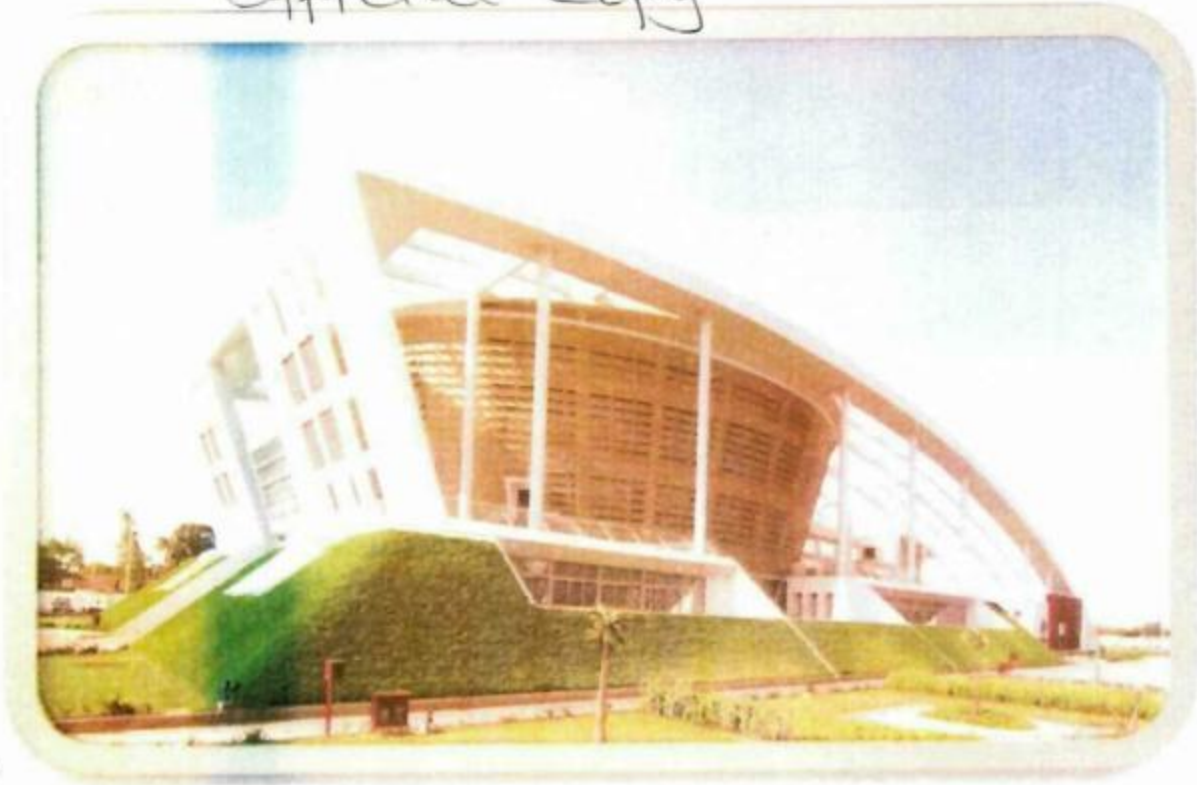


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**National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reverend Pyne
Lane, Banjul, The Gambia**

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

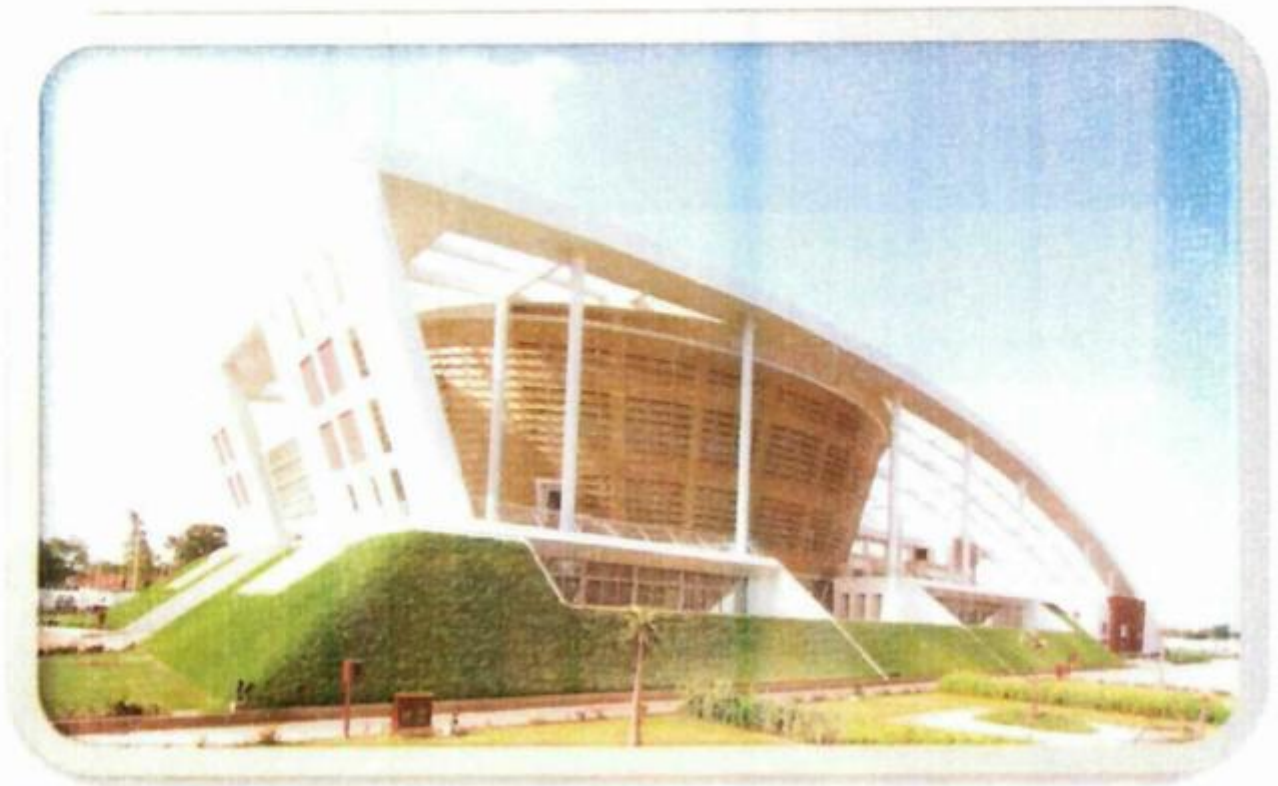
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - THIRD MEETING

