all trying to give you to understand us.

As I said, I have not much to say because already my fellow colleagues, especially Jatta, have spoken the truth. It is now left to you at least to understand us. When we meet tomorrow, we see where necessary the cuttings are due, we do it and then give it to the necessary areas where we think at least development can come because that is what we need. We need development for a better life. If you go through maybe just a few you go to some sectors the travelling allowance, the miscellaneous office expenses, you name it. If you put all these together, this bulk of monies together, as he rightly said if you want to build boreholes in the country there will be no area left without a borehole. Right now as he said you go to other areas water is a problem, so why can we not look at those areas.

Travelling is not bad in the sense that when you go out you bring in something that will yield dividend but it is sad to say how many of our people do travel outside The Gambia to other countries what do they bring that is gearing towards the development of The Gambia? It is very few, so we want to be very realistic and see how best we can at least make a better Gambia as we all were alluding to that it is a New Gambia, new dispensation so therefore, we should have a good way that all will benefit from. No matter where you come from, development is for all. So I have a few areas, a few concerns that I would want you please to help us. Miscellaneous office expenses, after mentioning all...

HON: KADDY CAMARA [FONI BONDALI]: My intervention is going to be the shortest because what I want to say has been said by my other colleagues. So I have only few things to say. If we want to move this country forward, we must change our attitudes and secondly Madam Speaker, I want to assure the people of this country that this National Assembly is a National Assembly with a difference because whatever we are going to approve here is definitely going to be in the interest of this nation. I would

like the Ministry of Finance to clarify for me the difference between house rent and residential allowance thank you.

HON MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I am so happy because this demonstration has been the first time in the history of this country. I have seen changes in this new dispensation. All is made possible thanks to the revision of this Standing Order. It has been a big burden to the Finance Minister this year with the help of the Standing Order. Ministers have come to defend their budgets point by point as Honourable Jatta said, I believe when there is budget you should come and listen as I always say we have to take the bull by the horn and press them. This is why Jammeh has been sacking them. He was sacking them because they were always in the air attending conferences. That is why Honourable Jatta was saying that we help each other for the benefit of the country. This is not about Adama Barrow or Jammeh. It is about development. Today I am very delighted because the Standing Order has given us the power. Even during the time of Jawara, they were not coming to defend their budgets. We now want change and bring everything to the door step of the electorates. Honourable Speaker I beg to take my seat.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUMDUM]: Thank you so much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I have not much to say as most of my colleagues have highlighted many of my interventions. As they unfold I have been scratching my head over what to say. I only wanted to emphasize that I have one or two ministries with their budget line to be looked at. One of them is the Ministry of Youth and Sports. We understand that they have lot of burden in terms of supporting the young people to access the necessary skills and development they require. And if you look at the budget the amount of money allocated to them has been cut by 26 million in **2019**. The last time I remember we emphasized to the Minister of Finance to at least increase the budget of the Ministry of Youths and Sports to 141 million so that they will be able to cater for the necessary programs that they have for the young people in this country .We understand that there are lot of agencies and the subventions they are receiving is not

even enough to cater for those programs. For example, The National Sport Council alone that is overseeing lot of national sporting associations cannot even support them because there is no enough funds for that agency to cater for their programs. I think it is important for this Assembly to consider the Minister of Youths and Sports and if you look at the Gambia Youth Action Program for 2020 and beyond has very important thematic areas .There are very important programs that have been captured in that document that the Minister of Youth and Sports needs to attract funding from the National Budget so that the youths of this country can realise their potentials as far as development is concerned. In a nutshell, what I wanted to say Madam Speaker is that we need to consider their budget line and I also appeal to all National Assembly Members to adjust their budget line from last year.

The other one I want to talk about Madam Speaker is the Minister of Trade which also forms part of the most important ministries in the country. They have other agencies that are working in the line Ministries and they also have land agencies. During my engagement with them, I understand that from the budget there is an allocation for vehicle 252million but they are not allowed to buy vehicles .Madam speaker, if you look at the budget I think there is a concern for us to look at .The amount of money allocated for training, food services, lubricant, travel, we need to look at them very carefully as members. We are working for the people we are not representing ourselves. We should try as much as possible to cut down this budget lines so that we can cater for the more productive needs of the society so that we can move to the direction we want to be. Madam Speaker, with this intervention, I want to spare my strength for now until we go to the Committee of Supply.

HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. In the first place I want to thank the Finance Minister for fulfilling his constitutional mandate. I also want to thank my colleagues for their contributions that they were doing since yesterday that almost exhausted all the concerns that we have as National Assembly Members .We all remember that we are representing people with different interest in terms of development .There are key areas where every individual

in the Gambia is interested in. It is a concern and also a problem and altogether we belong to a nation that does not have mineral resources yet or if we have it has not yet been discovered meaning we are completely dependent on the taxes that are mostly paid by the citizens. We have a nation that is very vulnerable to Climate Change .When it comes to Agriculture and agricultural production, we belong to a nation with a high level of illiteracy and our economy is a tax based economy and the tax that we pay are paid for the needs that we have in this country. There are priority areas that are identified in our National Development plan among them Agriculture. As we are speaking right now farmers are harvesting and government and the groundnut season is just at the corner and government should be prepared so that farmers can get their money as quickly and easily as possible.

