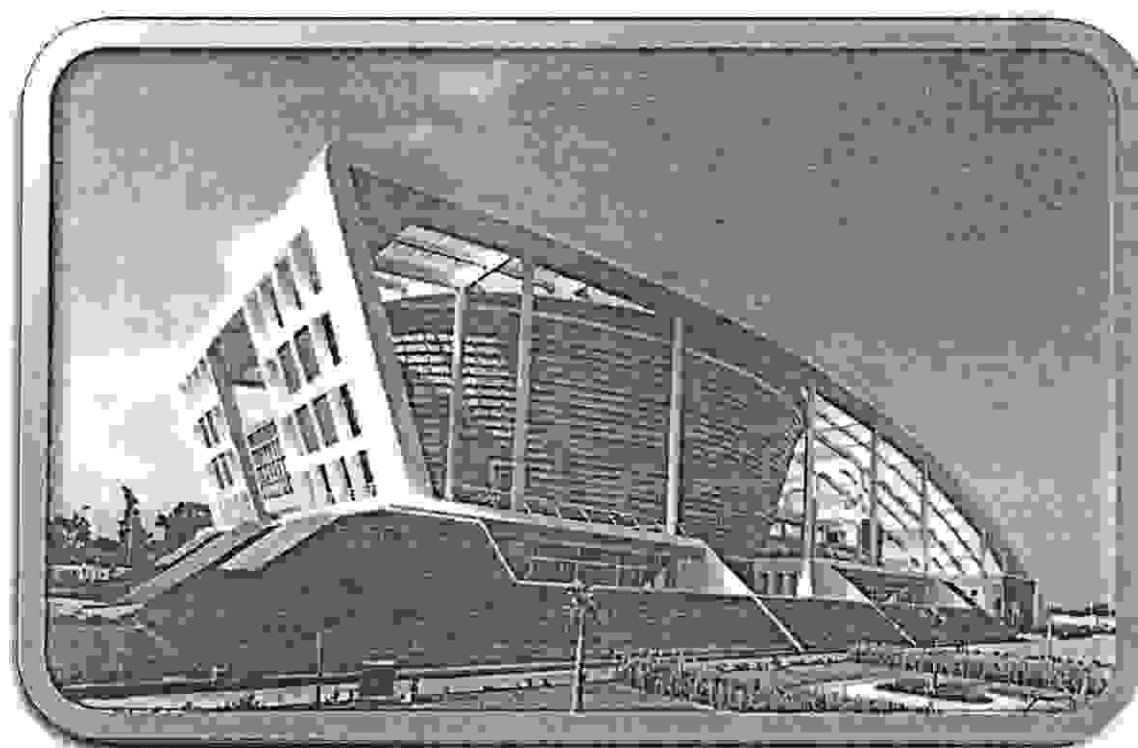




**National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane,
Banjul, The Gambia**

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

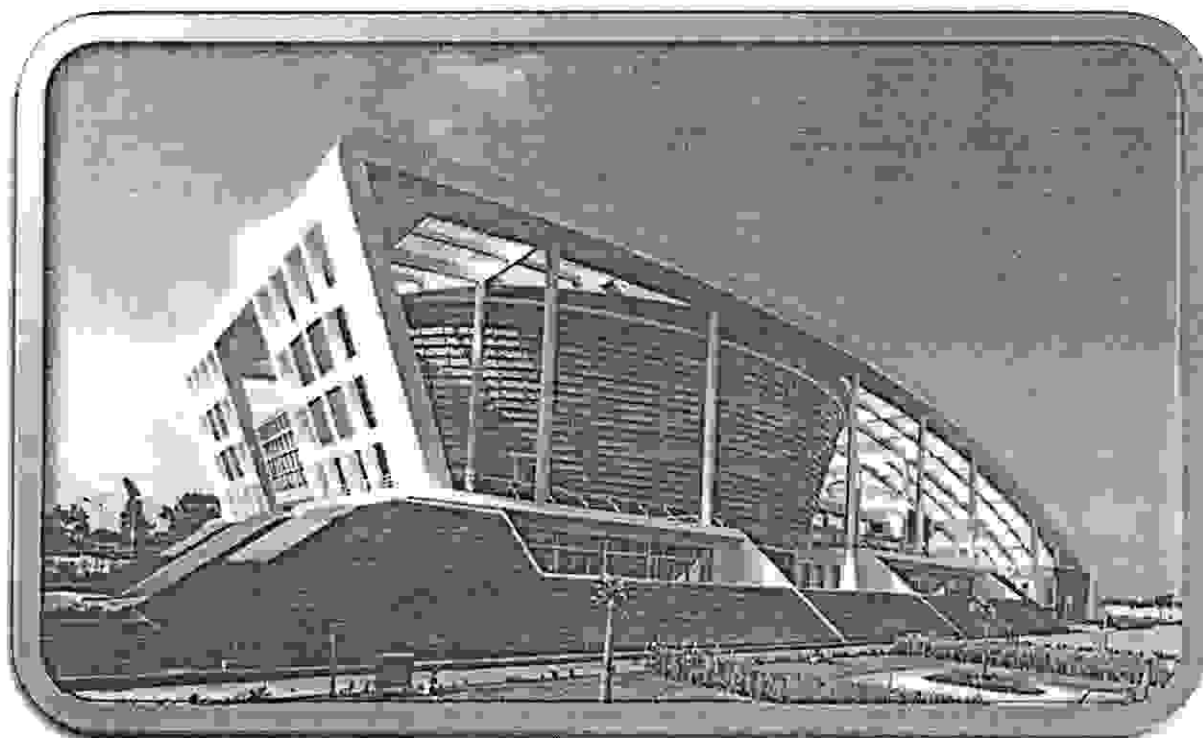
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION & SECOND SESSION – FIRST MEETING

MONDAY 12TH MARCH 2018 & TUESDAY 13TH March 2018

SESSION – 2018



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: I

NUMBER: 1 & 2

First Meeting of the First Session of the Fifth Parliament
of the Second Republic of The Gambia.

Proceedings of the Sitting Monday 12th March of the House, 2018.

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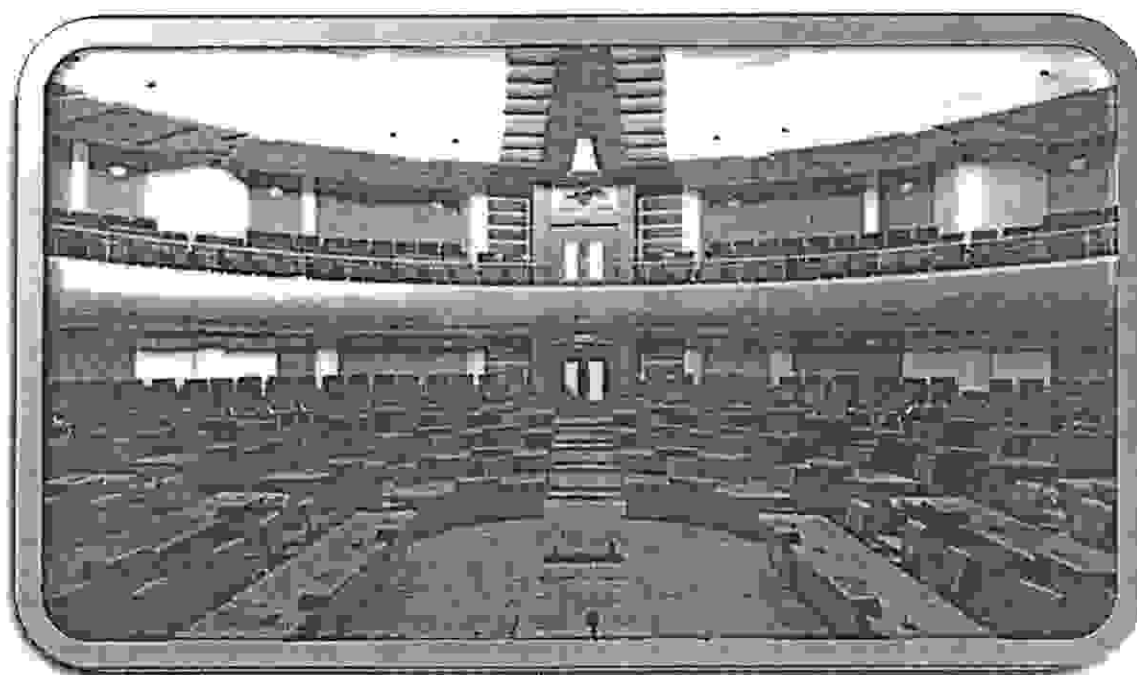
5. Questions for Oral Answers

[Hon. Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs]

6. MOTIONS

Be it resolved that this august Assembly do consider and ratify the:

- i. International Convention on Standard of Training Certification and Watch keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 [STCW-F1995]**



THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HOUSE**

**FIRST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY OF THE
SECOND REPUBLIC IN
THE 2018 LEGISLATIVE YEAR**

MONDAY 12th MARCH, 2018

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, I welcome you all to the First Ordinary Session of the National Assembly in the 2018 Legislative Year.

As you may all be aware, this Session is the First Ordinary Session of the 2018 Legislative Year after a long break of the plenary Assembly. I therefore pray to Allah, The Almighty, to continue guiding us through this Session and beyond.

Honourable Members, may I inform you all that there is an alteration in the Order Paper circulated earlier. Due to unforeseeable circumstance, the two Motions initially scheduled to be tabled today by the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure is now rescheduled until further notice. Furthermore, the Agenda of the Session has been revised and shall be circulated shortly.

May I seize this opportunity to recognise and thank Honourable Members for the good work and due diligence manifested during the Oversight Committee works. I also wish to extend same to the National Assembly Service for the support and guidance throughout the process. This shows that we have the interest of the country at heart and I would definitely urge us all to keep up the momentum or even do better.

Honourable Members, by way of information, the following Bills were passed by this august Assembly during the Fourth Ordinary Session of the National Assembly in the 2017 Legislative Year, and were assented to by H.E Adama Barrow President of the Republic of The Gambia.

NO.	Act and Act No.	DATE PASSED	DATE ASSENTED
1.	Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017 - 07 of 2017	11 th December, 2017	11 th January, 2018
2.	National Human Rights Commission Act, 2017 - 08 of 2017	13 th December, 2017	13 th January, 2017
3.	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission Act, 2017 - 09 of 2017	13 th December, 2017	13 th January, 2018
4.	Appropriation Act, 2018 - 01 of 2018	18 th December, 2017	05 th January, 2018
5.	Constitution (Amendment No. 2) Act, 2017 - 10 of 2017	20 th December, 2017	05 th January, 2018
6.	Constitution (Amendment No. 3) Act, 2017 - 11 of 2017	21 st December, 2017	05 th January, 2018
7.	Rent (Amendment) Act, 2017 - 12 of 2017	27 th December, 2017	26 th January, 2018

Honourable Members as you may be aware, the following Motions were laid and ratified before this august Assembly;

1. Laying of the Draft 2018 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Republic of The Gambia (01st January – 31st December, 2018 – both dates inclusive) **(By: Hon. Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs)**
2. Motion to Support for the Re-Entry of The Gambia to the Commonwealth of Nations. **(By: Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad)**, and;

Subsequently, a Report of the National Assembly was also laid and adopted before this august Assembly.

- The Preliminary Oversight Report of the National Assembly Select Committee on Health, Women, Children, Disaster, Humanitarian Relief and Refugees – Phase I – 07th – 21st November, 2017 **(By: Hon. Ouman Sillah, Member for Banjul North and Chairperson of the Committee)**

Honourable Members, as published in the Order Paper for today, the Honourable Minister for Finance & Economic Affairs will officially table the Report of the Auditor General on the audited Financial Statements of the Central Government of The Gambia for the year ended 31st December, 2014 and 31st December, 2015 before this august Body.

Before calling on the Honourable Minister, let me remind this august Assembly that as a convention, this Report, once tabled, an Honourable Member will move a motion to commit the Report to the relevant Committee of the National Assembly i.e. the Finance and Public Accounts Committee [FPAC] for a detailed scrutiny on behalf of the Assembly.

On that note, I would urge Honourable Members to kindly take note of the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the National Assembly during the course of this session. Thank you.

3. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SITTINGS OF FRIDAY 29th DECEMBER, 2017.

THE SPEAKER: Can someone please move that the Records and Votes of proceeding of the sitting of the National Assembly of Friday 29th December, 2017 be considered and adopted.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: I so move, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. FAKEBBA N.L. COLLEY [KIANG WEST]: I so second, Madam Speaker.
Thank you.

[Question proposed]

THE SPEAKER: We will go page by page.

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you, page 5, second paragraph where you have question put and agree to "it has been move and seconded that the Assembly sit beyond 1.00 p.m., Those in favour please say Aye, not in favour please say No, "Those" is omitted there.

THE SPEAKER: Any more corrections? *[Undertone]*

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Friday 29th December, 2017 was adopted as amended].

4. LAYING OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

Report of the Auditor General on the Audited Financial Statements of the Central Government of The Gambia for the year ended 31st December, 2014 and 31st December, 2015.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Good morning Madam Speaker and Honourable Members of the National Assembly. I beg to table the Report of the Auditor General on the audited Financial Statement of the Government of The Gambia for the year ended 31st December 2014 and 31st December 2015.

The audited Financial Statements included accounts that are controlled by the Accountant General's Department and do not include Public Enterprises, Local Government and Self-Accounting projects, with the exception funds are audited separately by external auditors through the office of the Auditor General. These

audited financial statements comprise of consolidated statements of cash received and payments made, statements of revenue and expenditure, detail revenue and expenditure comparisons, accounting policies and explanatory notes. The audited financial statements also contain additional statements as required by section 63 of the Public Finance Act 2014 and Part 2 of the cash basis and The International Public Sector Accounting Standards [IPSAS].

The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the legal and regulatory frameworks of the 1997 Constitution, the Public Finance Act of 2014, the Financial Regulations of 2016 and the International Public Sector Accounting Standards. There is a strong drive for Government to adopt International best practices thus the Government of the Gambia adopted IPSAS as the bases for preparing its financial statements.

The adoption of IPSAS is a necessary element in strengthening the governance framework and enhancing transparency;

- 1) That this has enabled the settling of appropriate minimum benchmark for discharge of accountability and transparency;
- 2) Provision of the framework against which audit is undertaken and allows improve quality and comparability of financial information reported by the public sector.

Honourable Speaker, the main matters arising from the Audit of the financial statements for the years ended 31st December 2014 and 2015 respectively recommends thereto on the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs through the Accountant General's departments are contained in the management comments section of the management letter of the Auditor General; that additional information and further clarification have also been compiled for sharing with the Auditor General.

The Backlog of the Audited Financial Statements

Honourable Speaker,

The challenges that are encountered during the migration of The Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS), Epicor 07 -09 cause backlog in the preparation and audit of the government financial statements.

However, these challenges have now been overcome and financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2016 have already been submitted to the Auditor General for audit. The preparation of the 2017 financial statement is currently underway and is expected to be finalized and the accounts submitted for audit by the end of June 2018.

In conclusion Honourable Speaker,

The Government financial statements are prepared from the IFMIS in accordance with the IPSAS; that due to the inherent performance challenges that are being encountered with epicor 09 version of the IFMIS, government encountered in the process of inverting the option of upgrading epicor 10 were these challenges have already been addressed. Government is also in the process of enhancing the tax administration, procurement, human resource management and the payroll and asset management systems amongst other public finance management resource reforms. These activities are aimed to improve the overall quality of the public finance management delivery within Government. I congratulate all the players in the management cycle including the quality oversight function which the National Assembly is effectively discharging.

On that note Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you very much. I rise to second the report of the Auditor General on the Financial Statement of the Republic of The Gambia for the year ended 31st December, 2014 – 31st December, 2015.

Madam Speaker, as you said earlier on looking at the document it is so bulky that I would therefore move a Motion to refer the report to the Finance and Public Account Committee for further scrutiny and report back to the plenary.

THE SPEAKER: But, I am thinking of the proper procedure, you second it and we get the motion to refer it. For now, you are seconding the Motion. Thank you.

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

[Question proposed]

THE SPEAKER: As I indicate earlier, Honourable Members as you aware that this is a very important report that requires meticulous and further consideration by this august Assembly. Not only that, I am just seeing its circulation now; I was with the impression that it has been circulated more than three weeks ago because I got mine more than three weeks ago. Unfortunately, it is just been circulated but notwithstanding; I think it is a very important document that needs proper scrutiny. On that note I would invite a Honourable Member, I think this is the proper time, to move a motion to commit the report to the relevant committee of the National Assembly for further consideration and report.

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU & MINORITY LEADER]: I rise to move a motion to refer the report to the Finance and Public Account Committee for consideration.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: I so second, Madam Speaker. This is a very important document therefore it needs to be properly scrutinise. We cannot just lay this document today and consider it. On that note, I thank you very much.

[Question proposed, put and Agreed to]

[The Report of the Auditor General on the audited Financial statements of the Central Government of The Gambia for the years ended 31st December 2014 - 31st December 2015 be committed to the Finance and Public Accounts Committee]

5. QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

[By: Hon. Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members we could recalled that we had a backlog from the last Session; some of the questions could not be completed.

Q. NO. 218/2017 [By: Honourable Member for Jeshwang]

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: Thank you Madam Speaker. May I just say for the purpose of records that I had clarifications earlier but I would like to read the question again?