05TH OCTOBER, 2017

SESSION – 2017



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

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: III

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Thursday 05th October, 2017.

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- "Be it RESOLVED" that this August Assembly do adjourn Sine-Die [Hon. Majority Leader & Member for Kombo South]**



THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

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

THURSDAY 05TH OCTOBER, 2017

1. PRAYERS:

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

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

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

The House was called to Order

THE SPEAKER: I apologize for the heat, there are some issues with the air conditioning but it will be fixed very soon.

2. Corrections of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday 04th October 2017

THE SPEAKER

The Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday 04th October 2017 is before us for adoption. Can any Honourable Member please move that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday 04th October, 2017 be adopted?

HON. MUHAMMED NDOW [BANJUL CENTRAL]: I so Move, Madam Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, any Seconder?

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

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

Any issues, observations, corrections, amendments?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker, page 4, Point of Order-where you have Honourable Alhagie S.B Sillah Member for Niani raise a point of Order, clarifying that the cash amount donated by the Chinese government—

THE SPEAKER: Hold on please, let us be with you, page 4 what line or paragraph

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Line 2 instead of floods should be "flood victims".

THE SPEAKER: I still don't get you, line 2

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Yes line 2, amount donated by the Chinese government to flood victims, instead of floods should be "flood victims" that is paragraph 1.

THE SPEAKER: Are you talking about paragraph 2 or line 2?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Last paragraph.

THE SPEAKER: Ok, can you read it from the beginning of the paragraph?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Yes, Honourable Alhagie S.B Sillah, Member for Niani raise a Point of Order, clarifying that the cash amount donated by the Chinese government to floods, instead of floods it should be "flood victims" in his constituency was one hundred thousand Dollars not one million as stated by the Member-

THE SPEAKER: Ok, not one million Dalasis. Thank you very much, I think that is a substantive amendment. Any issues of substance please?

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you Madam Speaker, page 5, the names, number 14. Instead of Honourable "Ousman Sillah" it is written as Honourable Alhagie Sillah. Thank you

THE SPEAKER: No. 14 reads, Honourable Alhagie Sillah instead of Honourable "Ousman Sillah". Anymore?

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: The same page similar corrections, number 18, page 5 Honourable Alhagie Darboe, Brikama North, initial "S".

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Page 3, observation or corrections, the first line Honourable Members scrutinized the votes. I think it should be "Records of Votes and Proceedings", observations, and or corrections.

THE SPEAKER: I don't get you, page 3

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Page 3, observations and or corrections. The sentence reads: Honourable Members scrutinized the Votes. I think there should be "Records of Votes".

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members scrutinized the Votes and Proceedings of Monday. Ok, scrutinized the Votes, so we include Records of Votes and Proceedings. Thank you, the Table Office will take note.

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Thank you Madam, on page 4 to 5, those who took the floor to do their deliberations—

THE SPEAKER: Read from page 4 so that we will be with you.

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Page 4, where you have the following Honourable Members took the floor and spoke on the motion. Here I observed that I was the second speaker ----

THE SPEAKER: Where it is indicated the Point of Order was upheld. Are you reading from there?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Yes, I am reading from page 4 going to page 5

THE SPEAKER: what is your comment or observation on page 4?

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: I mean, it started from page 4 going towards page 5. Page 4 is the title of what I am coming to say. Now going to page 5 where you have the names of Honourable Members listed, I observed that my name is not captured and I was the second speaker during the debate.

THE SPEAKER: The Table Office will take note of that. In fact, Table Office I cannot see number one, I don't know why. Where the Point of Order was upheld and you continue to page 5 with No.2. Where is No.1?

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Page 5, No.2, Honourable Bakary Camara of Kiana, I think we don't have a constituency called Kiana it should be "Kiang Central".

Undertone

HON. MUHAMMED NDOW [BANJUL CENTRAL]: I participated in the debate yesterday but my name does not appear

THE SPEAKER: Your name has not appeared? Where should it be, on page 5, ok is noted. Any more substantial amendment otherwise, if it has to do with typographical errors, minor grammatical errors then you can always contact the table office if you notice something in the course of the proceedings but then let us proceed.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

***[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly
Sitting of Wednesday 04th October, 2017 has been adopted with
amendments]***

3. Questions for Oral Answers

i. Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad

THE SPEAKER: Questions for which due notices were given to Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad by Honourable Members for Oral Reply.