Madam Speaker, my invention may be limited to this key sectors that is Agriculture and Fisheries as institutions as alluded to by Honourable Jatta these two sectors are enough to finance our budget if we take them seriously. Fisheries for example, most of the foreigners coming to the Gambia from West Africa mainly focuses on fishing .If you look at it every day we go for fish be it the fresh one or the dry one, you must go for one so that you can have a good meal. I think Madam Speaker we need to cut certain budget lines and consider this two sectors they are very important in terms of economic generation. I could not recall the figure exactly but fisheries alone contribute a huge amount of money in the GDP of the country. That can be a reason and also the product is needed by everybody in the country. For Agriculture, I think we should shelve it till when we go to the Committee of the House where we see how much we give back to Agriculture, really we need to help our farmers they need help right from the beginning of the Rainy Season and up to the Trade Season because no matter how you help them in terms of production, if the market is not readily available for them, it normally discourages many farmers and I think this is the reason responsible for the drop of the position of Agriculture in terms of contributing to our GDP because people are running away from Farming. I think we should try as much as we can at the level of the Committee of the whole House to increase what was initially given to the Ministry of

Agriculture especially from certain ministries, of course they are important like Defense and Security, yes, we all need to be secured because if you look at it internationally now, the biggest security challenge in the world today is not gun fighting, these are mainly poverty which is the most dangerous weapon. Food insecurity is part of it, internationally, these are tools that people are fighting against as a global threat. Diseases and environmental issues, of course we need security but not as much as we need Agriculture today because it is a productive sector so we can see how much we can tackle that budget line so that Agriculture can get what they need or what we need for Agriculture.

My other concern is, as alluded to by the Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol that is the miscellaneous allocation under all the ministries. By looking at it and if you go to any ministry you find a lot of budget lines, under any budget lines, there is miscellaneous. I counted them together and tabulate them it turns up to D37 million, after budgeting for all the programs, why do we need D37million in miscellaneous? And this was D35million or D35.5 million in the last budget and now it has been increased to D37.7 million. I think these are types of things we have to take from the budget to be able to complement some of these institutions that are productive like Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism.

As alluded to by the Honourable Member for Serekunda that what we need as a government is how to increase our earnings because if you cannot get much you cannot spend or you have to borrow or you increase our debts finally Madam Speaker **not clear....**

Finally, Madam Speaker, as mentioned by my colleagues all that I noted have been scrapped because there is no essence in repeating one another when we have a very important – that is the level of the Committee of the whole House where we will be able to do the exercise. The only confusion under the manpower budget and in fact this is existing in many manpower budget line under different ministries. I have identified a place where a Permanent Secretary's personal emolument salaries was paid less than what is paid in the last budget. The allocation of this draft we have right now is less

than what has been budgeted for last year and the margin is significant that is the Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and under the same Ministry, there is emolument salaries, that is the **M & E** officer and of course the same grade and the emolument is reduced by **D11, 600**. So here a word of clarity and If you go through that you find a lot of the same errors in it.

With this few remarks I thank you very much. I beg to take my seat.

HON. YAYA GASSAMA (KIANG EAST): Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me the opportunity to make my interventions regarding this important national document that is right before us. Various speakers in their interventions expressed genuine concerns about issues that affect the lives, livelihood and the welfare of Gambians especially the poor folks.

Madam Speaker, there are certain things happening here that is consuming our nation, that is destroying our nation and Honourable Member for Foni Bondali expressed concerns over attitudinal change, I agreed entirely with her. You see dishonesty, selfishness and insincerity all driven by greed is what is destroying this nation. Right from the beginning of preparing this budget, Ministers or Ministries and Departments are sent a budget circular to start preparing their budget and that is where the dishonesty begins as you prepare your ministerial or departmental budget you are thinking about ways of siphoning off monies to various dubious budget lines so that you enjoy that is the problem.

Honourable Minister, I am saying this because this is a very complicated document with a great deal of information and very crucial figures here that makes it very technical and not for the consumption of every ordinary person even the National Assembly Members here. This is why we spent 4 days in Tendaba with Experts or Resource Persons to help us make sense out of these figures to help us understand this document that was the purpose. That is natural we know that the National Assembly do not have all the expertise to understand everything, so it is natural that they outsource expertise from elsewhere. But those very people that you trusted to help us

understand this document, if those said people did not want us to understand the document that is the beginning of problems because some of the Resource Persons felt that National Assembly Members should not understand this document because certain resource persons were overheard saying that look do not tell them everything because if you do they are going to hold you by the neck and in response, the person to whom he was talking to said you let them find things out by themselves and even that is dishonesty. This is the problem they do not want us to understand this document and as National Assembly Members if we cannot understand this document who else will understand it. We are the representatives of the people and Honourable Jatta rightly spoke about the fact that the people for whom the budget is meant do not understand the document. So Experts are the ones to help them understand and guess these are the very people depriving us of that opportunity. Then how do they expect us to understand this document? That is the problem.

Having said that, when I look at the estimates, the page before page 1, my attention is drawn to one important thing and that is the combined budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology is less than the budget of the Office of the President. This is what I find extremely difficult to understand. I cannot understand that because people in the Executive are paying leap service to the National Development Agenda. When people cough or sneeze, they sneeze NDP but that is not reflected in the budget as if the Office of the President is synonymous with the National Development Plan. Education is a very important area and our livelihood is in Agriculture, so if somebody is telling me the combined budget of agriculture and education is less than the budget for the Office of the President I just cannot understand.

With regards to the Ministry of Higher Education, of course it is a known secret that a lot of our young women and men in the University of the Gambia, Gambia College, GTTI etc. are not attending classes because they cannot pay fees, some could not sit for their exams because of tuition arrears to settle and some want to go to college for teacher training they cannot because they cannot afford the fees and yet the Office of

the President is better of more than the Ministry of Higher Education as if the welfare and the education of these young men and women do not matter to anybody that is the problem.

Honourable Speaker, on page 1, where we have the summary of income and expenditure, there are many issues for example a deficit budget, Gambia is weary of deficit budget as it has always been like that from the first Republic to the second and to now the same budget deficit year-in year-out every time the budget is out, there is a serious deficit. Is like people are just kicking their deficit counts hoping that somebody else will pick it up and after **50 years** nobody has picked it up. Is it not time to understand that we need to take this issue up seriously and make practical efforts to solve this problem because a deficit budget is what we cannot carry on in our development programs because if you look at it, the deficit that we have in the budget is being financed principally by loans and grants? Is that the way we are going to continue? That is not possible so we need to do something about that.