Madam Speaker, I am interested in knowing from the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs, the factors responsible for the impressive and significant increment in the import cover from three [3] weeks to over four [4] months within this period?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, from January 2017, the confidence in doing business with the new government has improved drastically thus leading to re-establishment of bilateral-ties with EU, China and other donors. And for the first nine months of 2017, total budget support and concessional loans inflows amounting to US\$55.44 million on account of World Bank and EU support.

In addition, foreign currency inflows of government [gateway proceeds, Mineral mining proceeds, etc.] that were previously diverted by the former government

started hitting government accounts thus generating additional foreign currency thereby improving government reserve position. This together with the large budget and project support inflows led to the impressive position of our import cover to more than four [4] months in 2017 from a precariously low level of less than two [2] weeks cover by end 2016.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: Madam Speaker, could the Honourable Minister be kind enough to give us an update of the import cover as at now if he is in a position to do so please?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Unfortunately, I did not come with my statistics on this because these are figures that will move from month to month; but I can safely say that we are still above the four months level although I cannot give you the exact amount right now. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much. By extension it appears that we were been told that mining is actually taking place. Could I take it that Mining of Minerals is actually taking place and we have been told that also resources are been driven from there. Is the Minister is in a position to indicate when the mining started taking place and maybe eventually I will ask a question in terms of sum that had already been accumulated? But when did the mining started taking place after the new dispensation?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, mining in itself has not actually started; but the resources that were under the President's control have been moved into Central consolidated revenue funds. There are several companies interested in pursuing the mining of our sands deposit but as we know is a matter right now under the commission and we are waiting for that final budget to open the doors so that we can give out these licences for mining. But I must say it is well advance stage and we have identified those interested investors in that sectors.

The gateway in continuing, the resources were almost all taken by the former president, we had small change there. Now GAMTEL is managing the gateway on behalf of the government as a temporal measure because there are new reforms in the telecom sector and the government has already taken the policy to liberalise the gateway. But there are institutional reform in process. We are establishing a monitoring system in PURA and anti-fraud systems which will allow us to monitor exactly how many minutes of calls are coming to the Gambia and how many are going out and even within the local telecom sector. So that the operators will be allowed to terminate on their own. What government will do is to establish our tax level on this incoming calls which the operators will settle. So we are currently receiving the resources from GAMTEL. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Which enterprises are responsible for the mining if there is already one responsible?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: No! The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy are currently in charge of the mining sector and there are no public enterprises; these are private sector investors who are interesting in mining the sand deposits.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Could the Minister inform us the total amount of revenue accrued from mining for the year 2017?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: I would say that I do not come with those figures, if you want to know exactly we can submit the figures to the Office of the clerk later.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Madam Speaker, would the Honourable Minister tell this august Assembly what is been mine; what does this mining entail?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Simply these are the sand deposits from a layman perspective. I don't

want to dwell into that but geology would be in a best place to tell you the exact scientific attribute of this sand mining. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, but really I think with due respect the questions relating to mining should be directed to the relevant Ministries.

HON. BABA GALLEH JALLOW [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you Madam Speaker. The Minister in his answer said mineral mining proceeds that were previously diverted by the former government, started hitting government accounts thus generating additional foreign currency thereby improving government reserve positions. Currently, we have seen the depreciation of the Dalasi against major foreign currencies, what is the cause of that?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: There may be a slight related but there is not a direct correlation between income from mines hitting the accounts and the inflation in foreign currency. Foreign currency is being traded in an open market, free floating exchange rate system that we have this country. If there is pressure on any particular currency normally the demand is higher than supply, you expect the rates to go up. But am not saying that over the past six months or more, the rates have stabilised. You may have 5.00,10.00 bututs change but basically exchange rate have been stabilising except for the CFA which is been dealt with the local level by a lot of traders and not directly through the banking system fluctuating a little bit more but all the major foreign currency have actually been trading at a very stable rate. Thank you.

POINT OF ORDER

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: standing order [23] emphasise that we should allow any supplementary questions which deals with the question and the content of the answer. And as long as what is been asked is not against the standing order. In the Minister's answer, he mentioned that mining has contributed to the questions that was asked to the solution of the problem that was asked. So that is why the issue of mining came to the floor.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, but the Minister answered the question.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: well, I think you said that questions for mining should not be raised?

THE SPEAKER: I never said that. You asked the question and I allowed it.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: No qualms.

THE SPEAKER: Can I also just be heard, with due respect all Honourable members who asked supplementary question touched on mining and the questions was allowed. So I don't think it is fair to say that I refuse any question on mining. Thank you.

Q. NO. 219/2017 [By: Hon. Member for Serrekunda]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: We will still corporate with you Honourable speaker in other to make our Assembly move forward. Thank you.

Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs indicate to this august Assembly the sum received as loans and grants since the assumption to office by the current government, the sources and sum absorbed so far?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, please for the information of the National Assembly Member for Serrekunda Constituency find below a table providing detail response to his question.

Terms of loans signed in 2017 as at 30 November 2017

Loans and grants signed in 2017	LOAN/GRANT	AMOUNT	SIGNED DATE	CREDITOR	MATURITY	Grace period	INTEREST RATE	Grant element
Second additional financing for the maternal and child nutrition and health result project	LOAN	DR:2,400,000.00	3/2/2017	International Development Asso	38	8	1%	51.87
Development policy financing project [budget support]	LOAN	DR:22,300,000.00	11/7/2017	International Development Asso	38	7	1.50%	44.64
Additional financing for Banjul international Airport	LOAN	SD:19,000,000.00	17/5/2017	Saudi fund for development	30	5	1.00%	44.23
Inclusive growth promotion institutional support project	LOAN	UA 1,580,000.00	11/5/2017	African Development Bank	40	10	2	35

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker for the sake of the records what is detailed here should actual be read so that it will be in the Hansard. Some may know and some may not know. So essentially what one would want to know is concretely the formation as well as the interpretation of the drawing rights in dollars and dalasi so that in terms of grant aspect of the loan etc. I believe all these things need to be read, and then supplementary questions explain so that we know exactly what we are talking about.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Member, if you so please I can read it. I just

summarise for the sake of gaining time. But I read the loans and grants given in 2017.

Second Additional Financing for the Maternal and Child Nutrition and Health Results Projects: [Loan] is an amount of DR: 2,400,000.00. Drawing rights are the units of accounting using by the International Development Association [World Bank] and the rates vary from time to time but I have not put any rates here. This was signed 3rd February, 2017. The loan has a maturity of 38years, grace period of 8years and interest rate of 1%. The grant element is 51.87% from the World Bank.

Development Policy Financing Project: [Budget Support] DR:22,300,000.00 from the International Development Association, 38years loan, 7 years grace period, 1.5% interest and grant element of 44.64%.

Additional Financing for Banjul International Airport: [Loan] special drawing rights SDR: 19,000,000.00, signed 17 May, 2017 from the Saudi Fund for Development. Is a 30years' loan, five years' grace period, 1% interest and it has a 44.23 grant element.

Inclusive Growth Promotion Institutional Support Project: [Loan] [Units of Account] UA 1, 580, 00.00 from the African Development Bank signed 11th May 2017, 40 years' loan 10 years' grace period, 2% interest and 35% grant element.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, I would want the Honourable Minister to explain whether we have not received any grants from the EU and other bodies in 2017?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: This table was shown as at 30th November 2017, so we may not have covered the full 2017 grants. If it was a full year we would say maybe some of those fall later would be accounted for. We did receive €25,000,000 EU budget grants, that is true but I cannot tell you the exact dates at this point.

HON. MANJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister tell us, because I cannot understand when he said the table covered up to November. The question we are dealing with as at now is March. So why when the Honourable Minister is coming to answer these questions he did not make sure that it covers the whole of 2017 rather telling us is up to November. I cannot understand which is which. This question has been before him since March, so we expect the Honourable Minister to give us the current answer when dealing with question.

THE SPEAKER: Are you referring to March this year?

HON. MANJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: What I am saying is, the Honourable Minister when answering the Honourable Member for Serrekunda's question says that the table covers up to November 2017 and we are in 2018 March. So I cannot understand the Honourable Minister to stand in front of this august House telling us that it covers up to November. We expect the question to be answer in this session.

THE SPEAKER: I just want to repeat what I said earlier on during the Communication from the Chair that these are backlog of questions of 2017; these questions were asked last year 2017 not this current year. It is a backlog that we are trying to clear from last year. The answers were already given, but the Honourable Minister may have something to say on that. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: No, is fine.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, you quite right that this question was asked in 2017 and that's why we got this answer. But is it also possible for the National Assembly to help us because for us to be current, if a Minister is coming before this Assembly, any question that is asked to that particular Minister even if it had to take the whole day that Minister comes and responds to all the questions that are needing oral answers. That will address this issue of backlog.

Some questions are so urgent that they need urgent responds and if it delayed it becomes outdated.

THE SPEAKER: If you go by the number of questions you will have 218 questions, are we prepared to stay here till 10:00pm, 11:00pm to answer those questions? We go day by day and by the order paper that is why. We try as much as we can to make sure that all questions that are asked in any relevant sectors are referred to the relevant ministries for which answers will be provided. And of course the ministries all provided answers but then the business of the House did not allow this august body to deal with all the 280 questions. Our concern really is to clear the backlog and we are trying all what we can to make sure it is cleared.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Madam Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance be kind enough to provide the answer as it is stated in the original question that the grants and loans that we have received commencing from the assumption of the new government. Could you be able to help us with that answer?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, I think we have provided that answer. Each of these items even indicated the grant element. Some of them comes like the World Bank [package]; and we have 22,200,000 drawing rights and out of that 44.64% is a grant element. The others are all given in various categories. The information provided maybe what you have not heard is the grant which is in so many thousand and so many millions. Thank you.

HON. MANJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: What I want to mention is a point of observation on the question of the backlog of these questions. I think Madam Speaker this time around this august House should be prepared and willing to continue and exhaust all questions rather than keeping them for further session. I think we should put our hands together so that by next session we exhaust all the papers.

THE SPEAKER: We are equally concerned, this morning we discussed the issue and we are working out a mechanism whereby it would be adequately address. Thank you.

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, as the question is asking the amount of loan and grant since this government came into power. And then I have seen the amount of loan and grant that the Minister gave us. If my memory serves me well this Assembly ratified a loan with regards to the Laminkoto-Passimus road which is not captured in here. It was an additional loan from the Saudi fund.

THE SPEAKER: Essentially then what is the question?

HON. SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU & MINORITY LEADER]: That means that we are not provided with everything we still have some outstanding.

THE SPEAKER: I remember the Laminkoto-Passimus issue but that was in the Budget. I cannot recollect loans related to that. But any way is for the Honourable Minister. Maybe he will take note of that and comeback...we may revert to specific session to deal with backlog [just that] dealing with questions.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, I don't have any memory of this but I will take note and investigate and will write to the Office of the Clerk on the result for this. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH: [SERREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker we are definitely trying to be decent but it is important for the Minister also; that is what we are trying to do. We have been told just now and before and have raised questions in terms of grants provided for youth empowerment etc. what I am trying to say here right now even in the first answer we are told China etc. has provided resources with enablers to try and further exchange and increase our ability to have our resources. So essentially money has come and is not reflected here. What we can expect from the Minister to go back in due cause and give us the fact on issues that are being requested in this question.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Member, I do not have any problem in trying to update on this topic, but I want to also say we should take note maybe time difference as I said, this thing is as at 30th November 2017. So, will take note and provide you with the full year what we have received, will send it as a note to the Office of the Clerk. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable, I think it will be proper if we can have it, just take your time and let us have it. Thank you very much.

QUESTION NO. 220 OF 2017 [By: Honourable Member for Illiassa].

HON. DEMBO K.M CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Madam Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance tell this august Assembly whether there is any plan for Gambia government to bail out the economy?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, may I inform this august Assembly that the Ministry in collaboration with GRA is currently working on tax rationalization plan that will seek to reduce the multiplicity of taxes but also reduce tax rate on certain goods and products in order to spur investment and growth. On transforming The Gambia from a tax base economy, from January 2017, the current government has made efforts to redirect resources that were previously siphoned by the former President. Efforts at diversifying the domestic result base will continue in the coming fiscal years.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Madam Speaker could the Minister of Finance tell us how soon will this tax rationalization take effect and what rules they want to reapply if possible to name them.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Tax in economics is use as a fiscal policy. At various times, at some point in time you increase certain rate and some point you reduce rates. Depending on the

economic strategies at the particular point in time. So, it is a variable but Madam Speaker, you were aware of the tax measure that were taken in the last budget, we have reduced the tax on rice to zero, we have reduced cooperate taxes, staff income tax, we have done some of those adjustments and it remains the measure that the government used as an economic tool for spurring growth and investment in economy which will generate the required result for employment and income generation. Thank you.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, would the Minister for Finance confirm, because when you talk about the tax base economics you are basically referring to the fact that most of the revenue that is generated by the government is basically coming from tax. So, if I understand this question properly, is basically referring to; are you going to set up any other plan, do you have apart from this tax base economy that is actually going to increase the revenue of the government. If I am reading the question properly, I think it is basically asking for any other plans that the government actually have in place or plans to have in place that will actually reduce the over dependence on tax for this country. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you, I think looking at it from different angle is the same. This country depend largely on its taxes for financing investment, recurrent expenditure that is salaries, fuels and everything that has been budgeted. Now, a total transformation, is not an easy thing to achieve. This will be over a long time, maybe will be blessed with oil or diamond from somewhere and it will transform the economy in some ways when that comes. But other than that, the effort is there to give in some tips to the private sectors, to encourage more business, more private sector investment. You can see that interest rate are coming down and making a lot of effect to make sure that people have access to capital. Even at the current level it's still high, maybe 17- 18 person. But we are doing our effort to make sure that the private sectors can access capital and invest in the economy so that there is growth. So, hopefully if this result realize in the near feature, the country will still

generate more income and there will be still be more taxes but the dependency and the tax maybe change in some form or the other. So, is not an easy transformation? Thank you.

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you Ma. The Minister in answering to some of the supplementary questions, mentioned about tax rationalisation that is why they put zero tax on rice. I want to ask the Honourable Minister whether he has any explanation to this august Assembly why there is zero tax on rice yet still it does not have any effect on the prices of rice in the markets. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Member. You know this tax become effective in January 2018 so that it would not affect the old stock of rice that exist in the market today. But any new stock that is coming in, we are closely monitoring this and will make sure that the benefit of this tax reduction is pass on to the public.

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NIUMI]: Thank you Madam Speaker. It seems that the Honourable Minister is justifying why the price of rice should persist base on the old stock. It should be a principle that when you say this is what we have done, the people should feel it rather than hearing. We have seen and said here that the prices of essential commodities are still increasing and our people are lingering in pain in affording these commodities. Mr Minister, please it is time that some action is done rather than excuse. Thank you very much.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I wish everything is like that, just say it and it happens [laughter]. I would say that I want to change Gambia from been a least develop country to a first world and from the poor country to one of the best or the richest country in the world. But unfortunately the law of nature does not work like that and am sure there are some operations also.

The impact of this measure will be felt that is what I can assure you, but it has to be through rational time. Importing rice is not like every day No. Maybe within these

three months, you may have one vessel that is coming or another will come maybe after 2, 3 months and so on. So, is not as regular as you think. We will start monitoring from this year first January, all those that are coming in, we have already taking steps to monitor this and definitely we will try to make sure that the consumers benefit from this duty that we are forgo. We pray for a day when we say something and they happen on the same day. But right now unfortunately I will have to go through a process and I think the reasonable time should be allowed for this to take effect. Thank you.

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Thank you very much Ma my question is already asked and answered by the Honourable Minister. So, I withdraw.

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. My question is, what measures are to be taking to bail out the country from been tax base economy. Actually in the nutshell, what should be done is to invest in the productive sectors of the economic such as agriculture maybe tourism and so on, so that the country will not depend entirely on tax. So, my question is, what is the Ministry of Finance doing in that regard. Thank you?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, we have lunch National Development Plan 2018 to 2021 and this entails government's plan in all the various sectors of the economy, such as Agriculture, Tourism, Infrastructure, Education, Health and so on. This is the kind of investment roadmap that the government envisages for this four years' period. So those plans will provide you with the detail, I believed we have given the National Assembly the summarised version if not we will make it available to you and that will give you all the investment plans of the government through these sectors.

SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker, part of my question has been raised by Nianija representative. Honourable Speaker, am interested to know, you have said that the current government has made effort to redirect resources that were previously siphoned by the former president. Am

interested to know how much resources have we gain from the fund that have been siphoned off, would you be able to help us with that? Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, I do not think that one has any bearing on this particular question, am not sure we have mentioned in the movement of resources that have been diverted under this tax base question. So, really I cannot give you any answer as to say this is the amount, it's still ongoing, it's still changing daily at the commissions, they are discovering new accounts, new funds. I would not be able to give you that up to date figure today. If you so require it, we can try to see what is available in information and supply this Assembly. Thank you.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Madam Speaker, I have raised my hand well before these people raise their hands. Halifa since you are the one registering, you should sit somewhere you can see people, because I raised my hand before Lower Niumi and upper Niumi.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Still on the government over dependence on taxes to run the economy. The Minister told us that government is waiting for the private sectors to come and invest. So, in the event where they are not coming or they are late in coming what measures do you have in place or what is government considering to put in place to reduce the dependence which we all know is unsustainable. Do you have any contingency plans, because it appears they are not coming or they are slowly coming? So, what is the government doing to invest in productive sectors and reduce the dependency on taxes and burden on the tax payers?

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Member, may I know the supplementary question that your question is referring to?