Question No.89/2017 [By the Hon. Member for Jeshwang]

HON. ALHAGIE DRAMMEH [JESHWANG]: Madam Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation & Gambians Abroad explain to this august Assembly what is being done to help Gambians stranded in Europe, Libya and Morocco?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Madam Speaker, the New Coalition Government has made tackling irregular/illegal migration a top priority of its administration. It plans to focus on creating jobs and training opportunities to reduce the unemployment rate among young people. It also affirms its engagement with its partners such as EU, IOM, UNICEF just to name a few by exploring new avenues and how to address the root causes of illegal migration locally

dubbed **"Back Way."** Premised on the hope of better Gambia, many stranded Gambians have returned to Banjul on voluntary basis.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to the above-mentioned goal, my Ministry, the primary institution responsible for the welfare of Gambians abroad is re-engaging relevant international organizations and friendly countries in not only reversing the situation but also ensuring that the welfare of Gambians wherever they are, is adequately addressed, wherever possible.

Europe

As concerned in Europe, the Ministry through our Missions/Embassies abroad as well as cooperation with other countries is constantly in touch with the relevant authorities of respective countries where Gambians are being stranded to ensure their welfare and/or repatriation where necessary. This has resulted in several missions to countries where Gambians are being held to ascertain their nationality and to ensure that they are well treated and repatriated. Such missions include but not limited to Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, United Kingdom, Norway and Spain. Consular visits are regularly conducted by resident Embassy staff and by our Honorary Consuls where an Embassy is not present.

Libya

Through liaison with the Secretary General of the Gambian Association in Tripoli, Mr Edrisa Sarjo, the Ministry is constantly being kept abreast about the situation of Gambians in Libya. The Association conveys to the Ministry information regarding their conditions of stay as well as their needs and other issues relating to their welfare. Through the combined efforts of the stakeholders – MoFA, MoI, Libyan Embassy and IOM – and that of the Association, the Ministry granted approval for the repatriation to Banjul by IOM of many stranded Gambians. So far, about 772 Gambians were repatriated from Libya as follows:

Date (2017)	No. of Gambians
10 th March	140
4 th April	169
27 th April	168
23 rd May	157
08 th June	138
Total	772

The Ministry also wishes to mention that due to the deteriorated security situation in Libya, the Association could not make visits to Sourman, Zawia, Subrata and Misrata to assess the living conditions of Gambians. As a result therefore, the Ministry has engaged the Libyan Embassy for any information regarding any Gambians in these cities in Libya.

Morocco

In collaboration with our Mission/Embassy in Rabat, every effort is being taken to ensure that all stranded Gambians within the Kingdom are safe and their welfare ensured. Such efforts include but not limited to, regular consular visits and frequent communication with the relevant Moroccan authorities. Thank you Madam Speaker

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad inform this august Assembly as to how many Gambians have voluntarily opted for repatriation from Europe and how many of them have actually been repatriated and what were the conditions if any attached to repatriation and whether some of these repatriation are forcefully done? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would not allow that question and in any event I think there is a table... look at page 3, there is a table but you can also reframe your question, you have asked 3 or 4 questions in one.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, am speaking about Europe not Libya. The figure given to us is Libya, am asking about the figure from Europe. Thank you

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Can you come again please, your last question is not very clear to me.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, saying how many Gambians have voluntarily opted to be repatriated from Europe? And whether any condition is been attach to them being repatriated. And the other question is, if any condition is attached, what are the conditions attached to this exercise? That's those coming from Europe.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Madam Speaker, not less than one thousand Gambians have opted to return to The Gambia voluntarily, and there has been no conditions attached to their repatriation to The Gambia and we do not expect any conditions to be attached to their repatriation to the Gambia. We cannot as a government imposed on any government what conditions should be attached to the repatriation of a Gambian to The Gambia.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister has given us figures, seven hundred and seventy-two [772] Gambians repatriated from Libya. What I would want to know is, do we have camps established to host them in Libya before coming? Or do they have any arrangement with any authority before coming in - of been receive at the airport and after reception

to be given means to have small scale, middle scale enterprises in order to be able to settle in the Gambia having income. Is that process in place at the moment?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: The Honourable gentlemen's questions seem to bear into other ministries that really do not have any relevance to foreign matters but as part of the Executive I think I will tempt to give an answer.

Obviously, the situation in Libya is such that we found it extremely dangerous to camp our citizens in areas that are easily identifiable because the situation is, Africans in particular have been exposed to great deal of danger and to have all of them housed together we do not consider that quite safe for them.

In many events, the President of the Gambian Association in Libya together with the IOM are doing everything possible to ensure that our Gambians, our citizens are secure to the maximum. And when they return of course there is a Desk Officer in my office who meet the Gambians at the airport, receives them and after receiving them the relevant authorities, (internal authorities) take charge. Principally the Ministry of Interior which is responsible for Immigration matters and as far as settlements are concern Honourable Members of this Assembly are quite aware of the fact that the government of the Gambia has been working with the European Union in having Gambians who come voluntarily or who are deported to have them properly settled.

The Ministry of Trade and Employment, has a scheme where not only those who come from abroad but even Gambians who are here, young Gambians who could access the necessary funds to enter into businesses. This is to assure even for those who are resident, who have not gone so that the push factors that pushes them to go abroad will never occur.

It is not just having them repatriated and then leaving them but those who care and who have approach the Ministry of Trade and Industry for assistances, these are being look into and not only for those coming from abroad but also for all other youth in the

country and I hope that the Gambian youth will take advantage of the situation and benefit from the scheme.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you Madam, I would like to felicitate the smiling symbol of sacrifice and gratitude Honourable Darboe. I have two questions for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Gambians abroad.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, remember you are asking a supplementary question, you cannot load it so bear that in mind.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Honourable Minister, I would like you to shed light on why, there is a travel restriction between the Republic of the Gambia and United States. And my second question is, in Angola we have a large number of Gambians—

THE SPEAKER: That is exactly what I was saying.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: I am not aware of any travel restrictions between the Gambia and United States. Am not aware of any. All I know is that the government of the United States has policies regulating issue of issuance of visa to intending traveller to the United States of America and the applications of those laws I do not considered them as restrictions. You have to meet their visa requirements for you to be granted the United States entry visa but is not a restriction.