Madam Speaker, without taking much time as most of things that I wanted to say have actually been said by other speakers but before I conclude my intervention, I would like the Honourable Minister for Finance and Trade to help provide answers for me with regards to the Office of the President, which is on page 2. I think this is part 2 where you have details of expenditure or details of establishment, civil servant special scheme allowance, travel allowance, retention allowance, cost of living allowance, clothing allowance, housing allowance, telephone allowance, responsibility allowance for the Office of the President. Now Honourable Minister, why is this need privilege given to only the Office of the President and not to a class room in kanakeh or sankuley-kunda why? Because these people working in the Office of the President are working in a very cozy environment but people who are suffering do not matter to those concern. What is the problem? Why is this unique opportunity offer to those people and not to the teachers in the class rooms in the provinces?

Madam Speaker, I was also looking at the budget for the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. I have not seen this, may be perhaps you will help me

understand or find this in the budget. This is school bus services. It was there the last time but this year I have not seen it in the budget and this school bus services are for children of the poor people who cannot afford to go to their schools in private cars. Every day both morning and afternoon at Gambia High School here you find children standing looking for lift to and from school and this is taking a greater part of their school day. If you leave home for example coming to school in Banjul sometimes by the time you arrive in Banjul it is already late or you have few more lesson to do and pack your books to go back home. It is even worse for those that are coming in afternoon shift. So what is happening to the School Bus Services because I have not seen it in, or is it somewhere in the budget I want to know.

There is also issue of school feeding program. --**D19m** was given last year, this year the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education is asking for more. That money that was given for School Feeding Program last year was a lot to cover schools in part of Region 2 especially West Coast Region and Region 4. It could not even be extended to other areas we know what World Food Program is doing a great job in providing food to students at needy schools but World Food Program is facing out and the problem is, even if they are not facing out, Is it right for us to entrust the feeding of our children to other people? If you bear children you must take the responsibility of feeding and educating them. Why is it that in the Gambia we cannot feed our children in schools. What is the problem? I think that budget needs to be increased. The government of the Gambia needs to beef up to provide needs in the schools for Gambian children and not only for those in Region 2 and region 4 but for the entire country. If you travel to some areas children spend most of their time in schools without even food to eat and in some schools what a child is taking to school for meal lunch is more than my fish money I tell you this. I know what am telling you in some schools a child meal lunch is more than the fish money for a lot of families. In the provinces they are going to school even without seeing meal and we know the implications of that because I have seen children who drop out from school because there is no food and as soon as food supply comes to school they go and when the supply finishes they withdraw from school, it is

happening. So I think the budget needs to be looked at very seriously and start feeding our own children instead of depending on third parties to feed our children for us.

Honourable Speaker there are also issues of laboratories in Upper Basic and Senior Secondary School. We have not seen any allocation for that provided it is somewhere in the budget but please I want the Honourable Minister to locate that section for me where there is a budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education for Science Lab because we all know lab is a structure needed by science and technology regarded as drivers of our economy.

Honourable Speaker these are some of the questions that I want answers to. I do not have any more and I beg to resume my seat. Thank you.

HON. MADI MK. CEESAY [SEREKUNDA WEST]: Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Our dear colleagues, we can either part of the solution or part of the problem. We should ask ourselves this simple question. Why is this draft budget estimate here before us, it is here for us to scrutinize it. The Minister who prepared this is here only to guide us. They do not have the got to approve it. The issue of the budget should not take us long to talk in the chambers .We just go to the committees and we cut where it is necessary and adjust where it is necessary that is why the budget is here before us and we must also bear in mind that we are government,if government fails we fail . If government says we cannot sit fold our hands and allow things to fail. I cannot see any competent advisers to the president other than the Cabinet Ministers. Why do you get somebody outside to come and advise the president on Finance other than the Minister of Finance? Therefore, if we want to progress as a nation we must take some austerity measures. We cannot live like nations that are advanced. Some of these positions are unnecessary. The only right thing to do is to cut them out. I think we will reach where we want to reach and so goes into other sectors. It is amazing if you look at the allowance sectors of some of the ministries, they are almost half of the salaries. You begin to wonder how my allowance can be almost half of my salary .It is a way of tax evasion the central government wants to run away from tax ,put all the monies into allowances that are not taxed .If that is the case then

let us apply a gross taxation on all levies. That way the state will not lose. Just as they are doing to the energy of**not clear**....that way we cannot lose and that way they will not collect all the monies and put them into allowances and those allowances are not taxable, we are losing. I have a simple question for the Minister. I want the Honourable Minister of Finance to tell me what is the yard stick to measure a country's economic strength when it comes to the response to some of these queries because what we have here today and that we continue to have is an economy of budget deficit. And what is the implication of a budget deficit? What you want cannot be met by what you have you must get it somewhere else. And if you want solutions to that, you must cut some unnecessary expenditures of government if this National Assembly does not do that when we work out of this chambers, we are going to face our electorates. They are all watching and they are all listening keenly to what we are going to do here tomorrow. Therefore, we must take austerity measures if we want to survive as a nation. We must do away with some of the things we do not necessarily need as some of the Members said. We need to pour them in the environment. Honourable Minister what we have here is an economy where the domestic borrowings is on the increase. What is the implication of that? How can we get away with that? We must put in place austerity measures. We must forgo certain things that are not absolutely necessary. Honourable Speaker, The kind of economy we have here the debt is on the increase, always increasing. We cannot progress and to limit the debt, we must always do away with unnecessary expenditures. This budget, this draft estimate is full of unnecessary expenditures dumped into allowances into the Office of the President and other sectors. Tomorrow, we need to be a good judge if we want to make justice to this. That is why they are shared before us. We are not beggars. We cannot be on our knees to the executives. We have to assert our responsibilities and do justice to this book otherwise we are not fit to be here. Honourable Speaker, debt servicing are going up because we are taking all the time. We are not taking any measures to minimize it. You borrow and you want to live lavishly it cannot work. It will not take the country anywhere. So we must put in place certain austerity measures otherwise we cannot develop. And that has a culmination of lot of things attitudinal change and all what not, economic