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL SOUTH]: The Honourable Minister in responding to the questions told us that--,

THE SPEAKER: Which question is it referring to?

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL SOUTH]: The dependence on taxes.

THE SPEAKER: Oh the tax issue

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL SOUTH]: So am asking him, he said they are waiting for the private sectors to come and invest. So, it appear that government is currently depending on taxes and this is going to continue. What am saying is, is that unsustainable? What measures do they have in place or are they considering to put in place to ensure that if the private sector does not come government will reduce its dependence by investing in the private sector or even collaborating with the private sector. We haven't heard that and it is very unsustainable for government to continue depending on the private sector.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. Honourable Member, I think maybe it is a waste to say that Gambia should be zero tax but the reality is, if you go to the US who are far more developed than us taxation still forms a major component of their government's in economic activities. You go to Europe is the same thing. So, even if you go to the Arab state Saudi, they are now putting taxes on certain items which they are not doing before, even the haji is changing in its format. So, taxation is not an evil thing as it is stated, is your country, my country, everybody's country and we share that responsibility to raise the resources to develop it.

You want Banjul street to paved, you want the sewage running, you want the lights, you want other development, you want youths activities, youth employment and taxation form part of those resources, we need to implement the projects and programmes that we have. So, to reduce it, is good to motivate more businesses to grow to encourage employment and income generation. But is not like it will be a government policy to drive toward a zero tax economy, no country in this world is at that stage were the government is at zero tax. I think we have to be clear and send the right message to the people that taxation is an obligation for the citizen and we have to try to honour it. Thank you.

HON. DEMBA SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank you very much madam speaker. Still on tax, the Honourable Minister talked of tax deduction but last year the prices of diesel and petrol was reduced within a short time it was increased again. Also he said the tax on cement is 0%, but it has reach to a level that they have increased it to D340 for a bag of cement. So, is it that he is saying it verbally or he is doing it without consulting the various stakeholders, we want to know. Because when it is there the people have to feel it Honourable Minister.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much Honourable speaker, well Honourable Member we are not just speaking we are acting. On fuel, when this new government came in we initiated a liberalize policy which will allow competition and allow those who can have the capacity to bring in fuel to bring it. As opposed to what was happening in the previous regime were there was a monopoly by one businessman. Now, fuel is not something we have in the Gambia we don't produce it and if you are aware of the world market price of fuel, this has been fluctuating wildly in the world market over the years. At one point it went very low to under 50 dollars a barrel and at some point it went high as 100 dollars or more for barrel and we are consumers of fuel, we don't determine what the world market price is.

So, at the early stage, the prices were falling in the world market and what this government did was to pass on that benefit of a reduce price for the consumers. But later in the year, it started going up again for which we don't have a choice we have to pass it on.

The previous regime it didn't matter whether the fuel prices went to zero, they always increase prices. Some prices are always increasing and nobody complain about that. But here now we are giving you that benefit of the free market when it goes down we will bring the prices down so that you benefit from it but when it goes up the market determines so the price will also go up. So, we have to adjust to that free market system and is the same thing in other countries it goes up and goes down even in Europe and so on, their fuel price fluctuates the same way as the world market prices. So, we pray for a better day when we will have our own oil.

then we can just reduce it to a certain level. But you can see the crisis also even in Nigeria which is an oil producing country with their consumers when they want to remove the subsidies, the people were up and demonstrating against it. And they are producing oil, but it takes lot from the government budget. So if we want to continue bringing it down, then I have to come back to this Assembly and say we are taking this resource and putting it as a subsidy for fuel that may mean we either have to raise more taxes but you have find the source somewhere.

So, if we allow the market to play, am sure nobody wants the cost to rise on and on. But it has been coming down, like last month one of the items came down by 60 something bututs it was pass on, there was a reduction. So is not always increasing when there is reduction given to the consumer. I hope that I answer your question.

Cement, sorry, actually there has been no movement on the tax on cement so far and is not one of the items I brought in this house. What happened was, there was a shortage in the market and dealers and distributors were taken advantages of that to increase their prices to a level that so high. We are looking at it, at finance we are thinking of measures to allow greater importation of cement to meet the gap. I think one of the major dealers in cement is Jah Oil, but has not been importing because it is doing some investment in machineries and decided to temporally stop importing cement and that create a lot of pressures on the supply that is existing from Gacem and Salam and the others they cannot meet the demand. But this is a temporal situation and hopefully it should be shorted out soon. Thank you.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much madam speaker. I apologize. Honourable Minister I would like to ask whether there is any mechanism that your Ministry can take before making a pronouncement. With this new dispensation you cannot make a pronouncement up to 3 months the price of rice still remain the same if not more. So, the layman in the street will not understand what the Honourable Minister is calculating. It is better Honourable Minister for your ministry to do a proper calculation before making any

pronouncement to the public. Because if you are reducing price of any commodities make sure that immediately it has to be effective from the day of the announcement but not more than 60 days. Otherwise the creditability of the new dispensation will be questioned by the electorate. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Members, I think we should all be guided by the provision of our standing orders. We are at a liberty to ask any question but for our recommendations and suggestions, we can wait during the cause of the adjournment debates. So, let's just be mindful of the rules and procedures that we are supposed to follow.

HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you very much. Still on the issues of taxation and the reduction of tax on rice and the impact we might feel in few months. Honourable Speaker, just excuse the statement but it leads directly to the question. I have a feeling that the impact, we might be disappointed about the significance of the impact this zero percent reduction on taxes on rice might have, because the issue is, if you look at the rice packet, it is control by few people, it is more of a cartel and most of them are not Gambian. We have seen previously in the years 2009 and 2012, government through the AMRC tried to break into the rice market to reduce the prices. Talking about the other ways of reducing the price of rice as it is the essential commodity. I think the main issue when it come to the rice market is not about taxation, I think the issue is about capital, because if you look at it; to bring a vessel of rice you might need an amount of 60 million dalasi to start.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable, am sorry is a supplementary question, we are all very eager to explain, we have our suggestions but this time around can we make a supplementary question.

HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Ok, Honourable Minister, is the government looking at, like empowering Gambians by giving them guarantees like lots of credits, because if you look at the people involved, they might get loans from other countries on a rate of interest like 2% or 3%. Here the interest is about

27%, is the government looking at ways of empowering Gambians to get involve in the rice market, to create a competitive business environment, I think this will really reduce the prices of rice rather than taking out the tax. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I think we mentioned the issue of interest rate in the country and the government is doing its best effort to try and reduce this and we succeeded slightly from 24 to 18%. There is still more that needs to be done, to bring it down to a level where it will be easier for investors to access the resource available in the Commercial Banks.

Government is reducing its borrowing through the fiscal consolidation that is where Treasury bill are coming from 15% to around 6%. So, Banks have lot of liquidity and they need to engage the private sector to give out loan to generate funds. Is not easy to do business now, just putting their money in treasury bills and then relaxing. The rates are going down, we need to generate more income and they have to be proactive. We hope to reach that point but it is a process. We have to make efforts and there is a time line between polices and the result of those policies.

The economy is not a simple thing, it is a dynamic. You will start policy today, and you may have the results a year later or in two years' time. So, we make effort to encourage private sector to get into business. For guarantees the government is trying to get out of that. We have already issued the circular to say we are not guaranteeing the state own enterprises or private sector and we are not trying to secure new loans which are not concessionary. So, really to say we will issue to individuals that is out of the question. There are banks who have funds and you need to engage them to see whether you can raise funds to bring in vessel and so on. So, we have to be enterprising. It will take time but I think gradually we will get there. Thank you.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]: The Honourable Minister has already dealt with the issue so.....

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, the question alluded to two sources of government revenue; tax and what is none tax. And essentially the none-tax is sovereign national wealth, I think the question is alluding to the fact that tax is unsustainable and how do we supplement government revenue through non tax forces and one source is the mineral that has been mentioned. The question is that what is siphoned is been redirected in the productive base, which productive base? And if the productive base is to move away from taxation wouldn't the productive base be Honourable Minister, the mineral that are already available, which because of the commission of inquiry we are been told cannot be mined. Is that rational Honourable Speaker? Would you be willing to consider finding ways and means legally or any other means to ensure that what was siphoned and now available will be directed in that mining sectors to increase the capacity to harness sovereign national wealth.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Member, I think it will all be going around on with the same issues. It is true we want non-tax revenue, we want to increase our sovereign wealth but we also have to look at the reality on the ground, how much of that is there, even if we encourage the private sector growth; they expect the tax revenue to grow along with that because they will be paying company tax, they will start paying income tax and other taxes. So, it will create income for the population, the citizen, the employment, it will make the economy grow. Our resources like the sand mining or oil drilling, well you have investors for the sand mining. Government does not have to put in that significant result that is required, maybe to buy the machinery and build the capacity---we have investors from the private sectors who are investing in that resource. For oil, do we have the capacity to do our drilling ourselves? We can say let the government take the initiative, we go out to the sea and drill not so? [Interruption]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Point of clarification.

THE SPEAKER: You asking for clarification, you can go ahead.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, I do not want the Minister to introduce mediocrity in what I have said. I have not mentioned oil at all. I said there is already capacity for mining. I asked whether what he said in his answer that money has been siphoned, it is now been collected and directed to answer the question to non-tax sources of investment, I asked which those sources and I mentioned that manning is a potential for investment. That is what I have said and he should not go into any other area, am mentioning what is concrete.

THE SPEAKER: So essentially that is your suggestion, am I right?

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Is a question am asking, whether that's where they quote, wouldn't they invest in that sector and limit to that sector and no other area.

THE SPEAKER: Very well, thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you for that clarification, excuse my limited understanding but if you say sovereign wealth it is a plural includes all the wealth in the country, that is why I brought this. The oil is also a wealth for this country. So, If you are specific to the mining sectors, I will said we will go along with private sector investment rather than to take our resources ourselves and go into an area where we do not have all the capacities in term of technical, geological, because it involves more than just digging and so on. You have to get the quality, you have to know what you mining. So, I am comfortable engaging the private sectors in this area. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I kindly take the last question from the Honourable Member for Kantora.

HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the opportunity. I will like to agree with the Honourable Minister that no country would have really go for no tax because these are ways that citizen also participate in building their country. In term of your mechanism for tax reduction, wouldn't you find it necessary to reverse the VAT that has been imposed by the previous regime? As a less developing country, to introduce VAT system

probably might be too much to operate. So, in term of policy or programme you have in reducing tax, don't you feel it's necessary to reverse the VAT system in The Gambia? Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The VAT is one of the major component of our tax revenue and you go anywhere, you will find that VAT is a major tax item for their government's revenue source. I do not think this is an idea that we should look at right now especially when we are trying to mobilize and enhance our resources internally to increase domestic results. So, at this point I do not think that is a wise consideration to put into the table. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 221 of 2017 [By: the Honourable Member for Illiassa]

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister tell this august Assembly whether there are plans to introduce control mechanisms on the clearing and forwarding of goods in the country because noticeably a lot of unlicensed players particularly some staff members of GPA and customs are involved.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE]: Madam Speaker, may I inform this august Assembly that the clearing and forwarding of goods in the Gambia is only done by registered importers or agents. Furthermore, these agents and importers must have access to the asycuda system which is at customs.

[SUPPLEMENTARY[S]]

HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Madam, Speaker, can the Honourable Minister clarify further because to my understanding the question here is, I do not think the Honourable Member has any fact to back his claim here. He is accusing some Staff Members of the GPA and customs of involvement in clearing and forwarding of goods in this country. And they are the ones who have access to this asycuda system you talking about. So, if at all there is a claim that there are some conflicts of interest, I think the Honourable Minister

need to elaborate little bit more there or conduct an investigation to see whether there is any Member of staff of these agencies involve in this particular dealings.

THE SPEAKER: I stand to be corrected, but it appear as if the question meant for the Honourable Member. If I get you right; you asking for the bases of his allegation.

HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Yes! That is what I said.

THE SPEAKER: And I do not think the Honourable Minister can really answer that.

HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Yes! To me the answer is very basic and it means that there is a tendency of this particular staff members who have access to the asycuda system.

THE SPEAKER: Then that is a statement of fact.

HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Well I cannot back that.

THE SPEAKER: You see, we are dealing with supplementary question and if you do not have any – I do not think I would want to entertain a dialog. Please can we just close it. Honourable Nominated Member if you have a supplementary question you can take the floor.

HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]: Thank you, excuse my ignorance but I just want a brief explanation of what this asycuda system entailed and how it is a control mechanism, just an explanation?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: The asycuda system is been use by the customs for processing its transaction and this is a system introduced by ECOWAS for its Member states. From time to time they upgrade it. I understand they are now trying to move to the asycuda world, which is a more developed system. So, custom is using this as a processing tool for all clearances. Thank you.

HON. MUHAMMED NDOW [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you Madam Speaker, concerning the answer to this question, the unlicensed clearance, I think these are the people who do not have the license and are not authorised to do clearing and forwarding. But normally some of them do use the stamp of the license agency to do clearing and forwarding. So, am not saying that the staff of GPA and customs are doing it but I believe that there are others who are doing it, using agency stamps to do the clearing and forwarding.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry is that a supplementary question or are you making a statement?

HON MUHAMMED NDOW [BANJUL CENTRAL]: No am just making a statement.

THE SPEAKER: According to our standing orders we cannot make statements, let's ask the question, the relevant question and then we try to get the answers. Thank you very much.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. My question is, since it is only the registered importers who are supposed to be engage in this practise, would the Minister be willing to investigate whether there are staff of the GPA involve in clearing and forwarding in order to stop the practise, because it can be abused. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I will gladly bring this to the attention of the Management of GPA and Customs and they will address the situation. But it will help also if the Honourable Member has material information that is factual to put this forward to the management of this institutions. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question number 222 [By: Honourable Nominated Member Ndey Yassin Secka].

HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, rent is so expensive and it is getting more and more expensive. The agencies are making rent even more difficult, you have to pay them

first before they even show you a room. So, is the government coming up with strong mechanisms to solve this problem because is really getting out of hand. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. Madam Speaker, may I inform the august Assembly that the question raised on rent is under the purview of the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government and hence I will advise that the question be redirected to the said Ministry as they are in charge of regulating rent matters. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question Number 223 of 2017 [By: the Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol].

HON. ALHAJI SANKUNG JAMMEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. Madam Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs clear our doubts on the issue of fiat pick-up trucks allocated to NAMs i.e. are the pick-ups owned by the NAMs, if yes what are the modalities of the ownership and who bought the fifty-seven pick-ups for the NAMs. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, I would like to inform this august Assembly that the vehicles were not purchased from government funds and the question should be directed to the office of the President for clarification. I do not have any information to clarify. Thank you.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]: Honourable Speaker thank you very much, I want to use this opportunity to call the attention of the Office of the Clerk to section [111] of the constitution paragraph [1], "*There shall be a National Assembly services to provide services and support for the National Assembly*". So, if that is the fact, I think if questions are put before them, as the technocrat or the technicians of the Parliament they should be able to direct the National Assembly Member and tell

him your question should be directed to this particular Ministry so that the question would not be sent to the wrong Ministry. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The questions for this morning session are been completed, may I take the opportunity to thank the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs for the answers provided to this august Assembly. Honourable Minister you are now relieved. Thank you very much.

I think that is all for the day as per the order paper, I once more take the opportunity to thank everybody for your participation in this proceedings and I also want to remind the Honourable Members that the President of the Republic of Senegal would be arriving here this afternoon on a state visit for a day or two, that is today and tomorrow. So, he is scheduled to arrive at 4:30. All Honourable Members are invited at the ceremony at the Banjul International Air Port. Arrangement will be made through the office of the Protocol to facilitate entry of Honourable Members.

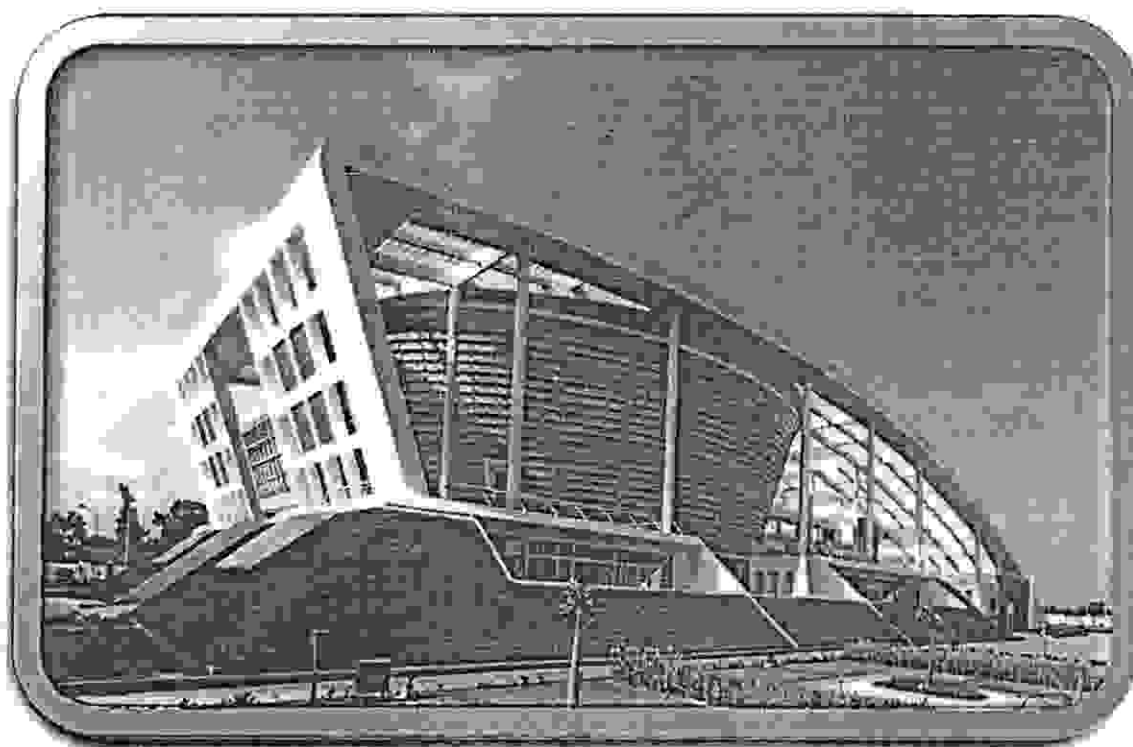
I would also like to inform you that during the lunch hour, while you are having your lunch, the document for tomorrow will be circulated at the canteen.