HON. BABA GALLAN JALLOW [SANIMENTRENG]: Thank you Madam, the Honourable Minister made mentioned of the cities in Libya that are not accessible due to security reasons but they have engaged the Embassy to know whether there are still Gambians in those cities. Is there any information whether there are Gambians in those cities?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: We have not got full information because the problem usually is to identify or to ascertain the nationality of these people because we have a lot of them, groups of Africans and is an issue of identifying or ascertaining their nationalities. Let me also inform the Honourable Member that the Libyan Authority, the Libyan Embassy in the Gambia and the Gambian authority are working closely but as at now we have not got anything quite concrete as to whether or not there are Gambians in these regions or not.

HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]: Thank you Madam, could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs inform this august House whether there are other Gambians in the entry points because going to Libya normally there are few countries you have to pass through, and likely there might be Gambians stranded at those places who might need to come back home, whether they know of countries like Algeria, Niger and other countries that are sharing border with Libya?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Honourable Member, I would like to inform you that we do not have any official communications from the authorities of those countries as to whether or not there are Gambians in those places. In fact, information about Gambians we have been getting from Gambians themselves who are in those countries and of course there is no doubt that there are still Gambians at some borders wishing to cross to other countries and we are only prevailing on them that they should not risk their lives, but come back home. We are appealing to them to do that but that is how much we can do. We cannot force anyone to come back home, we appeal to them and show them the prudence of remaining home and trying to do something that will be beneficiary to themselves in the country rather than taking the risk of passing the desert and further trying to cross the Mediterranean to countries where they are kept in camps without opportunities of been employed.

Officially, we do not have anything from those governments, either from the government of Chad and Libya being the crossing points. But we do have information

that there are Gambians there and even here sometimes we want to ascertain whether in fact they are Gambians because we come across situations where non Gambians presents themselves as Gambians and we really want to ascertain that whether those who present themselves as Gambians are actually Gambians before we take our responsibilities towards them.

HON. MAHTARR JENG [LOWER NUIMI]: Thank you Madam, the Minister has just said that they don't force anybody or anyone to come but if persuasion is backed by incentives it goes to enhance the possibility that the individuals could volunteer out of their own will to come over. We have been informed that there were funds that were given by the European Union for the settlement of those repatriated. How much are you aware of this and how much incentives do you backup your persuasion with the Gambians to come back home. Thank you very much.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Thank you Honourable Member, in fact, if the Honourable Member could refreshes his memory in my answer to the Honourable Member for Serekunda, I did mentioned what efforts were been made to settle those who come home voluntarily and I have made specific reference to the scheme within the Ministry of Trade and Employment to provide seed money to Gambians who come voluntarily or who are deported and even those who are within the country in order to prevent them from going away. I did mentioned that and I think I want to really repeat the same thing that, there is this scheme and of course in our efforts to persuade, we tell them that is all not bad, there is hope and you can still come back home and be really attended to.

We are not in a position to give millions to people but they will receive seed money that will provide them an opportunity to take-off -that is what we are doing Honourable Member and certainly we will continue to do so and I want to also assure members of this august body that we are doing everything possible to secure those funds. We want to really engage our partners to ensure that apart from what has already been provided, we still want more funding so that whatever seed money is given to any

individual or group of individuals, it will be a significant amount that would really assist in the pursuit of their objectives.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for the opportunity, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for that statement. We are looking at the collaboration and the cooperation of different relevant institutions IMO, European Union in helping you to achieve our goal. Hon. Minister going through your response, are there any challenges, if yes what are the measures or mechanism put in place to overcome them in terms of helping those Gambians who are stranded over there?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Sorry, come again Honourable.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Yes, I recognised your efforts and also thank the other institutions for their collaboration and combine efforts as well. During the intervention to helping Gambians abroad, have you encounter challenges, if there are, what are the measures or mechanisms put in place to mitigate the challenges?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Well, certainly the challenge that we encountered is getting these young men and sometimes young women convinced and I reduced it to a level of having confidence in what we say, having trust in what we said and we will not for any reason cajole any citizen into taking decisions that we ourselves do not believed in and we do not have any intention of implementing. That is really challenging and I want to say that, we hope that our compatriots who are stranded in other parts of the world will listen to us and really come back home.

HON DEMBA SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank Madam, Honourable Minister few years ago the American government issued a ban to all government officials and their families to travel to America. Could the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, International

Cooperation and Gambians abroad inform this august Assembly whether there are any plan for his Ministry to engage with the American government to revise the said ban?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Again Honourable Members, I was informed, in fact through records that in those days there were outstanding issues with the American government with respect to securing visas to some Gambian officials and members of their families. This was basically due to the fact that Gambians who had committed crimes in the United States, were convicted and after serving their sentence, the American government wants to have them back to the Gambia but there were no travel documents made available to them and the only way the American government probably believes they could deal with the situation was to deny visas to some of our Gambian officials and members of their families.

However, since I came to office, we have addressed that situation and again in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior issued the necessary travel documents to the Gambians who are supposed to be repatriated. As far as I know, there are no restrictions or ban on Gambian officials to go to United States. In fact as of yesterday, I met the same Gambian officials who are going to the United States for other businesses. I have just returned from United States to attend to Gambia government's business. So really I don't think the ban is there, I don't think the ban is any longer there.