discipline is all inclusive Honourable Speaker. Our solution should be we cut government expenditures .We need to do that and tomorrow we should see that happen here Government expenditure must be cut. We must cut them otherwise we will not do justice to this document .Unless we cut positions that are not critical to this process, we will not go anywhere. Please take that as a short term measure. I was also going to say that it will go forever but let us make that until we are going to stand firm on our feet .Honourable Speaker, We must reduce our embassies it is taking a chunk of our money. What is wrong with one Ambassador representing the Gambia to five to six countries or in a block a member can represent the Gambia into all these West African Countries .What is wrong in doing that and that way we are going to cut expenditures and that way we are going to limit our borrowing and our debt servicing is going to reduce .Honourable Speaker, we need to compress the number of Cabinet Ministers we have. If you look at the developed countries 17, 18 Ministers positions that is a joke, one Minister can represent a dozen sectors all you need is competent Permanent Secretaries and good Directors, the Ministry will work. But you want to have a Minister of everything when your economy is suffering that is why I say we must be part of the problem or part of the solution .We need to do that, if we did not do it, it is our responsibility. This National Assembly should do the right thing. If we do the right thing we are part of the solution but if we did not do the right thing we are part of the problem. History will judge us. Honourable Speaker we need to take austerity measures I am saying this over and over that is the only thing that can save this country. We National Assembly Members as I said from the beginning we must do the right thing by cutting all these unnecessary expenditures. We will be facing lot of problems and we will not be doing justice to the nation. This budget entails lot of allowances and duplicate almost half of the salaries for example, I cannot understand the differences between the residential allowance and house rent, I believe this way if we are able to do justice to this budget, the country will be on its feet .Madam Speaker as a government, We need to be very serious and committed to national development and honestly I have not seen any commitment to national development if we can entertain all these unnecessary positions in Ministries and Departments especially in the office of

the president. With particular reference to the presidential advisers. These are civil servants who are doing nothing but only politicking for the president. You take tax payers money and pay people who are not doing anything for the nation. We need to squash off all these unnecessary positions. Like I said earlier that there is no better adviser more educated and competent than the various Cabinet Ministers in their various ministerial positions. We need to look at Jawara days when Cabinet Ministers used to be their own experts. Things have changed as you cannot have a classroom teacher to be a Minister of Finance. You cannot have a financial experts to be Minister of Education. The Ministry of Education is now being headed by a competent educationist. He /She has the potential to advise the president on educational issues. So also is the Finance Minister to advise the president on financial issues. So in my honest opinion these advisers should just go. It is crazy you are talking of increasing it to six plus two deputies. It is crazy. You are just creating positions for them. I thank you.

HON. SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Thank you Honourable Minister with your technocrats for giving *...unclear...* to the Constitution. My contribution will be very short Honourable Speaker because much have been said by my colleagues. The only thing I will try to put across is Gambia is an economy based country. We need to realise our taxations Honourable Speaker. When we are not paying our tax, all these developments that we are saying will not happen. Honourable Speaker the revenue of this country, the chunk is from the tax revenue and when people are not paying tax, we will not move an inch. So we must uphold Gambians to tighten their belts and pay tax accordingly if we need this country to go ahead.

I have a question that I want you to ask the Honourable Minister, whether there is any policy on travel expenses because most of the Members are talking about this travel. Is there any policy on travel at the various Ministries? This is the question I want to ask the Minister. Honourable Speaker, these are recurrent expenditures that our own

brothers and sisters are filling positions, not talking of Defence. These are our own brothers and sisters that are there. The reason why we are here is because of them. They are maintaining peace and they never sleep at night Honourable Speaker. How much we the National Assembly Members are paid, compared to a security officer who spend the whole day without sleep. Let us compare that Honourable Speaker.

Defence, how many of our brothers and sisters are employed at the security apparatus? They are many because they are jobless. Every time National Assembly are complaining "We need employment". Most of them are in this security, it is not their wish to be in the security sector. It is because they are jobless. So to bring down Defence, I do not agree on that Honourable Speaker because we need to empower them. They are jobless Honourable Speaker. These recurrent expenditures, let us not touch them.

I had an issue though, later on I will mention whether the Honourable Minister can make adjustment or not to see that what we want to cut to put it in Fisheries and Works whereby everybody is yearning for roads and water, Honourable Speaker. Too many candidates are talking about agriculture. How many projects come to this country and how many projects are successful through agriculture Honourable Speaker? The Ministry of Finance cannot make any projections for Ministry of Agriculture based on their programmes. The Ministry must come with their projections that we want to implement this. Then the technocrats will know whether it is necessary to re-allocate these projects or not.

But if the Ministry themselves do not do their projections on programmes, I do not think the Minister will tell them this is the fund that is available. And now in fact, NEMA-CHOSSO are expecting eighty million Dalasi grant and the one that ended this year and FASDEP, what impact have they made to the life of the farmers? They may build feeder roads, they go and *...unclear...* we must change our attitudes Honourable Speaker. Those ones who are running these projects, go to their houses. They are building storey-buildings and they are taking all the projects to their family members. We must

change out attitudes and let us come together and work for the interest of our country. Go to Rwanda today, how many people were killed, over millions of people? And the President down there, you can see him working because they all bring people together. And today Rwanda is enjoying. We must change the way we are and when we put somebody in the front office, let us respect the individual. Though accountability and transparency must take place, we should not also try to say lot of things about him. Let us create and make that guy because we are representing the people down there.