On that note, I would now put the question:

[Question proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[For the House to adjourn until Tuesday 13th March 2018 at 10:00a.m.sharp]

[ADJOURNMENT]



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SECOND SESSION – FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY 13TH MARCH, 2018

SESSION – 2018



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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First Ordinary Session of the Fifth Assembly in the 2018 Legislative Year
of the Second Republic of The Gambia.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the Assembly
Held on Tuesday, 13th March, 2018.



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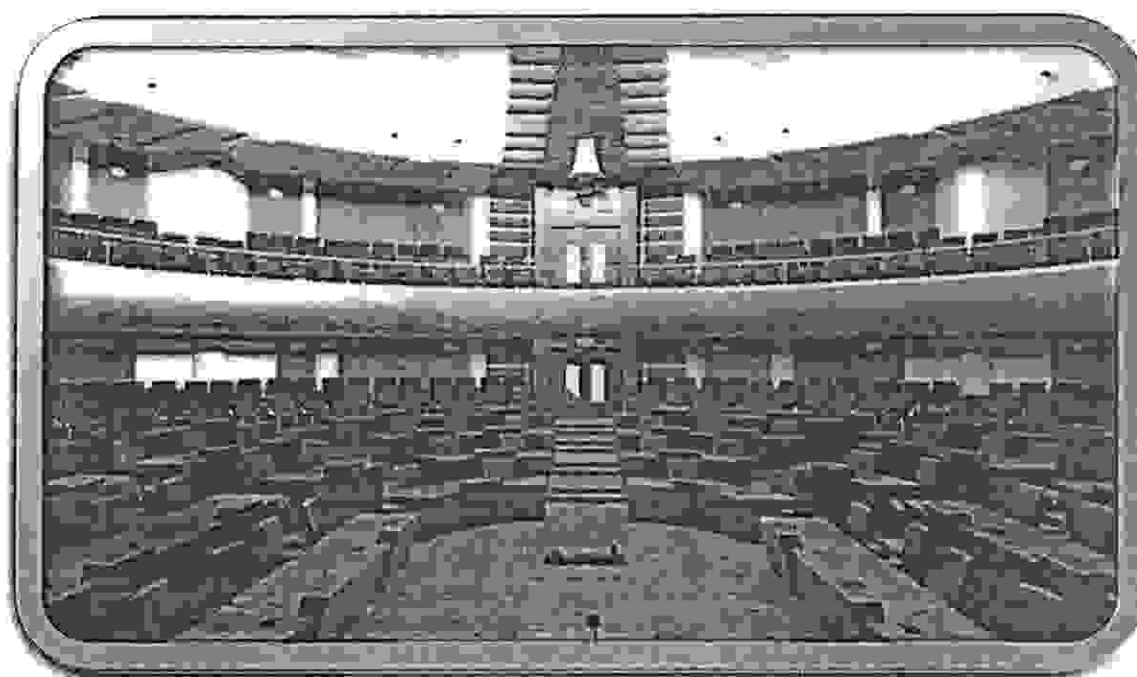
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4. Laying of Papers and Reports

- i. Report of the Gambia's Delegation to 2017 Westminster Seminar On parliamentary Practice and Procedure for the Period of 13th-17th November, 2017 [By: Hon. Bakary Camara-Kiang Central & Head of Delegation]**

- ii. Report of the Gambia's Delegation to 2017 Westminster Workshop for Public Accounts Committee for the period 04th-06th December, 2017 [By: Hon. Alhagie Drammeh-Jeshwang & Head of Delegation]**

- iii. Report of the Gambia's Delegation to the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Conference (PUIC) for the period 13th-17th January 2018 [By: Hon. Alh. Momodou LK Sanneh-Deputy Speaker & Head of Delegation]**



THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY

SECOND SESSION – FIRST ORDINARY OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

TUESDAY, 13th MARCH, 2018

1. PRAYERS:

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

*[The House met at 10:30 a.m. in the New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye lane,
Banjul.]*

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

The house was called to order

1. PRAYERS:

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The house was called to order

2. COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR [There was no communication from the Chair].

3. Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 12th March, 2108.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 12th of March, 2018 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, 12th March 2018 be considered and adopted?

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: I so move, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. DEMBA SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

[Question proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any issues or observations amendments for the records from Honourable Members. Sorry yesterday we had a problem with the communication system am not sure whether it has improved today.

HON. BABA GALLEH JALLOW [SANIMENTERENG]: yes page 3,

THE SPEAKER: Can we start with page 1, please anything on page 1, any corrections or amendments? No, ok then Page 2, page 3.

HON. BABA GALLEH JALLOW [SANIMENTERENG]: Page 3, the second to last paragraph, at the this juncture, Madam Mariam Jack Denton by way of information, notified Honourable Members with regards to the Bills, Motions and Reports that were tabled during the Fourth Ordinary in 2017 Legislative year. "Session" is missing.

THE SPEAKER: Yes thank you, I think the table office has capture it. Anything else on page 3.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]: The same page 3, first paragraph the one beginning with Honourable Speaker Madam Mariam Jack Denton just after communication from the chair, "you shower blessings on" not shower blessings into.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, he got it. Anymore on page 3, we move to page 4.

HON. BABA GALLEH JALLOW [SANIMENTERENG]: Page 4, second paragraph instead of Hon. Fabakary is "Hon. Fakebba".

THE SPEAKER: Anymore corrections on page 4? No, we move over to page 5. My left hand side page 6, 7.

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you. The first paragraph after the short heading Those in favour say "Aye" "Those" not in favour say "No"

THE SPEAKER: Please table office make sure you always capture that. Any last minute corrections? No thank you.

[Question been Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

*[The Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday
12th March, 2018 has been adopted as amended]*

3. Laying of Papers and Reports

i. Report of the Gambia's Delegation to 2017 Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure for the Period 13th-17th November, 2017 [By: Hon. Bakary Camara-Kiang Central & Head of Delegation]

HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you Madam Speaker I wish to report on the Gambia's Delegation.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Clerk what is wrong with the other mic that we were using yesterday?

HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]: Report on the Gambia's Delegation to 2017 Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure held from 13th-17th November 2017.

Introduction

From Monday 13th-Friday-17th November, 2017, CPA-UK hosted the 2017 Westminster seminar on parliamentary practice and procedure for first term-parliamentarians and newly appointed procedural/committee clerks from across the commonwealth.

The annual Westminster Seminar is CPA-UK's flagship capacity-building Programme and one of the most eagerly anticipated by CPA Members. The Programme brought about fifty commonwealth parliamentarians and Clerks from 21 countries.

Members and Clerk from Commonwealth legislatures, including the Gambia in an observer capacity, joined a five-day Programme to explore parliamentary democracy, practice and procedure within a Westminster framework. The ever-evolving Programme highlights current best practice and how parliaments adapt to changing domestic and global political environments.

Delegation

The Gambia was represented to this programmes.....[interrupted]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable sorry, may I make a suggestion, everybody has a copy of the report and a copy also maybe will be available in the library, so may I suggest that you just summarize, give us the gist of the report rather than reading it. Again I don't know what is the view of the Honourable Members on that? If you agree we summarize our reports and then make it available in details. Yes if you can just pick-out the most important paragraphs. Thank you.

HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]: Ok we look at page 5, where you have the Westminster system: a comparative discussion that is an important part.

The 'Westminster System': A Comparative Discussion

Lord Lisvane KCB DL, a crossbencher from the House of Lords, provides an overview of the 'Westminster System' and the current challenges it faces. These include representation of constituents, restoration of the palace of Westminster and, Brexit-the largest peacetime transfer of powers from the legislative to the executive.

During the open floor discussion, lord Lisvane also explained the UK parliament's web presence, the petition system and the division of electoral boundaries.

New Wine, New Wineskins

Dr. Tarcisus Makuka, a lecturer at St. Mary's University, explore the kind of leadership the world requires-those that are able to lead from the future.

He outlined that leaders should be tuned in to their constituents' needs, demonstrate courage and innovation and tap into more than one source of intelligence-including emotional, spiritual and practical intelligence. Dr. Makuka gave delegates practical suggestions and advice for their roles as leaders.

21st Century Parliaments: This session began with the Hon. Speaker Tan Chuan-jin MP, Speaker of the Singapore Parliament who spoke about the increased expectations of constituents particularly in the age of increased use of social media

and misinformation. He explained the diverse nature of Singapore and the various techniques that are used to ensure different people are represented.

Arlene Bussette, Head of Parliamentary Development at CPA, spoke on the opportunities of communicating directly to citizens by their elected representatives. She outlined the various ways of effective representation through programmes that focused on engagement and inclusivity.

Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth then discussed the challenges they face with each other and the panel.

The Speaker of the House of Commons

The Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP spoke to parliamentarians on his role as the speaker of the UK House of Commons. He highlighted challenges the role is faced with including representing constituents, giving members the floor and permitting urgent questions.

He also outlined his experiences in reforming the role and described to parliamentarians what a good question would look like.

Clerk of the House of Commons

David Natzler, the Clerk of the UK House of Commons-the principal constitutional adviser to the house explained the responsibilities, experiences and challenges of his role. He gave guidance to fellow Clerks and discussed balancing the procedural commitments of the clerk and the governance of parliament.

Final Session

Parliamentarians heard from Anna Dickson, the second Clerk of the Backbench Business committee in the House of Commons who explained the role of the committee in allocating debating time for Backbenchers on the various issues that are raised to them by Members.

Prime Minister's Questions

The Rt Hon. Baroness Primarolo, the former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons gave an introduction of Prime Minister's question (PMQs) outlining the process of the most high-profile weekly debate. She explained the procedure, preparation and tactics involved. Delegates then watched PMQs live.

Committee Hearing Exercise on Sustainable Development Goal

Baroness Young of Hornsey OBE from the House of Lords briefed the delegates on *Transparency in Supply Chains*, and how businesses should look for modern slavery and human trafficking and her current private member's bill to tackle modern slavery in supply chains.

The Hon. Filomena Tassi MP, the Deputy Government Whip in Canada chaired the Committee Hearing and delegates questioned witness Neill Wilkins a Programme Manager for Migrant Workers at the institution for Business and Human Right and Chris Harrop a Group Marketing Director and Director of sustainability at Marshalls Plc.

Visit to the Education Center

In the morning, some of the delegates visited Parliament's Education Center, a facility that inspires and connect young people with parliament and democracy. The center is a world-class education facility that inspires and connect young people with parliament and democracy. It is a dynamic, stimulating environment, distinct from the school environment.

It makes use of creative and immersive technology to create a unique learning experience that generate a sense of anticipation in groups entering the space, and from which groups depart feeling inspired and excited about their Parliament.

Media Masterclass

In the morning, delegates took part in media and social media master class with Kate Faragher and David Vigar from bespoke Skills. The master class covered

techniques handling media and gave delegates practical ways of effectively communicating their messages.

Charities and NGOs

There was a panel discussion with charities and NGOs which explored funding, engagement with civil society and parliamentarians. The panel was made up of Julia Keutgen, a Programme Specialist for Parliamentary Development at UNDP, Graham Gordon, the Head of Policy at CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development), and Heather weir, the chief executive officer of the Northern Ireland Hospice and, Daniel Rubio, a Public Affairs Specialist at. WWF [World wide fund for nature].

Closing Session

Delegates reflected on their experiences over the week and discussed what they plan to do when they go back to their parliaments.

The 2017 Westminster Seminar ended with a closing reception at speaker's House where participants networked, awarded certificates and were offered a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

However, the Gambia's Delegation could not attend this closing part of the seminar due to the flight arrangement that same evening.

Acknowledgement

The delegation wishes to acknowledge, with immense appreciation and gratitude, the unflinching support of the offices of the Honourable Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly of the Republic of the Gambia.

It wishes to recognize also the support given by the Government of the Gambia under the leadership of His Excellency, The President of the Republic; of course which have earned the Gambia to be invited as a non-Member of the CPA to the CPA-UK Seminar. Finally, we are heavily indebted to the secretariat of the CPA-UK.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member, any seconder?

HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Any Honourable Members who wishes to take part in the debate may do so now.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity. I first want to thank the team that is Honourable Camara and the representative of the Office of the Clerk Mr. Mbye for this wonderful report.

Now I want to talk about how the report was structured, now if you look at the way the report is structured I think this is excellent and I think is worth actually following up because if you look at the report, see the table of content which is really very clear and you see acronyms, names also very clear and there is an introduction. So, this is the kind of report that we really need to adopt in this Assembly because it make it very easy for somebody to read and digest very easily and I want to commend the team for doing a wonderful job on this report.

The second aspect of my intervention basically is along the lines of the diversity and inclusion. When I saw in the report that part of the activities was about diversity and inclusion. This is excellent because Honourable Member's and the fact that we live in a country with diverse ethnic backgrounds and Religions; I think this is something we really need to understand as parliamentarians to ensure that we live in a better society.

We should not and we cannot at all times marginalize the minority be it religion, be it ethnic and this is something we really need to understand and tell people that we are all one, we are all one country and we need to work together whether in politic or religion. And I think this is something we really need to adopt as Gambia and also as parliamentarians. Finally, I want to thank them for coming up with a very wonderful report. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. In fact, that is what we are trying to do. We are trying to improve the capacity through the quality of the report and that will improve greatly and we will endeavour to continue doing that. Thank you very much for the complements.

May I also suggest to the Honourable Members if anybody is going through the records and find out something that would be useful toward enhancing the work, be it improving the contents or anything that can improve the general content of reports or anything for that matter, please, just have short write-up and we will take up with the relevant unit within the National Assembly and we will work toward it. I am sure there are certain things we can copy from their experience and bring it to the National Assembly for the benefit of everybody. Thank you.

HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker let also seize this opportunity to thank the team for a job well-done.

The Report is very explicit as it has details of what exactly transpired during the sessions but I would like to go further particularly if I refer this Honourable House to page 5, the Westminster system a comparative discussions.

The purposed of the session actually is for them to learn and see different things, so I would suggest perhaps during the session, they should have identified certain things which in their opinion if translated or introduce in this National Assembly will be of great help to the National Assembly.

Lot of lessons has been learnt and the report as I said is very explicit but I would suggest particularly page 8; if I refer you to page 8, the Prime Minister's Question which is also very important. Perhaps the lesson learned could have been identified and then compared to the way we do our business so that we can see where do we improve by way of making certain recommendations.

On that note Madam Speaker let me once again thank the team for a job well-done. The report is professionally done and is much needed and clean. Thank you.

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the privilege to contribute. In the first place I would like to felicitate the team that actually represented the Gambia in this very important occasion.

I may not have much to say but looking at it, if you get to the National Assembly we are all calling for the new Gambia, if you have contact with the Executives they are also calling for the new Gambia, if you also contact the citizen of course they are calling for the new Gambia and the citizen out there rely entirely on us. So, as a result it is very paramount for us to have such capacity building especially on exchange of good practices and procedure about parliamentary work.

The thing that interest me most Madam Speaker is the issue of awarding certificates to the participants, this is very important I think this is something that we need to encourage so that whenever we have trainings participants are awarded certificate. It would help not today but in the long run, this is something that would definitely help members. It was a very good move that actually the organizer of this programme were able to fulfil. On that note, I say thank you to the team and of course the effort that they have made so as to give us this comprehensive report. Thank you so much.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. These experiences should be encouraged because the objective is to learn and as well as to teach so in common we all grow in having the capacity to deliver.

Essentially is the Westminster system and they had comparative discussions I couldn't really see the compares in the report itself, what belong to us and what belong to others, essentially I have seen the attempt been made to deal with certain aspect of our own work. Under section [101] of the constitution we have the responsibility to consider Bills and pass them under section [100].

Clearly there has be an attempt in that particular programme to see how bills are presented and what type of debate and discussion on bills covers, we have also under section 101 of our own constitution section 102 do have certain powers. We do have review powers, the Executive brings reports and we do review them, I think

when programs been made in term of such an august body covering as we are told by the report, 17,000 parliamentarians, we are not talking about an ordinary number it means it runs across the board Asian, Africa and all the continents so in essence this is definitely a school for parliamentary procedures. Essentially we have seen the responsibility of review one would ex-anticipated that an experiment would be done there to saw how that is done.

We do have advocacy responsibility and adviser responsibility there under section 102 where we could advise the President on matters under his jurisdiction, we also do have legislative powers but also quite a judiciary power under section 109 and other section where we can impeach and where we can call on any authority to come answer to us. So, the lesson that we are driving is how do we exercises those powers, how do committees really work so that we develop our capacity in dealing with those situations. We have seen the issue of trying to find out and validate appointments for example we do have those responsibilities. Do other parliaments have those responsibilities? How do they exercise it and how do they enlarge it?