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]: Madam my question is, Gambians in Libya are voluntarily coming back to Gambia because of security reasons. Can the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs tell this Assembly, if there are any reasons why Gambians in Europe would want to voluntarily return to the Gambia?

The second part of the question is, do you have any plan or strategy for Gambians who are in Europe having problems there but don't want to voluntarily come back. What plans do you have them?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Obviously, there are Gambians in other parts of the world other than Libya but who again are in interview situations, and are living in camps; they left the Gambia with the hope that they will secure employment. Instead of securing employment, they are kept somewhere for several months while their immigration status are being looked into and in majority of cases, immigration status might be- in those circumstance -means what arrangement would be made for them to be repatriated. I did not see what we as a government can really do for them. We cannot dictate to the governments of those countries how to deal with those situations, they have their immigration and other laws governing the accommodation of non-citizens or their non-nationals. They also really do not want to come back home, I cannot imagine what really we can do. A government might be as powerful as it is but then when the individual that you are dealing with are beyond your jurisdiction I cannot imagine what we can do to bring them back.

I would certainly want to probably engage other people because this is a problem that should concern all of us. I will engage other interested persons so that in situations like this, we can put our heads together and find a solution.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. Honourable Members will notice that except for the last sitting, I often remind Honourable Members of the provisions of the Standing Orders with regards to supplementary questions. But you would observe that every sitting I would remind Honourable Members to abide by the rules. Supplementary questions are supplementary to the main question, and that new elements of questions should not be introduced or ask. I don't want to be seen to be jumping into the arena and also to be seen to be depriving Honourable Members of their rights to ask questions but these rights are limited, through the provisions of the Standing Orders, which is the constitution of the National Assembly so let us abide by it.

I have not mastered all the provisions of the Standing Orders yet but let us all try and familiarise ourselves with it so that there will not be undue interferences from the

chair with regards to bringing or calling the attention of Honourable Members. This is my appeal please; if it persist I would not hesitate to stop the question. Thank you.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]: The Honourable Minister has outlined the scheme for returnees and even for some unemployed youth in the country, I would like to know whether there is any mechanism for mentoring or monitoring whatever projects they may undertake to ensure that they are ongoing?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Certainly, as I have indicated earlier the project, is situated within the Ministry of Trade and Employment and obviously, we cannot implement such a scheme without having a monitoring mechanism to ensure its success. Because failure of this project will impart negatively on our future efforts to secure additional funds from the same funding source as well as other sources. We can assure you that the monitoring mechanism and in fact from inception the ministry insists that there must be a business plan to convince that the scheme one is undertaking viably and it will not fail from its inception. We want to assure this Honourable Assembly that we will be very vigilant in ensuring that the funds are properly utilise and that proper measures are put in place to ensure that nobody who benefit from the fund would not marry a "**Manyo**" [second wife].

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister, I have noticed that the error is from the Table Office, they are circulating newspaper to Honourable Members. May I remind you to keep the papers and stop the distribution until after the session.

HON. LAMIN F.M CONTA [KOMBO EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker. It has been mentioned by the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs that the primary institution responsible for the welfare of Gambians Abroad is re-engaging relevant international organizations and friendly countries. Who are these agencies or organization? Thank you.

HON. OUSAINOU BARDOE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: These Agencies as far as this particular issue is concern, the European Union and the International Office for Migration. These are the institutions.

HON. SAINY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker and thank you Honourable Minister for that informed answers. How do you account for Gambians in countries where Gambia does not enjoy official representation? Thank you.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Well in countries where we do not have Embassies, we relied principally on our Honorary Counsels.

In passed years, we used to rely also on Commonwealth representatives in those countries but now that we are no longer in the commonwealth, we cannot really explore that avenue but relied basically on our Honorary counsels in many of these countries. We have quite a few Honorary Counsels who have been appointed by this government to look into matters effecting Gambians in those countries.

In countries where we have Senegalese representation, Gambians go there as a neighbour and solicit assistance and invariably where such assistance is solicited it's given but then we relied primarily on our Honorary Counsels. We will continue to do so in several countries because we cannot open embassies in all these places, but we will do so in places where government deem it necessary.

HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SAJAL]: Thank you Madam Speaker. My questions some part of it has been dealt with already that is the issue of documentation. Gambians abroad are seeking passport or national documents of the Gambia. How does your Ministry handle this issue?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Well the issuance of passports is within the portfolio of the Ministry of Interior.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Minister, sorry to interrupt but I think the issue of passport is not connected to the main question here. This question deals with

Gambians abroad, their repatriation and connected issues. So really I would disallow that question.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

Would the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gambians Abroad and International Relations inform this august Assembly whether the Ministry has information regarding the irregular migration trend and whether it is continuing? Secondly, is there any Gambians in the United States who are schedule for repatriation?

THE SPEAKER: Sorry one supplementary question at a time please.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Well the Ministry of course has desk officers who deals with migration issues and am glad to say that he is on top of the business and he keep updates very regularly so that migration issues and matters affecting Gambians in any part of the world passes through his office so that we keep records of available information.

Let me say that since some cases the information received is unofficial, we cannot rely on its absolute authenticity but we still work on it as data that is available to us and because I think it will be irresponsible of us if we just ignore that on the basis that is not official, so we work on the data.

Now as far as repatriation from the United States is concern I am not aware of any except for one, which is not an issue of repatriation, but rather the family wants the government to help repatriated the person from the United States.

There may be and probably if there are any such issues hanging, I would still know because I have been inconstant contact with my office, keeping me abreast of important events happening within the Ministry.