It is hard to say Honourable Speaker but if we do not change our attitude, this country would not go. Let us try and join hands and make things possible for Gambians. Then when we talk about this Defence and security, very simple. The least paid is D2,700 and we at the National Assembly, how much are we paid? We do not talk about anything on our salaries and our allowances. Are we not all Gambians? Of course we are. They are gauging us that is why they are there. Honourable Speaker, I do not think in these recurrent expenditures we need to cut anything on defence..... personal emoluments. Honourable Speaker I want the Minister to adjust on this because I have seen and we must commend him on this.

And the embassies, you cut over D240,597,650. We commend you Honourable Minister, it is a good job. These are Gambian people that are staying at embassies. There is only one embassy which was added, that is Geneva. I want you to tell us why you added Geneva there because we are trying to reduce then you add Geneva. We want to know why you add Geneva. And then you can compress all these embassies Dakar, Freetown and Abuja into one embassy who will oversee all these embassies. If that is possible, to minimise the cost of these embassies Honourable Minister. There are budget lines: seminar and workshops, furniture and fittings, travel expenses, food and medicaments (it is a huge amount), office equipment *...unclear...* if you can slice these ones and add it to Fisheries & Water Resources and Works because I need roads and I need water in my area. If you can adjust on these Honourable Minister.

And then we must commend you because you have done a good job with your technocrats. The whole year you are increasing and you are cutting. When you are leading people you must accept everything and pick the good ones because you also get future leaders in your house. You get children that we expect to live in this country so I am not seeing you as a witch hunter. You are doing it for the interest of the country. We must at least see the level that you have, with your technocrats Honourable Minister and I must commend you. Any day I stand here I will commend you honourable Minister. You do not give me anything but I am seeing that you are there for the interest of the country. We have seen the embassies for the D240 million, we must commend you honourable Minister. Honourable Speaker much has been said, I will end my intervention *...unclear...* on that note I take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you on your last point but we need to follow procedure, we have to follow the rules. Honourable Members, thank you very much. I stand to be corrected but I think I have exhausted my list of interventions, am I right? Any more interventions? No? Okay, in that case I just wish to state that in my communication, earlier on before the commencement of the debate, I omitted to state that after the debate I will allow the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs to respond to the issues that have been raised and wind up the debate, and that the committee of the whole House will consider the Draft Estimates 2020 in detail tomorrow the 29th of November 2019. In that case, I would now wish to allow the Honourable Minister to respond and then we adjourn for tomorrow because I do not want to suspend the sitting and then we come back. Let me extend the time so I would rather allow the Honourable minister to respond to the issues that have been raised and then we can adjourn the session for tomorrow. Please can we just stay put? Yes, Honourable Minister... I pleading for Honourable Members to stay so that we can finish the session, thank you very much. I hope it would not last more than forty-five minutes maybe? Thank you very much.

HON. MAMBURAY NJIE [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]:

Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. We have 41 interventions, I will try by all means to respond to them but for clarification let me just inform Honourable Jatta that the Finance Minister does not have a utility vehicle, and that I do buy my fuel whenever it is consumed at the end of the month, just for clarification. Honourable Speaker after 41 interventions, when we talk about citizens' budget, I think we were very glad that Honourable Jatta was there during the presentation and we have to listen to the voices of the voiceless. After 41 speakers, I was carefully listening that we are responding to the calls of the people and that is said on Page 9 of the statement I made here in this Honourable House. I said that we are setting up, that we have two initiatives for 2020. We are setting up the National Health Insurance Scheme that will cover not only the civil servants but also the most vulnerable members of society. When the package is unveiled, the Health Minister will come to this august Assembly and present the Bill. And the whole idea is about how to protect our citizens. We are talking about 0 to 5 years old; we are talking about pregnant women for 9 months; we are talking about pensioners; we are talking about Gambians who are over 70 years old and I think Honourable Jatta will qualify for that.

Honourable Speaker, during the year we struggled, it is true whatever we mobilise we have to allocate. And in the process of allocation, we have very stringent measures that we do when we talk about fiscal consolidation. We do not disburse the quarterly or monthly figures just like that. There is what we call activity report that you have to present before we disburse. After we disburse, before the next disbursement if you do not submit that activity report based on the planned activities, we will not release the next.

The other one in terms of the measures that we plan to do, I think one Honourable Member was talking about Constituency Fund. We have something like that for you but with this one it will not be disbursed to all the Honourable Members. I think we said it is a collective responsibility to develop our country. You have needs and wants, you have

communities that need badly water and other essential utilities. Our programme, which we have already featured in the 2020 budget, we will be doing it in collaboration with the UNDP and I am pleased to inform you that the feasibility studies have already commenced. The whole idea is to identify areas or communities that do need certain facilities like boreholes, like roads. We hope that after 2020, the activities will be up scaled to another level. The reason why we avoid doing anything in terms of constituency is how do we distribute, how can we know that this is the constituency that need badly water or access roads to their clinics or schools? That is why the theme for us this year we say it is a Pro-Poor Budget. Why is it a Pro-Poor Budget?

Let me share with you the data on allocation: Agriculture, the reason for the figure going down is that they have 3 projects that successfully were implemented at their closing. The figure we have is from D298,000,000 to D394,000,000 that is for Agriculture. For Health we have from D841,000,000 to D1.4 billion. For Youths and Sports we have from D79,000,000 to D114,000,000. For Education we have D1.8 million increased to D2.6 billion. The reason why I am highlighting this is key in the sense that when we do the allocation we want to make sure that whatever the call was made for last year and I think everybody will recall that Honourable Jatta did give us a benchmark but if we come back he wants to make sure that the minimum that a civil servant will take home is D3,000 and Honourable I am pleased to inform you we have achieved that target.