There is a statement made that, there was complete transfer of power from the Legislature to the Executive I could not get the details of what happened actually and of course that was not a good practice and how do we avoid such a practice, what happen in that incident and how do we really avoid such thing because the whole Assembly is talking about empowering the legislature not transferring legislative power to the executive.

There is an idea of also ensuring oversight, how are they conducting oversight? I believe everything was done there but as we move we should prepare our own check list of what our standing order say, what our constitution say about our powers and then wherever we go we should try to focus on what is really been done to strengthen those powers and to exercise them. I believe that is the purpose of the exercise and this is a good starting point and we should encourage this reproach with our other colleagues in other part of the world. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable. I will just say that I would appreciate if you can guide us through that checklist for the interest of everybody here. Thank you very much.

And also on the issue of the delegation, we have constraints, first of all we were invited to attend this seminar but at the time we were not part of the Commonwealth so we went there as an observers which we really appreciated and I think the Honourable Member who tabled the report did indicate in his appreciation on behalf of the whole Assembly but I hope and think next time around we will have more National Assembly Members attending this type of seminar. It was funded by them exclusively and on that note I will just call on the Member for Banjul South.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker and also I would like to say a big thank you to the attendees of this very important workshop or seminar. I think it's a very good initiative from the Commonwealth inviting us even though we were still not part of the Commonwealth.

What I wanted to point out is, yes the report is very good, it has outlined everything that they have done but probably in future what we want to know because we have not attended this seminar but we will also need you to outline the lessons learnt and recommendations because obviously the systems are different and we have lot to learn. Some of us are new in parliament so we need to learn a lot from other Parliament Members.

You mentioned names that a political student like myself are familiar with. You interacted with them obviously and there are some lessons that you may have picked from them. What I will recommend in future when you write reports give us some few recommendations from what you have observed. You also mentioned the Prime Minister's question time as a new politician but as a political science student I would love to see that practiced in my parliament.

We are not satisfied most of the time and we give them plenty of time to give us those answers. I think is also fair to give the public that opportunity to have a question time even if it is like once a month to have the Executive [President or Vice

President] they are answerable to the people. We appointed and elected them, so they need to be answerable to us. Certain things have been happening and that would also stop speculations. What I would recommend is to include this kind of things when writing our reports. Thank you very much.

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much madam Speaker. Well, I want to seize this opportunity to specially thank the team for an excellent report like this. One of the area that entices me in the report is the visit to the educational centre and I believe the essence of the visit to the centre is to learn international best practices and adopt them if possible since this parliament most of us are first timers and we need lot of capacity in other to write a positive legacy. I believe we have a library here, probably we might not be very much equipped to a certain level but if this educational centre can be replicated so that we can use it to learn and widen our scope in terms of performance, I think that will be ideal. That is my suggestions Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity. First of all I would like to acknowledge the meticulousness of the delegation to the Westminster Parliament. They have done a wonderful job in terms of accuracy in comprehensive report which we want to appreciate. I am really interested in page 5 where it states; "new wine and new wineskins". There are recommendations by Dr Makuka who actually demonstrate the kind of leadership that the world actually require, who can drive us to the future.

In his deliberation, he lamented that leaders should tune to their constituents and in doing so that outreach is very important were it will gain them source of courage and innovations and then more intelligent in terms of emotional, spiritual and practical suggestions which we really like to know and advice for the roles of leaders. The kind of leaders to drive the world into a new and more democratic era. Basically these are practical suggestions that he has actually put in place and we would like to know some of these recommendations and suggestions that he deem necessary for young leaders of this parliament to adopt for best practices. Thank you so much.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I would also like to join my colleagues to extend my sincere thanks to the team who present this report before us this morning. Though the report is very brief but very informative. I was also privileged to be part of the group that travelled to UK for similar training and Madam Speaker I would like to seize this opportunity to appeal to my colleagues to take best use of these trainings. I thank you very much.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I would also like to join my colleagues to thank the delegates who went to Westminster. I just want to say something about page [8] where you have the former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons who gave an introduction of the Prime Minister's Questions and the issue of media coverage of his debate. I think that can help members to learn a lot on debates and participate on their oversight function. With regards to the Deputy Governor of Canada who was in the committee and was chairing the questions and hearing issues raised about migrations. I think some of our concerns from African countries can be raised about migrations. Thank you.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. The team has really done justices because such trainings are very important in our new dispensation. Having training is one thing, now applying the lesson learnt from the training is another thing. So I believe with the support of our able Speaker and the government at large, the skills and knowledge acquired can be practices in this country. If the environment is not created for us to apply the knowledge that we learn then the training will be useless and lot of funds is spent on these trainings that we are undergoing. So we need to apply them to have effect on the new development of our country. Thank you the team for the effort done.

HON. ALAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: I would also like to join my colleagues to thank the delegates for the report presented. However, I have an observations on page [7] that I would want more elaboration on that portion of the report as the Honourable Member for Serrekunda rightly mentioned for comparative purpose.

Page [7] under the morning session, the day began with a session on legislative process of the government Bills and private member Bills. For comparative purpose if we could know the legislative processes mentioned here to be detail. It also went further to say, "he explained the different types of Bill in the UK Parliament so that we also try to compare the types of Bill we have in The Gambian Parliament. He also highlighted the selection process; it is important that process also to be captured here and then the support they required from the members and the length of time taken to process those Bills. Let us know so that in comparison the length of time it is taking for us to also get to our Bills. So this portion of the report needs to be broaden because we want to do the comparison. Thank you.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]: Madam Speaker, forums of this nature have basically two fundamental objectives. The first objective is to share experiences, and the second objective is to improve upon what we have. What is interesting about the forum in England is the fact that all the Members of the Commonwealth inherited that pattern of parliamentary procedure. But, there are certainly differences but these difference had not come out; and the structure of the similar itself for me I question.

Because if it is sharing experiences, then it should had been structured in a way that the possibility would had existed to come out with the type of experiences they have. But it seems that it is structured in the way they, we went to England and they did their presentations. But there are fundamental differences, Britain does not have a written constitution, we have a written constitution and also the commonwealth countries have written constitution except Britain. The authority of this parliament is defined by the constitution. What defines the authority of the British Parliament? And what defines the authority of other parliament other than this parliaments? So these are the things that should have come out because it is only that way that we can improve upon what is common to all of us because we are all speaking of a British parliamentary procedure [Westminster pattern of parliamentary procedure]. That is what we all banking on but it doesn't mean that

this is practice, because the world is moving, knowledge is moving and therefore practices most also change.

So, in this type of seminar were you have so many people, diverse parliament coming together and they are all sharing something which is common to them that I expected something to have come out. Something that shows that really we are sharing things but there are certain differences here and there, but you cannot see that in this report.

I think that fora in this nature in future should be structured in such a way that possibilities would be created for all the participants to come up with what they have so that together if you put them in basket you would be able to see what is what and then we share and improve upon what we have as a common practice. Madam thank you very much.

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. First of all, I would want to join my colleagues to thank the delegates that represented the National Assembly at this very important capacity building at the Westminster in UK.

As it is, I want to concur with the Honourable member for Serrekunda. You know we have responsibilities that we need to do as National Assembly Members. When you say capacity, I want to build my capacity then I must know my level. The level of capacity that I have and what are the things that I need. So if we are invited to Westminster, we know some of the things that we already know and what we have but we want to see the examples that the Westminster does on their procedures. Because if you look at the heading it say "practices and procedures of the Westminster". So what we expect is the experience that they have, though it is said in the report that they were observers or they went there to observe. But I believe when they observed they have gained a little experience. We also want to tap from those experiences.

I would also want to join the Member for Central Baddibu who also said what is more important in attending capacity building training is acquiring the skills and

implementing it. You have attended the programme and in reporting to Assembly chamber, we want to learn from your experiences. Then from there whether we have attended or not, from your deliberation we will be able to adjust something to our capacity to be able to deliver well in the Assembly.

However, the layout of the report is very fine. As it is a Capacity building, reporting and writing the report is still on the capacity that is why some of the observations need to be noted so that those who are going attend other capacity buildings to be able to know some of the things that the Assembly might need from you when you want give a report to them.

Other than that, it is just very good because why I brought up the issue, something very important has been said here but I ask myself where is that. It says on page [7] the Speaker of House of Common says "he also outlined his experiences in reforming the role and described to parliamentarians what a good question would look like". I want to see some of the examples and his experience and techniques of writing a good parliamentary questions. Because those are the things that we do; we write questions here. So we are willing to have examples of such so that we would be able to apply ourselves with it to see our level whether we are with the best practices or we need adjustment. But if you say he has given you advice on that and you don't share that advice that means the experience that you have only stays with you but is not well disseminate in the Assembly. Other than that is just wonderful.

Madam speaker, I want to urge my colleagues, capacity building is what we need. We such more and more to come then we would be able to produce the best National Assembly Members ever.

THE SPEAKER: I am happy that most people have indicated that the report is good in terms of content and layout. I can assure you that as a result of building capacity and how to prepare reports is ongoing, it will continue.

HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Allow me to join my colleagues to thank the

delegation that went to the Westminster, UK. Like my colleagues already said, they have done a wonderful job.

The report is well structured, you have the content and the acronyms that makes it reader friendly. What fascinated me must Madam Speaker is page [5] where it reads "The Gambia was invited as a non-member". I think this is very striking, striking in the sense that it has to do with our democratic credentials. We have been invited after knowing that we are not a member. So is a plus for the government and for the parliament. It means that the parliament is here to promote democratic credentials. Therefore it is my take for those who went to attend the conference on our behalf, we will apply it as they have been taught there because is meant to share international best practices as contained in the report.

With those few remarks Madam Speaker, I would want to thank the office of the Honourable Speaker for facilitating the trip. I would also want to remind the Office of the Speaker because it has been mentioned by the Honourable Member for Kiang Central that they were unable to attend the last session so that office of the speaker can facilitate when delegations are due to travel. This is a great opportunity we were accorded an observer status so it will help us members to catch up whatever is been discussed there. Thank you very much.

HON. DEMBA SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I am also saying a big thanks to the delegates for doing a good job. This is the essence of going for international seminar or workshops. If you go and come back with something and they have come back with something. This will help us and it will be also kept in our Library.

Gambia was invited as non-member but next time we will be invited as a member, because the National Assembly with the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have admitted Gambia into the Commonwealth. Thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and office of the Honourable Speaker. Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I now call on the mover to responds to issues raised and wind up the debate.

HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you very much once again Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I would like to start with the Honourable member for Upper Saloum's Interventions on the issue of diversity and inclusion. These are areas that are really look at, discussed and then exhausted. When you talk of diversity the issue of religion and culture comes in. Any time we have different group of people coming from different areas we must have differences. So what do we do in other to tolerate one and other? When you talk of diversity and inclusion is a complete process, it has to go on and then until such a time people are satisfied.

The Honourable Member for Foni Brefet talked about comparative system, of course you would realise that the British and that of ours though there are differences like other members said, but we have most of the thing in common. However, you would all agree with me that is a learning and continuing process anything that is left out might have been as a result of oversight. So as we are learning we try to capture all those things and then with time there would be perfection in whatever we do.

The Honourable Member for Niamina East we thank you very much for your observations and your points are well noted.

The Honourable Member for Serrekunda talked about the comparison again between that of The Gambia and the British System. Of course there are similarities and differences and then when trying to learn best practices those things must be captured for people to understand and try to get balance as what we should learn from them and what are the similarities as far as learning best practices are concerned.

The time also, the session was very intensive perhaps as a result of that it was never intended to left all those things out and not that we do not have interest or we do not know them or they were just left intentionally. Is a learning process and

whatever is absent in terms of the report next time we would try to improve on it and there will be perfection as we go.

The Honourable Member for Banjul South also your points are noted and then recommendations are made. As soon as I returned, I had a meeting with the British High Commissioner and then the High commissioner was trying to find out from me as to, "where do we think the British government can come on board to help". We made recommendations to her and is unfortunate that some of those recommendations are not here.

One of the areas I paid particular attention to during our visit was the education centre. As soon as I arrived these are some of the areas that I observed. People are frequently visiting the education centre in the British Parliament and they are learning. As soon as I came there are some of the areas that I tried to explained to people that there is a need. Once people have chance the opportunity to see what is happening in parliament, they will develop the culture of love for the parliament and then is going to improve their knowledge as to what happens in parliament and from there we would be able to generate future politicians and future political leaders. I also recommended that there is a need for a research centre in the parliament.

On that of Brikama South, like I have said in terms of learning best practices, we looked at the education centre and recommendations were made to that effect.

Member for Kantora, on page [8] what the leaders of today should do. I think the presenter talked on various issues like a good leader you must have continuous interactions with your people to know what their need and constrains are and then he explained on those areas. You have to listen to your people and let them make inform choices and you allow them in taking decision and then you follow rather than leading them in taking decision.

The Member for Bakau I thank you very much for your intervention and observations. Member for Tallinding also talked on the delegates discussion of migration issues. Sometimes you have organisation that are there to recruit workers and then later they are given to other institutions for employment. So in doing that

what are some of the challenges, because you don't have to take people recruit them and then give them to institutions and they are not given better wages. What are some of their problems and such people should not be treated as slaves. All those issues were discussed at length.

The Honourable Member for central Baddibu also on your intervention, what we doing is a continuous process. We also have to endeavour to make sure that whatever is learn is practised.

The Member for Brikama North, you talked of Bills. I may leave some but I have the private member Bills and then in the British Parliament they said in a year they have thirteen Fridays that are normally allocated for private member Bills and then you have the Appropriation Bill. Given the support required in passing the Bills time is sometimes constrained and it becomes an issue.

The Honourable Member for Wuli West equally highlighted on the needs to have similarities that exist. The similarities and difference are not captured in the report. The need to define the authorities in the British Parliament and that of the Gambian. Of course, we all know there are differences, they have a Constitutional Monarchy and we have presidential system, however there are differences and similarities, we would try to look at those areas as well.

Honourable Member for Busumbala, the need for best practices to be highlighted, we would do that. The Member for Jarra West thanked the delegates and also talked about the issue of why we could not attend the last session as a result of the flight arrangements which was beyond our control. The last session started at 3:00 and we supposed to be at the airport at 2:00 for our checking. So that was certainly beyond our control.

I thank you all for your kind attention. Honourable Speaker, I beg to take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much and I take the opportunity to thank all members for their positive contributions. I do not want to premier our report but I think most of the concerns and issues raised would probably be captured in the report of our visit to the UK Houses of Parliament earlier on this year that lead to the

signing of a memorandum of understanding between the National Assembly of the Republic of the Gambia and Westminster Foundation for Democracy [WFD] which I think will be of great value to all of us.

In fact, this morning we received some communication for WFD on the level of preparedness and work plan for now and against April. Things are moving very fast as a result of the MOU that we signed and it would be table before this House. Thank you.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[The Gambia Delegation to 2017 Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure 13th -17th November, 2017 has been adopted]

LAYING OF PAPERS AND REPORT

- iii. Report of the Gambia's Delegation to the 2017 Westminster workshop for Public Accounts Committee for the period 4th -6th December, 2017 [By Hon. Alhagie Drammeh Member for Jeshwang].**

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: The 2017 Westminster Workshop for Public Account Committee was held from the 4th -6th December, 2017 at the Westminster House of Parliament, United Kingdom. The workshop which brought together countries from the commonwealth was organized by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association-UK Branch.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an Association of Parliamentarians from 185 states, the association converge every year to share experiences on democracy and good governance. Every commonwealth state legislature has its CPA branch in our case we have FPAC.

The aim of the training was to build the skills and capacity of selected Chairs, Members and Clerk of the commonwealth. I think you are aware that our Chair,

Honourable Speaker couldn't attend because of the Budget Session also I think we have financial constraints that are some of the reasons why she couldn't attend it.

The objective of the workshop was to provide training for commonwealth PAC Chairs Members and Clerks to develop key skills, knowledge and confident building to facilitate continue peer support, knowledge exchange and learning through an active network of commonwealth PAC and access to expert resource. Grow the knowledge and expertise of parliamentarians and Clerks in promoting tax transparency and preventing tax avoidance and encourage country by country reporting in all legislatures.

As mentioned earlier, it was a 3days' programme. The programme was open by Rt Hon. Dame Margaret Hodge who is the Chair of old party Parliamentary group. She stressed the importance of unifying the committee and ensuring value for money and making sure that Public Finances were appropriately utilized.

She emphasized the independence of PAC especially the Chair. According to Honourable Drame their parliament is now elected rather than been nominated.

I think I need to inform this general Assembly that it was not the usual presentation style of the workshops that we are used to, it was a kind of discussion in which you will called expertise and they will just deliberate on their experiences and I think it is not all states that do elect their parliament, there are states that there are nominated from the majority party and there are states that it is the minority party and as I said is not one caps fit all so, is therefore differentiate to see what best suit them.

She also advised that PAC [Public Account Committees] can initiate enquiries from whistle-blowers and journalist not just from other reports you can enquire....I think we had a case here Madam Speaker, in our own Assembly when we called the Honourable Minister of Finance when we had information about the vehicle policy, it was not from the National Audit Office but it was from the General Public and our concerns were made known.

They also emphasize that, it is their practice to call back witnesses at any time to follow-up on the implementation of recommendations. I think this is something we also do, the Accountant General can attest to that, he has appeared before the FPAC on several occasions and the Governor of the Central Bank those are things that we also do here in our own Parliamentary Committee.