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister, you talked about the engagement of Libyan Embassy. What mechanism did your Ministry used to come to such conclusion, was

there consultation with the parties concerned such as the returnee, their travel agency among others? Thank you.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Well our engagement with Libyan authority is really at the official level. They have a mission here and we engage their mission. However, we have not got the returnees involved and am not sure whether really in such situations you do get 'returnees involve' because you are dealing with government to government and am not sure whether those who may be the subject should be part of the engagement. But certainly we are engaging the Libyans for the benefits of those returnees and I can assure the Honourable Member that whether the returnees participate in the process or not everything done will be in their best interest.

HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister, is your Ministry aware that there are Gambians in Libya that collaborate with Libyan in other to maltreat Gambians? Thank you.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Well, again we have had horrendous stories of mistreatments to not only Gambians but Africans in general in Libya. I am not sure whether this is been done in collaboration with Gambians or Libyans and other people and I have raise those issues with the relevant authority and whether they exist, if they exist it will be address if they do not exist then it will never arise and that's t the whole purpose of my engagement with the relevant Libyan authorities.

HON. MUHAMMEH MAHANERA [SANDU]: Thank you Ma, for giving me the floor. Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs. Sometimes ago Gambians were depressed in.... [The Speaker intervened]

THE SPEAKER: Please sorry! Can you ask supplementary question and let's stop the history.

HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]: Some time ago Gambians were depressed in Mozambique because they do not have official representative. What plans does your Ministry have for those people who are depressed in Mozambique?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Sorry I didn't hear you.

HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]: I say sometime ago Gambians were depressed in Mozambique just because they do not have official representative and the complaint has come to the Gambia here. What plan does your Ministry have for these people who are depressed in Mozambique?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Madam Speaker, the situation arising from Mozambique a few months ago and of course even though we do not have representation in Mozambique but then our embassy in South Africa got our official to travel to Mozambique to address the situation. I am happy to inform this august Assembly that the situation has been properly addressed and again right now Mozambique is one of those countries where we are thinking of appointing an honorary counsel because we already know that there are one or two gentlemen there who on a volunteer basis look after the welfare of some Gambians.

These gentlemen have been resident in Mozambique for more than two decades and they know the country very well; and they have some kind of relationship with some of the authorities there but again that is not enough. However, I believe that whoever has been attending for the welfare of Gambians, on a volunteer basis maybe considered for officialisation so that they can have the mandate to look after the problems of the Gambians. But in the meantime the mission in South Africa which is also accredited to Mozambique would be looking into any issue that arises not only in Mozambique but also in other countries in which our Ambassador in South Africa is accredited.

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker and thank you very much Honourable Minister for your wonderful deliberations.

Madam Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs inform this August Assembly whether his Ministry has any mechanism in place to follow-up properties of those Gambians who died in abroad that his Ministry is aware off?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Honourable Members be informed that we are in the process of establishing a fully fledged diaspora desk or diaspora directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which will look into various issues affecting the Gambian in diaspora whether alive or death. But then on the specific issue of attending to the properties of the deceased Gambians abroad we can hardly do anything about such situations if the matter doesn't come to our knowledge. We should be informed and when we are given information and our assistance requested, we will give all the necessary assistance including advice.

I am not sure, but it is likely that every country would have in place its regime of laws that will govern such situations, the procedures one has to follow and depending where the country is, where the deceased dies we will advise and assist the families as to what should be done. I want to assure you that Gambians wherever they are whether death or alive when it is necessary for the government to intervene in any situation we will do so and will do so with the greatest urgency that it requires.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I will withdraw my question because it has been answered. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Serrekunda I had earlier on seen your hand but the reason why I did not call you was, I wanted to give others who did not have a chance and then come back to those who had already spoken. If you still wants to ask the question you can go ahead.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much for your generosity Madam Speaker. The question I would want to ask is, since there are Gambians stranded who are yet to be fully located in Libya, would the Honourable Minister seek the services of the IOM so that in collaboration we should be able to know all the Gambians who are stranded in all localities mentioned in the question.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Obviously, I believe that is a suggestion that we cannot ignore and again we will be working with the IOM with respect to Gambians everywhere and we will just intensify our engagement with them as far as Libya is concern. Because it is the area from which- whether true or not- this is the area where we hear horrendous stories and we really want these horrendous stories to abet. So, we will definitely intensify our engagement with the IOM so that we can locate Gambians wherever they maybe in Libya and make satisfactory arrangements if they want to come back.

HON. MOMODOU L.K SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker and let me also thank the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad. Could the Honourable Minister inform this august body when will Gambia be re-admitted into the Commonwealth?

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Well Honourable Members of this August Assembly, I want to inform you or at least remind you of some of the things that you already know because these are matters in the public domain. When I was sworn in as Minister one of the first steps I took was to send a letter which was signed by the President for the re-admission of Gambia into the Commonwealth family. And in March I visited London and I had very fruitful discussions with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth and I was very much encouraged by the discussions because the first thing the Secretary General said was welcome home and I said well I think am back in the Commonwealth.

So, that was very encouraging and since then we have been engaging them, materials that they needed for the assessment of our request to re-join the commonwealth have been dispatched to the secretarial and that this was followed by a visit of the assessment mission to the Gambia few weeks ago. I think there are some Members of the National Assembly who I believe had the opportunity of meeting with this assessment team.

Last week Friday I had a meeting on the sidelines of the General Assembly with the commonwealth Secretary General and we discussed on this issue and we are looking forward to be able to attend the next forum in April.

There are other issues that were raised with me which really has given me the absolute confident that we could consider ourselves as de factor members of the Commonwealth and we hope that in the next few months or so some events will unfold which will show how much nearer we are to the commonwealth family.