Why is it Pro-Poor? We have the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme which we have already put in D100 million in the budget and we know that we will be able to mobilise more resources for the insurance scheme. The introduction of Women's Enterprise Fund D200 million; the introduction of this emergency Community Development Programme D250 million; Social Safety Net D260 million; Banjul Rehabilitation Project D360 million; establishment of a full-fledged Women and Children's Ministry D84 million; Ministry of Health budget has increased, the purchase of drugs now we talk about D120 million, vaccination D35 million, these are all GLF and

then we also have our development partners GAVI, this is for D127 million; Global Fund D272 million; UNFPA D59 million; UNICEF D158 million; School Feeding Programme we have already allocated D90 million; input subsidy to GGC, this is for the farms we have D150 million; School Bus service D15.7 million; crop financing D200 million; Women's Entrepreneurial Fund this is D6 million for the total of D200 million cumulative; this is Pro-Poor as we are concerned.

Now, some of the issues that have been highlighted by many Honourable Members in terms of the breakdown. The new chest of accounts we have it is very difficult to break them down. What we have agreed for the 2021 budget we will have Annex as explanatory notes to ensure that whatever budget line item that is not featured will be able to reveal the line item that the budget line item is embedded in. It is technology, we are migrating to Epi Core 10 just to make sure that we have not debt services to ensure that the capacity increases and the deliverables are also featured. That is why even the Presidential Meet-The-Peoples tour, we have already allocated D6 million. When we go to the House of the whole committee we will be able to reveal all of that. We have already mentioned the School Feeding Programme. The allowances issues these are mainly, you know it is a system of checks and balances, it is the PMO and fortunately we have the Permanent Secretary here with his technical advisers, that after he will be able to join me to be able to dilate more on these issues that have been confronting us. So most of these things that are there that would really tempt to present to the honourable House, I think that technologically we are adapting to a fast changing technology environment. That is why whenever we decide to move to another level these are issues that we are confronted with.

Youths and Sports, most of the Honourable Members did mention that and this year among the measures that we will be coming to present for approval is the Sports Levy. You are aware that the demand for sports all over it has been very hectic and that the pressure on the budget is too much, that is why the issue of the Sports Levy will be presented to this August Assembly for approval.

For the Ministry of Finance, the electricity and water budget is D30 million. This is because we have centralised certain payments to NAWEC, including all the local Councils' NAWEC bills are now settled by the Ministry of Finance. Example, up to June 2019 we have paid the electricity bill arrears of all local Councils and we are talking about almost D259 million, we have paid all just to make sure at least NAWEC will have the breathing space if it is to operate as a public enterprise.

The operating cost of the Ministry of Finance, this costs are associated with the running of the IFMIS system, in particular license fee and other hardware installed. This is in all government entities utilising the IFMIS so it is not a centralised budget just for the Ministry to be using, it is all over. The total subvention for the Ministry of Finance has increased substantially due to an arrangement with GRA whereby GRA subvention will be based on their collection. We are now just to give them the incentive, we pay them 4.5% of whatever they collect. I think if you see the performance of GRA will be presented the revenue forecast. Last budget it was chaotic in the sense that they complained but now I think we stretch them again just to highlight the issue of not cutting, but let us augment and I think the Member for Serrekunda did highlight.

So, that is one thing that I will appeal to the entire House please I know you have your cutlasses to cut but let us not cut. I think in terms of programming and planning because we have already negotiated with all of the departments, including even our development partners. What we can do is to come up with something more innovative for next year because they have already agreed, they have their programmes, their projects already planned for 2020. So as at the last minute, if you do the cutting and move to a Ministry which cannot absorb what is given to them then you are fuss-feeding. Fuss-feeding it is not healthy.

So I will appeal to the entire National Assembly, let us not cut. I think let us look at areas that we can try to be innovative, how we can mobilise more resources but if you

cut there are implications. And sometimes it is very difficult to explain exactly how these things can have negative impact on the operations of government because once you cut maybe you are even giving the opportunity to others who will say "Well, you have cut my budget, I cannot deliver". That is one thing that I will appeal that when we go to the Committee of the whole House then we will be able to look at Allowances.

It is true but the experts and the sector responsible, these are things that civil servants are paid D650 a night. They go to a hotel now, like Basse or something, they charge D900. How can they continue to subsidise themselves? These are things that we have looked at and then it will commence from 2020. IEC, National Audit Office, Judiciary, as far as the Ministry of Finance is concerned, they are untouchable. I think they are protected by the Constitution but being the national Assembly I am sure you already have met with them and I am sure you will be able to resolve it. We did everything possible to create a conducive environment for the private sector as part of our fiscal consolidation. I am sure they have to remember that last year for October, November, December, we instituted a travel ban which was very unpopular.

For us that was a tester, that was a message and a signal to the entire system that certain behaviours will no more be tolerated. When you look at the figures, I came into office July, August, September and I looked at the figures and it was growing exponentially. That was why we were able to put the break and to our credit it did yield results and also behavioural change. What happened, as part of our fiscal consolidation measure, the private sector are now enjoying the credit from the banks because of the fiscal discipline we are not borrowing anymore. We are not borrowing anymore, whatever we do is to prepare and plan to have like a shock absorber. We are a small country, small economy, developing, we are price takers. Any shock that will hit us, example the telescope, the **...unclear...** these are all shocks but at the time I was making my statement that time when we run the model we have seen that growth rate will go down from 6% to 4%. Now it has gone up between 6% to 6.2%. These are

issues that showed we are on top of issues. We are monitoring closely whatever is happening in the world.