The first session of the day was focus on 3 things. The effectiveness of Public Account Committee, Governance and Structure of those Committees and the Role of Auditors.

The first session focus on **Governance and Structure**, explored the coordination and collaboration of Public Account Committees. During the session Members Chairs from Canada, Ghana and Bangladesh gave case account of their experiences and inquires they conducted. I think there is one thing that we learned from Ghana that they do called private institutions who execute contracts and those private institutions are now sermoned to the Public Account Committee for hearing. I don't think that is something that we have already initiated here, is something we can learn from Ghana.

In the Role of Auditors: Shabana Mahmood MP, Linda Mills and Karen McConnell, who is the comptroller and Auditor General at the jersey these were the facilitators. During the session it was clear that the role of National Audit Office is mainly to provide oral and written briefing to Members as well as the line of questioning, I think Madam Speaker, we do have the Auditor General as Subject Matter specialist and I think he is helping in that regard.

The National Audit Office also advised the committee as to which witness to sermon and to draft the committee report at the end of the session. It is important to note that UK and many other PACs produce their reports at the end of each enquiry rather than producing a consolidated report which might take ages. And I think this Madam Speaker, these was a concerned and these are recommendations we have already had during in our committee and I think one of those reports is coming

during this session. We are not waiting to the end of the year to produce one bulky report but at least for a start session after session.

On the second day we had session on:

- i) Working cross-party
- ii) Getting government responses
- iii) Working with chairs and witnesses

And I think during one of those sessions we were divided into two groups, one group discussed the pressures they face within committees and gave guidance on cross-party working and discussed ways committees can maintain pressure on the government in the follow-up to their recommendations. And during this time we were separated in must time we are attending the same programmes I and Mr. Buba Jatta as a Clerk but during this session we were separated National Assembly Members on one side and Clerks on other room.

The Clerks made to know that they explored ways to develop effective relationships with Chairs of Committees and witnesses and also discuss effectiveness of pre-panels' during committee enquiries. And I think Madam Speaker this is the same we have here before FPAC session I think the FPAC committee and Subject Matters Specialist have pre-briefing were they try to discuss key issues that we want relate to auditors or those that are coming to the committee.

Media Masterclass: We had session with the media masterclass on with we are told on techniques on developing questioning skills required when questioning witnesses and also gave delegation practical ways of effective communicating their messages.

The Tax Transparency: We also had a session, these was a separate place we have to travel I think for 30minutes that was in the afternoon. The facilitators were Joseph Stead Laura and Jason. During this session we discussed the importance of ensuring large corporations pay tax to avoid small businesses becoming disincentive in paying their taxes. And I think the Honourable Minister mentioned it here not only

the Gambia but in most countries if not all depend on tax the level differs but it was one of the session that we discussed how best to tap on those taxes to encourage small businesses pay their taxes.

Training Media Engagement: The last day we had a training on media engagement. This was also facilitated by Alanah Donnell, who is the Deputy Director of Communications and Engagement. She offered practical advice on using social media especially Instagram and Twitter to engage the Public and manage media interest.

PACs and the Sustainable Development Goals: I think here Madam Speaker; it can be related to the National Development plans that we have. There was a discussion on ensuring sustainable development goals are met and holding the government to account. We can for example hold the government to account in the realization of those NDP 2018-2021. We also had a session on challenges and opportunities for PACs in small legislatures.

Engaging the Public: These was aimed to improve political engagement and awareness among for example students and young people and I think these has been a concern that must NAMs have been rising. How to engage and inform our electorates as to what we are doing, what the government is doing and so forth. They suggested to highlight the use of significant experience as a way to engage the public such as celebrating the anniversaries of laws that have been passed, holding town hall meetings, public hearings and outreach all geared towards bringing parliament closer to the people.

On the last day Madam Speaker, we had the opportunities to witness the live session of the UK Public Account Committee. We were divided into two groups, those who were interested in attending physically at the hall and some of us that decided to just watch it because once you go there you are not allow to do anything. So, some of us prefer to watch it on the TV while others went and sat on the benches. The same problem that the previous delegates had, we too could not attend the final

programme for the day due to the travel arrangements. We had to cut it short by at least I think 4 hours so that we could make it to the airport.

I thank the Honourable Speaker and especially the Ambassador and his team and I think it would have been a big problem if they had not help us because we are not as luck as the recent team.

Thank you very much Ma, for giving us that opportunity and I thank my colleagues for listening attentively. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable. May I just clarify one issue that you raise in tabling your report and the Honourable Member for Klang Central also raised and that was the constraint on lack of attending your last session because of your flight arrangements, I just want to point out and am sure you are aware of the fact that the tickets came from England and that they were not facilitated from this end [Gambia] and there was very little that we could have done to alter the flight arrangement. Especially when we did not really know the whole programme with regard to the timing of the last events. So really is not the fault of the National Assembly Service.

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: No, I understand that and I did express clearly in the beginning that you couldn't attend because of certain constraints and it was wholly funded by UK. Just to explain that there are programmes at the end that we couldn't attend because we have to pack our bags if not we will miss our flight.

THE SPEAKER: That can be raise as a follow up concern for future seminars. Thank you. Any seconder?

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

[Question Proposed]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Any Honourable Members who wishes to take part in the debate or make some interventions may do so now.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I also want to join the colleagues who previously contributed to the report presented by the delegation that also went to Westminster.

In terms of the lessons to be learned to improve on our performance as legislators for oversight to be more effective and to be able to deliver. The report is very interesting as it has lessons for us to learn. I just want to say that it is good that when we are going, we also go to share because these are occasions that can be utilized to validate our practices. Our practices are sometimes guided by the constitution of the Gambia, by the standing orders. These are things that we can take along to show to others that this is how we do it in the Gambia. Of course it is not an obligation on us to be doing what the sharing with us but these can be standards of best practice that we can apply to improve our performance.

I would suggest, it has been said earlier on that it is good for us when we are going to share with them what we are doing here and for this to be reflected in the reports that when we went we explain to them that in our oversight, this is how we engage the Executives or this is how we engage experts that come before us. Because these things don't only apply to the Public Accounts, it is applicable to all the oversight committees because as the practices now we want the oversight committees to be also dealing with finances of MDAs under their preview. The lessons are equally practicable to all the committees. I have seen that you have indicated here under....these are the types of things that we really expect from the report. If you go to page 5, the end part on the effectiveness of PAC report.

Mr. Cooke highlighted that oversight committees report should:-

- Focus on recommendation that are clearly based on evidence
- Better to have fewer and sharper recommendations
- Relate it to previous recommendation if there are any
- Relate to government announcement like government policies like the NDP.

If they have any pronouncement on the NDP, you will hold the Executive to be implementing programmes, the policies. These are the kind of things that we want as recommendations. So this is quite in order.

And also I would have like to see what they have said in terms of engaging the Public because you talked about Public hearing. How do others do Public hearing? It is good for us to know so that in our own circumstance as an Assembly, will be holding Public hearing to hear the views of the Public on legislation that are laid before us or on existing laws that people would have issues with that require amendments. These are type of things that we also want details on. Of course, town hall meetings we can do it on our own but for public hearings, these are very important for parliamentarians to be engaging in this type of consultations.

And then of course you said what the Delegation also shared with their colleagues, what they will be doing when they come back and then am not seeing what you intended to do when you come back in term of your participation. It is also good if you can also reflect this in the report because it helps us in sharing.

We may not have the time for them to come back and then organize a training but in our reports we reflect all these practices that can be adopted at the level of legislature, the plenary and also at the level of our oversight committees.

I think this is what I have to share as part of my contribution to the report and I thank the delegation.

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NIUMI]: Thank you Ma for giving me the floor. I join my colleagues in extending my satisfaction and also expressing my gratitude for having this in front of me. If we go to page 4 of the report, I want to quote with your permission Madam.

"The presenters share their experiences and the presentation of Honourable Agyekum MP from Ghana was indeed interesting. "He said among best practices introduced by Ghana PAC is that private institutions should execute contracts finance by Public Funds are now sermons or invited to PAC to serve as witnesses whenever

the need arises. They are questioned on the contracts they have executed and whether there was value for money”.

I think if this is adopted by the PAC/PEC committee, it would be very effective in monitoring the disbursement of funds as well as contracts to contractors. I have two cases in points where contracts were given to contractors and they felt short and the people are still suffering in my constituency. There is a case in Mbollet Ba where a contractor was given the fixing of solar panels, he fixed the loose ones and the people are suffering the consequence of not lasting long.

Another contractor was given the chance to roof a mosque and the premises is still the same. If contractors are not monitored, government funds will go down the drain and nothing will come out of it, to the desperation of the public. I think this is a very good move that could be copied from Ghana by the PAC/PEC committee of this Honourable House.

Madam Speaker that was my observation, I beg to take my seat. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable, I stand to be corrected but I think there are adequate provisions for the various committees. Anybody can be called to come and explain before any committee is a good practice. There is even a relevant section to that effect. Section 109 (2) committees maybe appointed to investigate any matter of public importance and public importance of course will include the use of public funds. Thank you.

HON. YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]: Thank you Ma for giving me the opportunity. I want to first of all thank the team for the Report as a lot of efforts are invested in report writing. However, comparing this one with the previous report, it is clear that we need to have a standardize way of presenting reports to parliament.

The first report was a bit more comprehensive than this one and the interestingly there are sections in the report that potentially have lot of information but hidden in very short paragraphs that are not clear. For example on page 4, paragraph 2 which deals with the presentation of the Honourable MP from Ghana. Of course, the

Honourable Member for Lower Niumi has dealt with that but on the same page in the last paragraph where you the National Audit Office, in the last sentence it reads:-

"It is important to note that UK and many other PACs produce their reports at the end of every enquiry rather than producing a consolidated report which might take ages".

Of course we know that here by the time reports are table in the Assembly, a lot of details may have been lost on the way because of the duration it takes. We are still in the learning process, there is a lot of improvement that needs to be made but the only thing I want to add is to make a recommendation that when we write reports, the report needs to be detail and we also need to have a format for the report and a standardize way of reporting so that all the reports will take the same format. Thank you Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable. Before we proceed, please with your indulgent can we just rise for about for 2minutes and reconvene, just 2minutes please. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER [DEPUTY SPEAKER IN CHAIR]: Thank you, we will now continue with the interventions.

HON. BAKARY NJIE [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker and I would like to thank the Delegation of 2017 Westminster Workshop for Public Account Committee which was led by Honourable Alhagie Drammeh for attending the workshop on our behalf and coming back and report to the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I think those who go and represent us since we cannot all go at a time for this workshops and other trainings specially outside the country, I think it will very important if they come back and have a briefing or share those ideas with us. I think that will be very good.

Since they are there to represent all of us we cannot all be there, the information, the ideas, the training they got there I think it should trickle down to every Member

of the House. Obviously, if we can all go and attend the training directly we will all benefit but as long as that cannot happen then I think it is paramount, it is important if they come we can have a day with them so that we can discuss issues that they learn there in order to localize them, in order to help ourselves so that we can perform our duties as expected.

Obviously some of the experience they got from their colleagues that they met, the way they are practice obviously cannot be exactly practice here but through discussion, exchanging. I think we can brainstorm and see what is the best way forward, how can we use it here depending on our cultural set-up and our social set-up. Mr Speaker, this is my take on the report I strongly believe that sharing ideas will help us all to move forward. I thank you.

HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]: Thank you very Mr Speaker for the opportunity. I want to add my voice to those who have spoken before me to thank the delegation that represented the Gambia Parliament at Westminster Workshop 2017, for Public Accounts Committees, from 4th -6th December, 2017, Houses of Parliament, London.

Honourable Speaker, after given my blessing to the team, we have a report before us which is becoming ours after considering the documents and trying to domesticate it so that it become a National Document.

Honourable Speaker, first of all, I think I want to agree with the Member for Bundungka Kunda that sharing information is paramount and I think this is a lesson not only for this delegation.

We have learned that the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee is elected and not nominated. So the analysis is to make the comparison. In our own case what do we do? Do we nominate or elect. At the end of the day what should be recommended?

Mr Speaker, we have learn from this document that after scrutiny, when it comes to implementation of the recommendations, the PAC/PEC committees called back witness for follow-up. That means is not only the day of appearance of a particular institution that the witness accompanies them but after that if there is anything to

follow-up or if there is anything to implement the recommendations, those people in their capacity of witnesses would be called back to come and give that assistance. I think that also is a lesson and a best practise.

Mr Speaker we learn from the document again that the PAP Committee is headed by the leader of opposition. In our own case we called it Minority Leader but in fact, I think this now is a best practise especially in West Africa. The public Account Committees are headed by a leader of opposition parties.

Honourable Speaker, we understand from this document the role of the media because is connected with the committees and the tax payers. We have to know that we are speaking for the people that we represent. We are elected and if you are elected you are representing and the representation cannot go without consultation. The people you are representing, the trust and honesty they put in you should be transparent to them. Let them know what you are doing for them and let them know whether their needs has been considered and addressed. And I think the best tool that we can use in other to execute that function is the media. So it is showing the importance of the media as far as the sittings of the Public Accounts Committee is concern.

We understand from this document that an institution being public or private whenever you deal with government money, tax payers money you are hold accountable we have so many NGOs and foundations in this country and those NGOs are established for who and by who, at the end of the day are they accountable? If not this document is giving us a signal that it is time for us to know the NGOs and the foundations that are established in this country in name of the people of this country will be hold accountable.

Honourable Speaker, in this document we understand that reporting is one thing, that is what the delegation did, they have reported to us, we thank them for that. But the second stage still as the Member for Bundungka Kunda and somebody said it before him is to have a briefing station. I hope though there is no annex and appendix but I think you have come with some presentations and statements that

need to be shared among the members of the relevant committee here in this parliament even the entire membership of the National Assembly. So that we go through the document, learn and know exactly what is happening in other side of the world and how it happens so we will know how we are going to behave now so that we go up to international standard.

Honourable Speaker, the principal objective of going out is to come with something different to contribute to the Capacity Building of the National Assembly. As I use to say, we need to build our capacity. If you want to do justice to our function and that is only through such movement, workshops, seminars that the members of this parliament would be able to build their capacity. So if that is the case now, as far as you have a document before us brought by a delegation, we want to recommend to the delegation in collaboration with the office of the Honourable Speaker and the Clerk and the Committee on that matter to organise a seminar to share that information with the entire members of parliament in order to contribute to our capacity building. Having said that, I have to go back again to the delegation to thank them for the honesty they show in representing Gambia in a very dignified manner and come back to the Gambia with something that Gambians can use in order to grow. On that note I would want to thank them and beg to resume to my seat.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I also join my colleagues to thank the delegation that went to this very important seminar which deals with Public Finance Accounts. This is a very important seminar since it helps us to know how to go about making government accountable to the people. The emphasis is on making government accountable to the people for the moneys they collected from them and other ways.

Mr Speaker, on page [4] the role of the auditors has been emphasised as crucial since they go into the length to advise the committee as to which witness to summon relating to certain things. They also draft committee report at the end of the session. I am not very acquainted with the work of the PAC but I think it is very important that the auditors don't just hand over a big book to them to look at but

they also highlight certain areas and even help them to summoned witnesses that are crucial in the report.

Mr Speaker on tax, we learnt from the report that it is important to ensure that large corporation pay tax. In many countries corruption is high and I know here too, so we forgo what large corporations should pay and the smaller corporation are seeing that, they become disincentive and then relax. So in other to curb corporation, we need to follow the large corporation to make sure that they play their part in the small enterprise.

I want to ask the delegates to clearly explain to us why the Chair of the PAC elected.

Mr Speaker, the importance of public finances to be utilise appropriately to ensure value for money is very important for us because like Member for lower Niumi highlighted; many a times we approved things even in the budget, for example the National Identification Card which should have been provided to the citizen in 2017 and it has not and we have done it again this year. We must be able to follow that up to make sure that the citizens get the value of their money that they are paying.

We should use the PAC to really hold government to account. In this report it is emphasised to an extend you can even overhaul finances to make sure that happens. So those are the lesson that we have learnt. I am not sure how much they have left out but what they have brought to us is quite lessons that we can capitalise on and develop it. Thank you.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me the floor. Unfortunately for some of us we received this report very late and did not have the chance to thoroughly look at the report and contribute properly. We would have been more effective had we had we receive this report early.

The PAC Committee is a very important committee because it looks at most especially government expenditure based on the budget that we approved in this Assembly. We have seen what has been happening and I am very happy to say that I have seen on page [6] mentioned that on the effectiveness of PAC report a

participant highlighted that the committee report should look into and most specifically relating to government announcement and undertakings.

I would go back to an announcement that we all witness regarding something that we passed here as part of the national budget which was the vehicle policy. We all have seen again a release came out that it was not going to be honoured and I myself as a Member of the PAC Committee requested for the Minister for Finance to be summoned to explain because I personally do not want to waste any time on...it was not a speculation but a release made by the government but everybody had their own intake and I personally wanted the Minister to come and explain to us as PAC so that we can bring it to this august Assembly.

We came out as a whole to approve that budget. It was an entity and we expect the government to implement the budget as a whole not part of an equation. If a part of that budget is not implemented as was approved then I expect this august Assembly to summon them and ask for an explanation. I think this nation deserve that from us. We were duly elected as the President was also duly elected and cabinet members are appointed they are not elected. So I would say we have more at stake than they do. I applaud this report especially when it comes to that and it also says focus on recommendations that are clearly base on evidences.