So, we are working very hard and I had made special pledge to all the Foreign Ministers of the commonwealth countries, asking them to fast track Gambia's request for re-admission because we know that there are processes but at least if the processes are fast tracked that will really help us and we wouldn't have to wait for the matter to be taking to the Commonwealth Heads of State for consideration and approval at the next forum. We want this to be done before the next forum and I hope that very soon we will hear something very positive so that everything will be equal.

[Applause]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister am sure Honourable Members do not know why the question was allowed but am sure we all appreciate and are eagerly looking forward to some communication with regards to the Gambia's re-admission to the commonwealth. That was the only reason why it is taking long. So, the last question I would take is from Nominated member Ya kumba. Please can somebody assist her to access the mic? Thank you.

HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]: Point of order, thank you very much ma, for giving me the floor. I am Honourable Ndey Yassin not Ya kumba. So, thank you very much.

Most of my questions have been addressed but this is just a suggestion. Before the migrations you know how the youths are physically, mentally and you name them and during their stay outside you know the torture that they experienced and when they came back here just imagine giving them incentives only like that. I don't think that will solve the problem. What about creating mechanisms of rehabilitation. Thank you.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: The Honourable Member's point is well taken and noted and again we will not ignore this suggestion particularly coming from an Honourable Member of this august body. I will note it and I will in conjunction with my other colleagues work on how to have these returnees re-habilitated. I mean the suggestion is well noted, thank you. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Sorry for the mistake on my part it was not Ya kumba but Ndey Yassin.

Thank you Honourable Minister for the answers, responses to the questions and I also thank the Honourable Members for their interventions and we hope to have you again in this National Assembly very soon and am sure Honourable Members will continue to bombard you with questions. I am sure Honourable Minister will readily respond to them. Thank you very much.

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE: [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I know there is a Foreign Affairs or Relation Committee of this august House and probably there has been some kind of oversight on the side of that committee too but I am looking forward to working very closely with this committee because I think it is probably one of the most important committees of this House. Its functions will really help shape and re-shape our foreign policy and which will also have some impact on our domestic policies and I am looking forward to working with the committee. I am told that the Honourable Member for Wuli West is the Chairman of this Committee, am looking forward to working with you very closely and

Honourable Members of that committee my offices are open to you at any time. I thank you very much Madam Speaker. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I think that was a good invitation to the Foreign Affairs Committee and I hope the Chair will take note of that.

Incidentally who is the chair of the committee?

Honourable Jatta! I saw him nodding that's why I ask the question, I wanted to get it directly from him because I want to engage him.

Our appreciation goes to the Honourable Minister and I also thank everybody for participating. Can we proceed to the next item on the agenda?

ii. QUESTION FOR ORAL ANSWERS

[By the Hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs]

THE SPEAKER: Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs by Honourable Members for oral reply.

Question No. 168/2017 [By the Honourable Member for Illiassa].

HON. DEMBO K.M CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs inform this august Assembly why Maersk Line and other Shipping Agencies in The Gambia have the highest freight charges compared to Senegal and Guinea Conakry?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Honourable Members, my understanding is that freight charges are prices and like all prices demand and supply play a critical role in determining prices. This price differences can also be seen in other areas like air fares. We believe these are market determined and as we live in a liberal economy, government has no control over this.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION/S]

HON. DEMBO K.M CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Liberal economy, you say government has no control over it. Is there any trade policy in the country which can harmonize the business atmosphere of the country?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Members, when you liberalize the economy you allow private sector players to bring in their goods and services to trade and they price them according to what the market can pay base on their cost and their matching.

Now if we want to control that it means going back to the old days of price control. I think some of you may have known when we had price control which hadn't been a good experience for the economy. So, right now the policy is to liberalize and allow the market force, businessmen and buyers to agree on their trading terms.

HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]: Thank you Madam Speaker. The Honourable Minister for Finance made mentioned that we have liberal economy which is the same as free market policy. Those your Ministry has any plan for stock exchange between Gambia and other stakeholders?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, maybe I don't understand the question, if the Honourable Member can come again.

HON. MUHAAMED MAHANERA [SANDU]: Thank you Madam Speaker. The Honourable Minister made mentioned that Gambia had a liberal economy. And my question is whether the Ministry has any plan for stock exchange between the Gambia and other stakeholders?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member with all due respect I think that is a new question which should have been written and sent in advance. We are talking about freight charges. I think stock exchange is completely new although they are all within the financial market but I think is a new question and I would disallow it, sorry.

Hon. Members lets watch our supplementary questions I think it's important that they relate to the original question otherwise we will just be dragging and remember we have to start the adjournment debate today. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. The question emphasizes the comparison between Senegal, Conakry and Gambia. Senegal, Conakry at the moment are both liberal economic. The question is why is Gambia's higher? Would the Honourable Minister seek to conduct an investigation to actually find out why Gambia's is higher and then act accordingly to amend the situation not by control but essentially by some form of cooperation and regulation?

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much honourable Member. I do not have the comparative pricing of these countries, that is Senegal, Gambia and Conakry but I do know that shipping agents look at destinations and the charges will depend on turnaround time of vessels. We know the port in Senegal is much more developed than Gambia and when you are crossing or if you are around the area you can see some vessels lining in weight in the sea waiting for their turn to discharge cargo some will wait for one week some more than that and all those are cost to the importers.

We have realized that the port now is a constrain, is a bottleneck to the expanding business. We having more traffic coming into the Gambia than was the case and so, we are looking at this issue in that light, the need for expansion of the JT to be able to dock more vessels and provide more equipment like container handling equipment and other discharging equipment. So, all this maybe factors but these are prices determine by the private shipping agent and liners. So, I can only offer some of these potential reasons for differences. I think the investigation would help but we already know our constraint, we can double check if you want us to do that. We know we have a constraint at the port.