Why NDP will reach 2.5%, this is *...unclear...* because of the non-realisation of the budget support and when we ask about the budget support and DPOs, they are performance-linked, especially the most important one is if you do not have a full-fledged programme with the IMF. When we perform very well, we are graduating from what is called Staff Monitored Programme to the PCF. PCF enhances credit, as a facility it will be able to allow us more access to resources but most importantly, during the Committee of the whole House, I will also update you on our debt restructuring mission and that will also have impact even on our domestic debt situation. We have sent our officials to all our creditors and in particular, let me just mention, you have the Kuwaiti Fund, Abu Dhabi Fund (UAE), BADEA, Islamic Development Bank, India, these are all creditors that we have approached and the whole debt restructuring that we are requesting is to have a freeze. We need the fiscal freeze and when we have this freeze for five years, minimum, we will be able to have much breathing space and then we will be able to plan much better. The reality is that as small developing country sometimes we are confronted with certain shocks that no matter how good your shock absorbers are, it is very difficult to move on. So the whole idea of the debt restructuring is about having a five-year freeze that will be able to give us the D2 billion savings that we will be able to utilise especially in the areas that we have been talking about, the social sectors.

The draft budget that most Honourable Members have also said is being absorbed so far and is still below 50% due to the fact that the Ministry of Health were given a budget support of €2.25 million from the French government. Out of this they still have D60 million to spend on drugs. So really if there is anything to say, they are not being underfunded. I there is enough resources to buy drugs. The settlement of confirmed debts, it is part of the misclassification issue and it is due to the introduction again of the chartered account the GFS 2014. The correct budget line should be settlement of

confirmed arrears and it is to deal with the confirmed arrears by the Internal Audit. They did an audit to ensure that these debts are legitimate and they are not something that was just made out of the blues so they did a good job on that and those are the figures that you are seeing.

The NDP pledges, we said that it is a lot of money, 1.7 billion but almost half of them are loans so we are doing everything possible to avoid the loans. So far we have been able to capture purely grants and that is to the tune of US\$ 182.8 million so these are things that we have been very cautious. We want to make sure that whatever money that we have to go in for loans it must be something that is concessional. Right now we insist any loan that is coming in must be 50% concession and that is the external loan mostly.

Now we are hoping that after we go to the whole house with the confirmation from our debt creditors that this debt restructuring is forthcoming, and we are confident that actually it is confirmed, that the domestic borrowing amount will be able to definitely go down. Because we run, it is not something that we do the *...unclear...* alone. It is scientific and we have a model that we run so we will be able to discuss those issues.

On the issue of the *...unclear...* the PMO was tasked to revise the manpower budget and in addition Cabinet has endorsed for training to be centralised. That is why D110 million is in there but it is the entire civil service. The whole strategy is, any training that they can do locally will not have to go outside again. That is the whole thing, to ensure that every training and then there will be a training that is demand driven. Whatever we need here to be able to build capacity, capacity retentions and capacity harmonisation. The executing agency will be the PMO and the Chair will be Secretary General.

What plans do we have for the productive sector for 2020? The 2020 budget will focus on key areas that will help provide a conducive environment for growth to be realised in

the productive sector. Key among these is the availability of reliable energy supply which we can all attest that the situation has vastly improved over the past year. In addition to our prudent management of fiscal policies credit to the private sector has increased by more than 25% on year-to-year basis. We envisage this to continue in the 2020.

Finally the 2020 budget places emphasis on infrastructure development, especially road infrastructure which would in turn enhance the productive sectors. The question, how budgets of various sectors are spent, the Ministry of Finance is continuously pressing all budget execution reports on our website, we post them. So most of the questions that the Members are asking is on our website. And I think up to end of October we have that update, the budget execution report, all of it is there. All the figures are there, Honourable Speaker maybe we can have an arrangement where we can link our website with your website so that any Honourable Member can have access to it. If not, we do not mind to be coming to do the presentation but with information technology I believe even with your mobile phones now you can access these reports.

I think we have to commend the approach under the leadership of Honourable Sallah that we have already made audit of half of them, seven are remaining. What we want to avoid is when we move ahead and do the execution or implementation of the recommendations with our Auditor General, maybe it might take some time so we gather the resources to make sure that the other seven would be done, we are negotiating actually with the auditors. There are two exercises: one is for the ones that have already been done, the remaining seven we hope that after this. Our vision that the type of Gambia we have, is to have good performing public enterprises that will come not only pay dividends but will be a good employment generation entities and that can also pay us the corporate taxes that we need. That is our vision and we believe that what we have seen so far that the National Assembly is doing we believe that we will be able to move towards that direction.

Under BE15 service, we will unbundle it and give you all the details once we get to the Committees' discussions. I understand the PAC/PEC have already been updated on that but we will make sure we give you all the information today. On disability and social welfare, we have catered for D22 million for social services and an additional D3.4 million on disability. There is also D4.3 million allocated for social welfare development activities. These are all things that is in the 2020 budget. On the issue of the debt, Honourable Speaker if I have permission just to be able to share with the House, how we have also revolutionised the way we manage our debts. It could be recalled that D2.2 billion three-year bond was issued in 2017 to finance government deficit and domestic debts re-profiling. The bond will be maturing in August 2020, which is currently included in the 2020 budget for redeeming. So here, we are in a situation where we are now forecasting. Again, the budget estimate is just an estimate. It is a planning tool, it is not something that is cast in a stone.

So in our planning we have our own econometric models that we run then we look at the figures and we thought why do we not plan for a worst possible scenario in the event (what happened to us before for the budget scope). In the event it did not come and then come August 2020 all the investors decided to redeem, this is where we said we need strong shock absorbers that is why it is input there. But with the IFMIS stuff we have just had after our team returned from the capitals, we will be able to revise it downwards during the whole House.

However, the current medium-term debt management strategy we have one 2019-2022 the government's intention is to be able to stretch the maturity profile of domestic debts by continuous. The issue of long-term instruments like three years, five years. In the past, all that we were doing is very short-term: six months, three months, and nine months. We are now changing, we are saying that we have to really stretch it. This is premised on the prevalence of high refinancing risks from domestic debt portfolio of over 55% of domestic debt that matures within one year ending 2018. In light of the above, government intends to continue the issuing of long-term debt security to ease

out high concentration of debt maturities within a year and lessen the pressure on the national budget. We already tested the market and recently we issued D500 million two-year government bond that is November 2019 surely to redeem the short-term maturing debts in 2019 to address refinancing risks in the domestic debt portfolio. The issuing attracted what was oversubscribed by 125% with a weighted average yield of 9.93%, it is still a single digit. The result of the issuing signal to market-driven and appetite for long-term instruments which is in line with government's medium-term strategies to emulate the maturity profiles of our domestic debts.