Mr Speaker, if we put the executive to task we would reduce speculations because we would work on their recommendations and then on fact it says to relate it to previous recommendation if there is one. We have inherited a worst government but that does not mean we have step on their feet and continue to work like they do. I think we are the ones taking care of tax payers moneys hence we are the custodian of the budget, and we need to ensure that we do our oversight work well. We are not only legislators; we have the responsibility to oversee how the budget is implemented. Also our task is also to represent and we need to represent those people without any fear or favour affection or ill will.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to say we are the eyes, ears and therefore we need to be the mouth of those people and we need to represent them well. Thank you very much.

HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for giving me the floor. I would just like to refer the Assembly to page [3] first paragraph of the report. I think something very important was stated in this report. If you look at the second line of the first paragraph it said "she went further to explain that PACs can initiate enquires from whistle-blowers, journalist etc. rather than always wait for the Auditor General's report".

I think there is a lot of whistle -blowing going on in this country. Yesterday I was listening to a recording of Assan Faal, former CEO of GIAPA, and he actually divulged interesting information I would say allegedly about what is going on at NAWEC regarding energy contracts being signed between the Government of the Gambia and a company called the Kinesis Company in the Turkey. But before that, day before yesterday I also saw a video of an- I don't know if he is an ex- employee or current employee of NAWEC, a guy called John Jatta actually given a detailed explanation of what transpired regarding the deal between Senelec a company in Senegal and The Gambia as a country. I think from both audios allegedly what they are stating is the government of the Gambia, the presidency in itself is been ill advised regarding all these contracts. I would like to refer the Assembly to section [109] of the constitution dealing with the committees of the National Assembly 109 [2a] ... "the committee maybe appointed to investigate or inquire into the activities or administration of Ministries or department of the government and such investigation or enquires may extend to making proposals for legislation or be to investigate any matter of public importance". I think this is really important and I think the National Assembly as representatives of the people needs to pay attention to exactly what is going on in this country. I think the issue of NAWEC is a very pertinent issue. Also the issue of recently what is been happening in the Ministry of Health with the doctors sit-down strike because allegedly the Minister made certain statement they

were not so happy about. I think the committees responsible, the committee on Health, PAC/PEC should initiate enquires into...-[interventions]

[POINT OF ORDER]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Mr Speaker, I think the item on the floor is dealing with particular report. Definitely as a PEC committee we have already submitted our report and I am sure that this National Assembly will know that we are doing exactly what she wants to recommend. So I don't want recommendation to be in the books because we are already doing that.

[POINT OF ORDER]

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: The Honourable Member is also referring to this crises affecting the health sector that is the Minister of health and Doctors and then referring to the health committee of the Assembly, that matter is been considered. So this not the forum for that issue to be raised at this time. I want her to withdrew that and focus on the report on the table.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Chairperson of the Health Committee for that clarification.

HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much for those point of Orders. I would disagree with the point of order because the report actually is dealing with matters of how committees should lodge enquires into matter of national importance especially in matters were whistle -blowers are involve, those giving information that are not asked for. That the committee or the National Assembly should pay attention to this matter. I am not actually saying the committees are not doing their work is just a recommendation because I do not know exactly what is happening in the committees. Thank you just to clarify that issues.

On the issue of NAWEC, I think the issue of electricity is of utmost importance to the country. It will be great for our legacy; the legacy of the president and the entire government if this issue of electricity is solve by this transition government. I think

this is more reason why we should really pay attention to what is going on and what the whistle-blowers are saying and lodge enquires immediately into this matter to see if we can help the executive solve the problem because at the end of the day it is going to be the government made the promised and do not deliver on that promised in regards to the electricity and we are the government. It is not the executive or the judiciary but the three arms of government make a government and we are all responsible. So I would just like us to pay attention to this advice.

Another thing is the public appointment standing committee. I think it is important that this committee starts work if there is one. I am not aware if there are members that are allocated to this committee, I just want the Assembly to pay attention to this matter so the public appointment standing committee will start to be effective. Thank you very much.

HON. SAIKOU MARONG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJIE]: Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me the floor. I have gone over the report and look at it very well. I know this happened in the first report. We would recommend them to write the reports in the way and manner that it would be easily understand by everybody? That is one recommendation I would like to give the team.

Also on the report, the area that I am so much interested is the area of tax. Yesterday during our session with the Minister for finance, someone asked when are we going to graduate from the tax base economy or what so ever? I think the problem we have now is how can we tell people to pay their taxes and on time. Looking at this report very well, this is what is emphasising. The role of an FPAC engaging the members in how important tax is to a country like The Gambia. And then what people are saying, FPAC committee are really doing well. If you follow their previous sittings it shows that they are really delivering. Going to Westminster, what I believe is that we went there to learn good practice and those good practices that we are learning outside we have start seeing them. People are really doing great. When we say capacity building this is part of it. We have been following the FPAC Committee previous sittings and this is exactly what is expected from us Member of Parliament. You are doing your job and doing it on time.

With regards to what happened on the vehicle policy we are following and the FPAC committee did very well by engaging the Ministry of Finance about what we have agree upon here in this august Assembly.

Notwithstanding Mr Speaker, the issue that we all taking about we say NAWEC is highly indebted, everybody is taking about it, but did we really asked ourselves why are they highly indebted. These are the things that we need to ask ourselves. Also this is an august Body, we cannot rely on the audio recordings or whatsoever on the social media and says we are parliament and these are the issues that...you know is an issue of concern but we have a committee that are responsible for those jobs and those committees I believe they are doing their job.

What we should do now is to make sure that we encourage our FPAC Committee to make sure that they put pressure on the government to collect taxes and on time. This is what we need at this juncture. But, we can assure the Nominated Member that the Committee that she mentioned are doing their job and we will make sure that we represent the Gambian people the way we should. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. It is clearly stating at the very beginning of the report that the former Chair of the Public Accounts Committee of UK did emphasised the importance of responsible taxation. She in fact was in charged of a committee dealing with that particular statement [responsible taxation]. Unfortunately, we have no elaboration of what that responsible taxation means. But responsible taxation must go with responsible representation and essentially that is what parliament is all about. To be able to establish the Public Accounts Committee is to ensure the accountability of government to the population.

This is talking about Public Accounts not NGOs accounts or accounts of other bodies. Those NGOs etc. are responsible and accountable to their boards and the larger public under the law. But essentially we are here responsible for public accounts. Yesterday a question was raised, how much money have we received since the assumption of office of the government. And we have Public Finance Acts indicating

exactly where government revenue should come in. This is talking about just taxation. Part of government revenue is grants, loans, nontax revenue from public enterprises. We have already written our report to show the backlog in terms of submission of the activity report of public enterprises and their accounts.

We have an audited report given up to 2015 right here presented to us. How relevant is that to us now as we move. So in essence, no individual in this parliament should try to assume that he or she is advocating for the accountability of government to the population. Is our collective responsibility and we must find out what each... we have laid conditions. You will see it in the report and we are going to end the backlog. That is the determination of our committee, and all those who saw us on TV or everywhere could see exactly the measures we are taking; we are taking measures according to law and we are going to take into consideration all facts that are giving to us.

Essentially here, the report tells us where government revenue is derived and here it is taxation. We must go beyond that in terms of best practice.

Secondly, it tells us the governance and structure of the institutions responsible for holding government into account and that is the Public Accounts Committee. The governance environment it says, will be best defended to serve the purpose for which the accounting of government to the public should be ensured by ensuring that there is security of tenure. And I believe that is why it says it is better for elective representatives to be chairs of such committees rather than nomination. That is what I have seen here and there are things that we need to look at. How do we ensure the security of tenure of those people who will be responsible for holding government into account? It also emphasises the need for unanimity for the unity of the members across partisans' consideration. So parties do not matter. It means that when they are in the committee they are serving together to ensure that there is accountability of government to the public.

It emphasises the need for capacity building of the members so that they will be able to carry out their functions. This also shows the object and the object is to

ensure value for money. Meaning that they are checking where the money is driven and how it is spent and not only that but to ensure that the money goes to where it is appropriated for.

To ensure, yes, the Auditor General, the audit office will be relevant but it is saying that well you must listen to also what the outsiders are saying about the public expenditures and take that into consideration. It means that gives you information. Information is not fact, information is information. You have to validate the information to be able to gather fact. Which means that anybody who has information can be called before the committees to testify to give you information; so that is the essence.

Parliament cannot come and validate anything until the information that is in the public space is actually brought down to the committees and the committees must be independent in their operation. They are quasi-judicial bodies in the sense that they have the powers of a high court under section [109] in calling witnesses and they must come otherwise they will be held in contempt of the committees and the National Assembly. We have those powers but we cannot exercise them with impunity but we must exercise them as any judicial officer with impartiality and independence. So all the things that we are hearing, the committees are duty-bound to go into these matters and then get the witness that are relevant as it says in this report you want evidence base information, evidence base recommendation.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: [The recording did not start from the beginning]. In this National Assembly here. Now if we are able to help the media for example to do that, at least that will be a good start. If you go to GRTS or the print media or any of the Radios, basically what they said is actually everything is in English how can we help the media to ensure that some of these local languages whether is Wolof, Mandinka or Jola whatever it is they can interpret what exactly we are saying here.

Because I do know that to have these National languages will take some time but at least we can start from somewhere, let us help them to be able to interpret what we

say or what we do in this National Assembly so that the people in Wuli, Upper Saloum or Basse can really understand what we are trying to do here.

Now another area that also I want to talk about especially on some of the recommendations is the role of the auditors. We been consistently working with the National Audit Office to clarify certain things and also the unfortunate thing is that we are dealing with 2012, 2013 audited accounts. We should be talking about 2107 accounts by this time of the year but is unfortunate there are lot of backlogs and FPAC is taking the role just to ensure that we clear this backlog, we are on that as well. And as we speak we are almost done with 2012 and 2013 so we will be looking at 2014 and 2015 very soon and by the grace of God we want to clear the backlog this year and continue from there so that we can look at the most relevant things going forward.

Another area that these report spoke about is the need to get government responses and again at FPAC when we are not certain about certain government announcements we call the particular Minister. On several occasions we have called the Minister of Finance to come and clarify, on several occasions we called the Governor of Central Bank to come and clarify and on several occasion we called the Governor of Central Bank to come and answered to the FPAC Committee of the National Assembly to clarify on certain things before we look at their accounts. Again on those recommendations we are doing just that.

On the media master class, I would have like this report to actually highlight what are some of those skills that they have learned from UK. Perhaps telling us the skills would also help some of us that are new in the business to be able to answer or to able to ask relevant questions to some of these witness that we have at FPAC or any other committee.

On a final note, we are a very small legislature and I would like the report to actually highlight some of the issues that they have learned and maybe if shared we can also learn a point or two on how to be more effective.

And finally Honourable Speaker, I want to recommend something for our committee which is FPAC, which is to have a follow up on the recommendations of FPAC. We have previous recommendations by FPAC but again what is the outcome of these recommendations, some of the recommendations were taken on board by the Executives but some of them actually nothing happened. In the event people are found contempt or have embezzle Public Funds, the full force of the law must take its cost. We cannot allow mediocrity in our committees, we are here to represent the people of the Gambia and we must represent them well. If there is a recommendation from this National Assembly to the Executive, we must follow-up to ensure that is actually done. Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Upper Saloum.

HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, a comprehensive Report so far but some things needs to be done.

Maybe I will start from where my colleagues said things that were approved by the National Assembly and you look at it, it is the other way round.

I will talk about the budget that was approved and when we say that some allocations should be preserve but to my surprise **[recording not clear here]** and look at the transportation allowance that is supposed to be added to civil servants' salary. In January it did not happened and whether you know it or not some of us the [National Assembly Members] were are going to people to tell them to keep cool things will happen. These are things that we need to talk about and when the Executive knows that this will not happen let them come back to us and talk us because dialogue is what we need. Let us not hide things, let us come together and talk together and bring things forward because we need the Gambia to change. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Nominated Member.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me the floor. Mr Speaker by going through the report we can at least pick some relevant points that can help our noble House.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, we have learn best practices and practice them in our own land. If you look at Public Funds, these are funds that all the citizens are entitle to, they are not meant for individuals but they are meant for all of us. Looking at the report, the security of the Public Funds is paramount, it should be responsibility of all us whether in FPAC or not, whether a Minister or not, President or not, Governor, Chief etc to ensure that these Public Funds are secure because without them there will be no development in this country.

Without the Public Funds, the Educational system, the Health system will never be improved. We should be all ready to secure this public funds by hook or hack.

People who are controlling the Public Funds are people with high discipline, people with high morals, people who are ready to make change in this country. Once we don't have those people in controlling our Public Funds then is just a matter of taking 10 step forward and 30 step backward. So, our Public Fund need to be very secure.

Mr Speaker, and in utilizing these funds, care must to be taken. We need to know which areas need this fund because all the areas are not equal in term of needs, we must make it a scale preference.

Mr Speaker, value for money is also featured in the report, I think attitudes must be changed, we most have respect and value for our money. So, if you don't have value for money then the resources that we are trying to mobilize from the taxes and from other sources will never benefit Gambians.

Mr Speaker proper implementations of project because once these funds are acquired they have to be spend on projects. These project managers need to be questioned on how they spend these funds, they need to report, timely report I mean to the committee. The committee should not wait, they should call them and find out how these funds are implemented or the project are implemented.

Mr Speaker, timely reporting is a problem and I think we need to graduate from that we need to give reports as long as we want progress. Anytime we embark on something, report must be tabled on time.

This is not the responsibility of FPAC alone, all the committees that are in National Assembly need to ensure that they produce timely reports and timely reports. Are we ready to do that? Are we ready to change? We shouldn't be in the chambers always saying good things and if you go to certain committees they have been embarking on activities and no report is still tended. I think it needs to start from us.

Mr Speaker we must put pressure on the Government constructively, we must put pressure on the government, if we relax we don't put pressure on the government, Executive in particular they wouldn't work as expected. We need to put pressure that is why we have these committees in the National Assembly moreover the FPAC or the PAC to ensure that pressure is put on Government officials so that they will be accountable at the end of the day, so that they will deliver to the best interest of the nation but are we seeing them? They are lot of lapses in these areas, we need to ensure that those lapses becomes history.

Lastly tax transparency is also featured in the report, Mr Speaker, we all agree that in the Gambia we highly depend on tax and those taxes needs to be controlled very well. There should be transparency in utilizing those taxes and people also must be ready to pay tax. Without tax we can't do anything, we must be ready to bail out the country from the economic crisis not only to say we need tax from other ends but the taxes are very paramount, no country can develop in this world without taxation but it must go with responsible representation.

People as I said in charge of this taxes need to be people who are responsible and ready to serve the interest of the Nation.

Mr Speaker this is what I have but before I take my seat I would like to refer everyone, all the Members of the House to page 5 at the bottom of the page last paragraph.

On the effectiveness of the PAC report, Mr. Cooke highlighted that committee reports should:-

- Focus on recommendation that are clearly based on evidence so, evidence base is key.

- Better to have fewer and sharper recommendations
- Relate it to previous recommendation if there is one
- Relate to government announcement or undertakings

These following points needs to be put into consideration Mr Speaker I beg to take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for old Yundum and that is the last on my list.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Actually Honourable Speaker I didn't have an intervention I was just trying to move a motion that we sit beyond 1:0'clock that is why I raise my tag. Thank you.

HON. LAMIN FM CONTA [KOMBO EAST]: Thank you Mr Speaker. First of all, I need to thank the Members of Delegation who attended the 2017, Westminster Workshop for Public Accounts Committee held from 4th-6th in the House of Parliament in the UK.

Mr Speaker, I think I will be very brief because most of the points have been highlighted by the previous speakers but nonetheless according to the report on page 3. **Governance and Structure**

This enticed me much, that is the session gave an overview of the effectiveness of PACs in both subnational and National Parliaments. This is very important in the sense that the Public Funds should be definitely utilize and properly in the best interest of the population. Certainly is a matter of urgency for the PAC to put the government to task.

The other issue that entice me much also is about the media. It is an effective tool as far as the awareness is concern because the media plays an integral role as far as Public Finance is concern and because it create an awareness for the people to be aware of what is happening.

I feel that this report is very timely and I feel very much comfortable with it and we thank our delegations for a job well-done. With those few remarks I beg to take my seat. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member that is the last on my list. May I now call the mover to respond to issues raised and wind-up the debate?

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, may I just say that may be in answering these issues would take more than the presentation itself, I think there are many points raised but I will attempt...-interrupted

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member please attention, summarize your responses. Thank you.

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: Ok I have been ordered to summarize, you may not hear my responses to every question that was raised but I will do my best.

To say at first to the Member for Banjul North who suggested that is good to share our experiences and I think that is what we have done am not claiming that is perfect I know there is great room for improvement and I think you would accept that this has been the norm and we surely endeavour to do that.

The Member for Lower Niumi I think got this from the report, the calling of private contractors. I have mentioned that these has not been case and the Honourable Speaker sighted the section in the constitution that give us the power which we have not yet started but is a point that we need to consider.

The Member for Kiang East stated that is clear that we need to have standardize way of reporting, I accept, because if you could see the previous report had provided the table of contents and acronyms which we have not but I think there has not been any standardize way of doing things, once that is provided I think not just us but every other committee would surely follow suit.