With the above background, government now looks into the possibility of issuing a three-year bond which could be used to roll over the maturities or perhaps redeem short-term maturities domestic debt re-profiling. However, despite the above one should also take note that should in case we are unable to get the full scale subscription and hence the need to include the D2.2 billion maturities in 2020 budget for prudent debt management and it is a precautionary measure just to make sure that we do not have any situation where we will have the issue of how do we pay our salaries.

However, the most important part of this is the need to develop a domestic debt market which can only happen by the introduction of long-dated instruments. Hence, the need to issue a three and five-year bond is there. Honourable Speaker, I think when the issue of how do we manage our budget again I come to the fact that it is all of us. It is our collective responsibility and how we can develop a partnership there we will be able to look at the issues holistically and then also respect the rule of law by way of ensuring that every entity that is doing their responsibility cannot and should not be taken away. I think what we can be coming up with is benchmarks, to make sure that whatever is being done is closely monitored and to ensure that they will be coming back to do the reporting maybe quarterly or bi-annually.

On the issue of boreholes that have also been highlighted by Honourable Members, government has constructed many borehole over the years through the Rural Water

Supply and Sanitation Project where government also factored in D10.5 million as its counterpart fund and an additional D2 million factored in enabling sustainable water resource management. This is the 2019 budget for the drilling of boreholes. Again coming to the input subsidy, the question was what was it for, D150 million budgeted under centralised services is for fertilizer for the farmers.

On the University of The Gambia campus, the donors have now agreed to take over most of the government counterpart fund due to lack of funds from government and then we will be able to finance and make sure that the project implementation is on a fast track. I think due to certain issues that we were confronted with that was how some of these issues, the construction was delayed.

Basse-Fatoto road, the amount budgeted for the land compensation is D30 million. the D9.6 million on the development vote of the Office of the President comprises of various budget line items including purchase of motor vehicles D8.5 million; office equipment D500,000; furniture and fittings D333,000; ICT infrastructure D200,000; and purchase of motorcycles D100,000.

The subvention to Councils as I have already said, that we have paid D259 million to be able to make sure the Councils are no more in arrears with NAWEC so the subvention is budgeted for under the programmes strengthening decentralisation and good governance programme of the Ministry of Lands and the amount budgeted for is D8 million as subvention. An Honourable Member asked the difference between Residential Allowance and House Rent. Residential is for Grade 10 civil servants and above D1,700 and for people residing in the Kombo St. Mary's area (that is the KMC) that is for the D1,000 and for people residing in the Kombo St. Mary's area. House Rent is for Ministers, Security Personnel, Advisers and provincial postings. The House Rent allowance paid to these individuals varies depending on their positions.

The School Bus Services, which I have already mentioned under the Basic and Secondary Education, we have already allocated. The second to school management D7 million thereby totalling D15.7 this is for the School Buses. On the school laboratories we have factored a total of D28 million under the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and this can be found on page 143.

The other issues raised for projects, the Banjul Rehabilitation Project, it has been resolved and that we can provide the documentation that is why the project continues. And the sticking point was, if it is a Dollar-denominated project then it is classified as a loan that will have to come to the National Assembly even before we secured it. This one, it was a pre-financing (which I was privy to know). It is called the EPC and the Minister of Works is the expert and I think he came here on several occasions to explain. Initially, the whole idea was that the financing will be done but it was submitted and a whole year up to today as we are talking, we have not paid a single Butut to the Contractor because the proposal that was made was "I can work for one year pre-financing. The design, everything is documented and we can make it available to the Clerk of the House. Moving from the foreign to the domestic (to Dalasis), that is why it was not necessary to come for the ratification as a loan. No, it is classified under domestic debt this is why we are here to present to you the National Assembly for approval for this year that we will be able to pay. But again, let me re-emphasise it was a pre-financing and all the documentations including Cabinet's approval are available and we will make sure by tomorrow the Clerk of the House will have access to all these documents.

So most of the issues I guess, that the recommendation that all the allowances will now have to be taxed on the gross, I think when we go to the Committee of the whole House, the PS-PMO is here and we will be able to discuss those issues. So basically Honourable Speaker I think I have touched on majority of the issues, if not all. Most of them, line by line, we should be able to address it during the Committee of the whole House and I will be available to discuss any issue. Again, one of the issues that has

been raised over and over is the issue of deficit financing. Deficit financing, it does not take the representatives to be able to understand that everybody, all developing countries they operate on a deficit budget but it is how we manage it. Now what we have learnt is that not everything is something that can be scrutinised properly. All the projects, we have to make sure investments that we are going to make have a good rate of return or social benefits to the most vulnerable. So these are the issues that we have been battling on and our models now will be able to reveal if we have any investment that is coming we will be able to know, or even contracting any loan. But as at now what we have insisted, any loan that we are accessing is 50% concession, that is the foreign loan. On that note, I will still stay if there are any follow-up Honourable or do you have to come back during the Committee of the whole House?

THE SPEAKER: Okay, thank you very much. Once we release you, I think it will be a good idea if other Ministries come as well. *...interruptions...* Thank you very much and I will also thank all Honourable Members for their interventions as well. Honourable Minister thank you, and your team, we appreciate your input. I will now adjourn the session until tomorrow that is Friday the 29th of November 2019 at 10:00am when the House will resolve into Committee of Supply. This will give enough time, at least for those Committees who are yet to submit their reports to FPAC before the end of the day so that the reports can be consolidated.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The House stands Adjourned until Friday 29th November, 2019 at 10:00]

ADJOURNMENT