The Member for Bundungka Kunda suggested that is important to give a briefing and I think it is in the same line as that of the Member for Kiang East. The Member for Basse also spoke on the same sharing of information. He was able to go back to our report and identified the key lessons learned, the calling back of witnesses' role of media, being accountable to the Public, I think that is a repetition.

I think the Member for Wuli East mentioned that the main purpose of PACs is holding of government to account. I think this is clearly understood, the role of auditors is crucial and I think this has been identified and well highlighted in the report. The issue of tax I think also came out visibly.

The next one is the Member for Banjul South who suggested that committee report should link into Government Policies and announcements and I think this has been highlighted in our Report. It is a suggestion that the FPAC reports do look into government policy and I think those are suggestions that we have already highlighted. Also on recommendation that are clearly base on evidences, I think that was also provided for.

The Nominated Member Ya Kumba touched issues that had already been answered, that had nothing to do with my report but those are suggests that are really welcome. She also suggested that if PAC can initiate inquiry into information from whistle blowers and journalist, I think this features prominently the report.

These are keys things that we would surely recommend and I think they have already been recommended in the form of the report but which will be welcome at the FPAC.

The Member for Latri Kunda also suggested that we should write report that are easily understandable. I think we endeavour to some extend but if it is not satisfactory there is always room for improvement. He noted that the issues should be how to improve tax collection rather than abolishing the tax has the main source of revenue.

The Member for Serrekunda asked about the meaning of responsible tax may I just say that, that was not the session on tax, he was the chair of that old party parliamentarians group on tax but on that session he didn't mention anything on their responsibilities but the session that we had on tax I think we have clearly stated what that session was.

You also talked on the backlog of financial reports of Public Account and I think that Honourable Mbow has to some extend answered that and I think something he has

left was, we had tried to kind of cut off because we understand there is not much impact if we are in 2108 today and dealing with 2012, 2013 reports what effect would that have. We have tried and I think we have endeavoured, if you could remember we have asked most of this Ministries to make sure that by the end of 2018, we are at par with the current situation. I think it wasn't the Accountant General? No, is the GRA we have given them timelines, in June they should provide 2016, around September they should provide 2017 and I think with that schedule we would try and clear the backlog.

The Member for Upper Saloum answered most of the questions. The Nominated Member Ndey Yassin Secka raise some concerns but I don't think that had to deal with my report, that is for the general consumption of the House.

The Member for Central Baddibu raised concerns on the security of the Public Funds. He mentioned that it should be the responsibility for all that is a recommendation that needs to be taken on board. People who hold public funds should be people of high moral standing that's also a recommendation. We should ensure value for money, appreciated timely reporting which I answer earlier to say, for example if it was requirement to produce immediately we return we could have endeavour to do that but the norm has been that it has to be put on the agenda for it to be circulated and discussed.

I think I have endeavour to answer must of the questions and I have been asked to be brief which I have attended to do as much as I can.

Thank you very much once again for the recommendations and I think most of these recommendations are very much implementable and we need to note and take it forward. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member the mover of this motion. Let me thank all the Honourable Members who took part in these debate. May now put the question. Thank you very much Clerk you may proceed.

[Question Proposed, Put and agreed to]

[Report by the Delegation to Westminster Workshop [PAC] has been adopted]

(iii) Report of the Gambia Delegation to the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Conference (PUOIC) for the period 13th-17th January 2018 [By Hon. Ousman Sillah-Banjul North and Head of Delegation]

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I raise to present for the consideration and adoption of this august Assembly the Report of the National Assembly of the Gambia Delegation to the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Conference (PUOIC) from the 13th-17th January, 2018 held in Tehran, in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Member of the Delegation comprised Momodou L.K Sanneh Deputy Speaker and Head of Delegation, Hon. Fakebba N.L Colley National Assembly Member for Kiang West and the Member of the National Assembly Parliamentary Union of the (OIC).

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member sorry to interrupt am appealing to you to summarize the report. Thank you.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker I will do my best to summarize as much as possible. The third Member of the Delegation was myself Ousman Sillah National Assembly Member for Banjul North and also the Member of the National Assembly Parliamentary Union of the (OIC).

In fact, this report was to be delivered by the Honourable Deputy Speaker who was the Head of the Delegation but by the virtue of the circumstances is now presiding over the session, he has delegated me to present the report on the half of the Delegation.

I am told to summarize the report, you can see the contents, we have introduction, objectives, activities and then annex.

The Delegation of the Gambia comprising these 3 Honourable Members left Banjul on Thursday 11th January, 2018 to attend the 13th session of the Parliamentary Union of the (PUOIC) in Tehran in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meet was held at the Espinas Hotel in the Iranian capital and was attended by Parliamentary Delegations from 44 out of 54 member countries of the organization of Islamic Conference as well as representatives of Regional and International organizations.

The Parliamentary Union of the OIC (PUOIC) Member States is composed of parliaments of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. It was established in Iran on 17th 1999. The membership as at now stands at 54 countries in Africa, Middle East, Asia and the Caribbean. However, the Gambia joined the PUOIC as a Sovereign Independent nation in 2009, but as far as records are concern, the country has not been proactive in her engagement in the activities of the union.

Article 4 (1) of the statutes of the PUOIC provides for the conference which is composed of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the union or their representatives, in addition to a maximum of 4 parliamentarians from each member of union. Article 5 of the same statues also provides for the conference to be convened once every year.

The purpose of the conference is to consider subject matters that fall in the scope of its objectives, as provided for in article 1 of the statutes and adopt appropriate resolutions, decisions and recommendations.

The Objectives

The Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Conference aims at achieving the following objectives:

- Introducing the sublime precepts of Islam and seeking to disseminate them while emphasizing the various characteristic and humanism of the Islamic civilization.
- Enhancing and supporting the implementation of the Islamic principle of consultation (shoora) in all OIC member states, in accordance with the constitution and circumstances of each member;
- Providing a framework for comprehensive and fruitful cooperation and coordination among parliaments of OIC members in international fora and Organizations;
- promoting meeting and dialogue among parliaments of OIC members and their deputies, exchanging parliamentary experiences, discussing economic, cultural, social and political issues of interest to the OIC members, and addressing grave challenges and attempts to impose cultural, political and economic domination and adopting appropriate recommendations and decisions on such issues; and
- Strengthening contacts, cooperation and coordination with other parliamentary, governmental and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of advancing common objectives;

This was followed by activities, it was a five-day engagement which started on Friday, giving the fact that The Gambia at the time was not serving in any of the committees so the delegation did not engage in any activity on that particular day.

On Saturday there were meetings of the committees and for your information the PUOIC has organs and four Specialist Standing Committees.

1. Sixth Committee on Political Affairs and Foreign Relations
2. Sixth Committee on Economic Affairs and Environment
3. Sixth Committee on Human Rights, Women and Family Affairs
4. Sixth Committee on Cultural and Legal Affairs and Dialogue of Civilisation and Religion.

The Committees meet and because we were new we decided as a delegation to attend one of these because they were being held simultaneously two at a time so we agreed to attend Specialised Standing Committee on Political Affairs Relations.

During the discussion, the Gambian delegations made a contribution in the form of recommendation which was eventually considered and adopted and that was for the PUOIC to be consulting with existing regional organisations in which member countries belong to such as the ECOWAS parliament and the AU. It can be in the form of having permanent delegation ambassadors but the recommendation was for consultations to be intensified so that position being taken by the union would resonate in those organisation, like for instance the issue of irregular migration which is affecting member countries in the Africa region of the PUOIC, and not only Africa but the Arab region because young people leave countries like The Gambia, Senegal and then go through Libya which is part of the Arab group. So for positions to be taken in consultation with this organisation like ECOWAS can also help in this regard. This was the recommendation and it was eventually adopted by this particular standing committee.

The session on Monday was a working session called the 20th Session of PUOIC General Committee. In this session statements were delivered by the outgoing President of the Parliamentary Assembly who was the person of Honourable Issaka Sidibe. The Speaker of Iranian Parliament Honourable Dr. Ali Larijani also delivered a speech. A statement was also delivered by the Secretary General of PUOIC Pro. Mahmud Erol Kilic of Turkey who was also outgoing. This was followed by a working session and in this working session the committee after adopting the agenda also elected a Vice President for the African group which went to Niger and also the Vice President of the Arab group which went to Mauritania. You can see Mauritania and Sudan are not part of the African group and of course Libya and others. This was followed by the report of the Secretary General on financial matters of course as an organisation it deals with resources.

During the session it was revealed that some countries are in arrears and of course our concern is Gambia. For your information Gambia is in arrears of its membership dues. The Gambia supposed to pay US\$11,000. There is a recommendation made by this delegation to that effect which I would come to later.

We discussed organizational matters such as the drafting of the communique and the agenda. This was followed by the consultations of three existing group, the African group, the Arab group and the Asian group. Naturally we are from Africa and part of the African group we attended this group's meeting.

The meeting had an agenda and was presided by the Senegalese Speaker of parliament Honourable Mustapha Niasse, who also came to show up support for the candidature of Senegal for the position of Secretary General of PUOIC. The session was supposed to be chaired by the Malian Speaker but he was engaged in other side events and the Senegalese Speaker of parliament Honourable Mustapha Niasse presided over the session.

The session was to discussed the position of Africa regarding filling of the position of the Secretary General in which an African member of the PUOIC submitted an application in the person of Honourable Cheikh Muhamed Koureishi Niasse is a member of parliament in Senegal for the position which was supposed to be vacant as the occupant of the position has its second term.

Before we left Gambia, we has a briefing as a delegation together with the Speaker of our parliament Honourable Matiam Jack Denton to discuss about Gambia's positions. We finally agreed that Gambia is going to support Senegal in its bid for this position. Of course when the issue came up the Gambia took the lead in advocating for support for the Senegalese candidature which was well appreciated by Senegal, it was in fact indicated by the Speaker in the session there and also after the session. Our stand was not sentimental, we were very objective that Gambia and Senegal share the same region. Besides the relationship, cultural,

religious, biological connection, we shared the same reality. So the reality in Senegal if Gambia wants her interest to be served by this union Senegal being represented there at that epics and with that epics responsibility, Gambia's concern would be heard and address.

This was the position that supporting Senegal means supporting ourselves. So that was the position we went with and we took the lead in nominating Senegal. The other factor also was that Senegal applicant was the only application up to the time of the closure of submission.

The third factor is that article 16(1) of the statutes indicates Geographical Rotation and this time is Africa's time. So all these factors favoured Senegal's candidature.

Sudan argued of course on some legal points that cannot be back by any legal provision in the statutes, but it was arguing that it is not binding. This Geographical location should not be a factor when Sudan is not part of the African group. So the African delegation took position and finally agree that;

1. The African group will not compromise on the issue that it is Africa's turn to occupy the position of the Secretary General on the bases of geographical rotation in accordance with the statutes.
2. The African group endorse the candidature of Senegal for the position of Secretary General of PUOIC
3. That Sudan is not a member of the African group

So this was the position that we took and we agreed that it is none negotiable as we will not compromise with it and when we went there this was the position taken and fortunately it was supported by all. In fact Sudan had to withdraw its candidature.

After that, it was the election of members of the Specialist Standing Committee. As I indicated earlier four Standing Committees which Sudan have been occupying through elections. The Gambian delegations submitted nomination for all the four.

There were five including the executive committee but we felt that since we are just coming new let us just go where we can be effectively engaged and these are the areas which we believe we can actively engage. So those are the four committees that I earlier enumerated.

In these committees, the delegation submitted the names of members to the following standing specialist committee (SSCs):

Honourable Ousman Sillah Committee on Political Affairs and Foreign Relations,
Honourable Sainey Touray Committee on Economic Affairs and Environment,
Honourable Ya Kumba Jaiteh Committee on Human rights, Women and family,
Honourable Ousman Touray Committee on Cultural and Legal Affairs and Dialogue of Civilisation and Religious.

The reason why we did this was we knew we cannot get all the positions, of course it could have been possible but we felt that it may be impossible also. At least we can argue that we are coming new so let them give us the opportunity to serve. At least if we could have got three or two we fine so this was the reason.

There was also a gentleman who works with the PUOIC, a Gambian who was serving there. He also advised us that we do it this way because it was the best way so we submitted the names. The discussions started with the committee in which I was nominated and it was agreed that the Gambia is new and therefore should be taken on board. However, some issues arose as some countries wanted to serve in committee in which they have already served. It was suggested to come up with a principle that this time around if a country served in any committee that particular country should give chance to other countries.

This was the situation we found ourselves. So during the course of our debate the Head of the delegation Honourable Momodou L.K Sanneh through our consultation following the steps of other committees because other delegation also did that,

withdrew their nomination for other countries. He took the floor and withdrew our nomination to give chance to other countries as done by other countries.

THE SPEAKER: The mover of the report Honourable Sillah, remember the report is in three fold, the communique, the declaration and the statement. That is why I said initially you have to be very brief.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Basically those are the main issues. I think I highlighted the arrears that Gambia is in. that is how matters stand in the committees. The session started on Tuesday and the opening was grace by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran H.E Dr Hassan Rouhani and the opening was chaired by the Speaker of the Iranian parliament Dr Ali Larijani. Then after that we were engaged in the working sessions, presentations of reports by the outgoing Secretary General and after that there were also statement from heads of delegation in alphabetical order. The Gambian delegation also prepared a presentation you can see it in the report circulated which I read on behalf of the delegation. The session regarding election of the Secretary General Sudan was the main challenger but it had to concede given that there was no legal for her application and given that everybody else Asia, Arab and African all supported the candidature for the Senegalese Member of Parliament.

In conclusion, with your indulgence I would want to read page (14). It was very important that the Gambia National Assembly was represented at the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic countries. The participation of the delegation in the proceeding was effective and noteworthy.

In this regard, the delegation is pleased to present some few recommendations for the National Assembly to consider and peruse for their realization. The recommendations are thus:

1. That the National Assembly from henceforth should become proactive in its membership and participation in the activities of the PUOIC so as to continue its quota towards the attainment of its noble objectives of bringing about world peace, the strengthening of cooperation between and among Member States as well as the promotion of the development and welfare of the population in the Ummah.
2. That for the Gambia to be regular and up on date in the payment of her membership dues so as to enjoy independence and an unquestionable position as the Gambia is in arrears of US\$11, 000 [eleven thousand Dollars]. The reason why Senegal's candidature was accepted is because they are not in arrears. We were even advised to prevail on our country to pay its membership dues because this is what gives us authority.
3. That the National Assembly engage the executive branch of government to restore and maintain good relations with all the PUOIC Member countries, including the restoration of Gambia's diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran which was broken by the previous regime.

The General Assembly of PUOIC also requires two members to be represented Honourable Fakebba Colley by virtue of his position as the memssber for the National Assembly Parliamentary delegation to the PUOIC and myself were representing the Gambia for the period of one year. All this position are for the period of one year, 2018. The next PUOIC meeting is going to be held in Casablanca, Morocco.

You can see the annexes, the speech and statement of the delegation. The Tehran declaration, Communique which we do not have the adopted version and felt that the draft is not meant for this so we would try and get the adopted final Communique and sent it to all the members of the Assembly.

We also thank the National Assembly for facilitating this, the only lesson that we have learned was that when we went there throughout our stay was interesting. You can see the cloths that we put on was the only cloths we have until we had to go to the mall to buy cloths which was expensive. The problem was that when we were being checked in, our luggage was checked in to Dakar and we do not know. It was in Turkey we realized that our luggage was not following us.

Thank you, that is what we had for the National Assembly and we are begging for consideration and adoption. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Any Secunder?

HON. FODAY N.M DRAMMEH [TUMANA]: I so second Honourable Speaker.

[Question Proposed]

POINT OF ORDER

HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]: The document before us here is for consideration and adoption and on page [14], the document is annex by two more documents that are not attached. If you have to do justice to the report is also to consider the Tehran Declaration and the Communique which are not available now. Therefore, I don't know whether it will be possible to withdraw the document until all annexes are gathered for consideration and adoption. Thank you.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you Honourable Member for calling my attention to that. It has been noticed earlier that 3 pages are missing and this is the Tehran Declaration. We have given the Table Office some copies, if circulated it will serve the purpose.

THE SPEAKER: The mover of the motion has make a clarification to your suggestion. Since it has been circulated I would rule that we move ahead to give chance to members to deliberate on the report.

HON. MAGASSY: I am concerned with the proper consideration of the report. Just now that this document had been circulated, or just now that I received mine to be more specific. Secondly, the report is talking about three documents and the third document is not in my hand. So I am talking about the proper consideration of the report that is why I raised the issue. Thank you.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Regarding this Communique what we had when we left Tehran was a draft communique, the declaration was adopted but the communique was not adopted. I informed this House that we are going to contact them and if we have the final one we will send it though the Table Office of the National Assembly or we can remove it as at now for it not to form part of the report if that is satisfactory.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much the mover, it is not the fault of the Table Office because it has not been submitted. That portion of the report would be deleted until we get the communique from the organisers.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me the floor. I think we have to suspend this document Mr Speaker because incomplete document cannot be adopted. We do not have to waste much time on this, let the document rest and we proceed on other items.

MOTION:

[For the Report of the Gambia Delegation to the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic Conference [PUOIC] for the period 13th – 17th January 2018 be withdraw till further notice].

HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]: I stand to move a motion that this report be withdrawn until we gather all the necessary annexes for proper consideration and adoption. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: I so second the Motion Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[That the Report of the National Assembly Delegation to the Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic Conference [PUOIC] for the period 13th – 17th January 2018 has been withdrawn till further notice]

Adjournment

[The House was adjourned to Wednesday 14th March, 2018]