HON. MAHTARR JENG [LOWER NIUMI]: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to tell the Minister that he might be throwing the ship to the wolfs by having too much sympathy on the importers, the business entity than the consumers themselves. If it

is very liberal it become a problem and the blame goes to the government. However, liberal government should exercise some control otherwise.....

THE SPEAKER: Please Honourable Member can you ask your supplementary question?

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NIUMI]: I just wanted tell the Minister if it's.....

THE SPEAKER: You are suggesting, giving a suggestions.

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NIUMI]: Yes, that the government should not actually liberalize to the extent that the consumers would die in the hands of the importers and business entity. Thank you Ma.

THE SPEAKER: I think in future if we have suggestions we can always direct them to the ministry as most of the Ministers have indicated their doors are always open and Honourable members will have priority to get over to them. If they are not in town am sure their able technocrats will be able to answer or take the suggestions down. Thank you very much.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister my question is with regards to the port. When people come to clear their goods sometimes it takes quite a while and you go through different phases to do payment. I was thinking whether there could not be this **IFMIS** system where all the things will be package as one so that the payment is done once and for all to allow quick clearance of goods. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, there is always room for improvement and we are certainly open. If you see areas that can be improve either operationally or in terms of procedures that can be accommodated in the customs operations or the ports operation that is welcome. We are open to that. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Wuli West and I think that would be the second to last supplementary question.

HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]: Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Minister himself has indicated lack the of space is mainly responsible for the price hike at the port and the time people take to get their goods even if you buy the whole of half-die you still will continue to have the same problem because you see the situation has changed. Before few containers were coming because of the situation as we all know that obtained here. Now that situation has dramatically changed, we will be expecting more and more containers coming here. So, are you not thinking when I say you I mean the government not thinking of creating a new port somewhere else other than Banjul because Gambia can become the most valuable port for all of these regions if we have a wide space for our port activities.

HON. AMADOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I can inform you that the ports expansion project is one of the priority projects that the government has earmarked. I think energy maybe the most important priority but ports is a critical priority also. Looking at our economic circumstance, building a new port would require much larger investments and at this stage when we are trying to rebuild our economy, it will be a very big demand on us.

So, the port expansion project has already been debated in cabinet and the plan is to expand the JT and allow more vessels to dock. It will also expand the container handling terminal and then will have more cargo handling equipment including container handling equipment that will make sure goods are cleared at a very fast rate and also to offload the ships, vessels at a very fast rate but right now there is a constraint in that.

So, we think that the expansion project will cater for the short term and the near long term needs of the country and then as the economy grows, which we pray and hope this economy grow fast then maybe the need for a second-deep ship port can then be considered. Thank you very much.

HON. ALHAGIE MBOWE [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Alluding to the answer that the Honourable Minister gave, in free market economics where the forces of demand and supply would determine the price but there are other factors both variable and fix and the fix factors have a lot to do with government policies. Would your ministry consider checking what is actually working in the sub-region where they are able to have a lower rate in terms of charging shipping agencies so that it can also be applied in this country to reactive or to promote the re-export trade because by and large government policies do have a great factor in the charges as these are fix factors that they can avoid compare to the variable factors that would determine the prices of commodities etc.

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Madam Speaker. I think here, the degree of flexibility in terms of government policy to influence prices is limited. In the sense that the port also charges for its services in various forms and we believe that giving the facilities they offer, they offering the best prices. And from time to time they do review their charges. So, this is an option they have as professionals in that area instead of government telling them this should be the price or that should be the price. They have a working board, they have their technicians, they look at it and I am sure they compared the prices in the sub-region and determining what they should charge for their port services.

So I look forward to a day when at least we will have an improved port, very good handing facilities and if the turned around time of the vessel is shorter, I believe we will give them the best price and will have more vessel coming up. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister!

Question number 169/2017 [By the Honourable Member for Illiassa].

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker! Could the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly, whether the government and the Gambia Ports Authority are making any plans to allow shipping agencies in the country, particularly Maersk Line to have their own container terminal so that they will not be a burden to GPA.

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, first the container terminal management is usually not the function of shipping lines but rather terminal operators like you have divide ports, APM, terminal etc. As a government, we are always open to proposals to improve operations. Any terminal operator has the right to send in proposals for terminal management and the competent Authorities will review the proposal and advise government. However, government is working with development partners on ports expansion, this will resolve the congestion issues that have been highlighted. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much! Honourable Member for Illiassa, I think I will give you one more chance so that others can also ask supplementary questions base on your ordinary question. Please you have the floor.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Honourable Speaker, Maersk line has sent a proposal to GPA during the former regime but their proposal was rejected, are you aware of it?

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, this is new information for me, am not privy to that but am sure if they are interested, we are already receiving several proposals from interested operators some of whom have gone beyond just sending proposals, they have taken teams of government officials and ports to their operations in other countries like the DP wall that is the Dubai ports, they have taken some officials to Dubai to see how they operate their system. So there are so many agents that are interested and lot of offers are coming. So, if you have the opportunity and you have that rapprochement with Maersk line, they can easily send in their proposals. Government is open to receive all potential investment proposals in this area. Thank you.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much Ma for giving me the floor! Is the Honourable Minister aware that some of these challenges that we

are talking about here are mostly caused by anchor juice, berton charges and the marriage charges that people do at port and recently, the terminal handling chargers. The THC is almost to **95** Euro per **20**...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member I think you are going into facts; can you ask for clarification in case there is any ambiguity in the answer given by the Honourable Minister. As I said we do not need preambles, thank you very much. I think issues are well understood by those within the financial sector. So just ask your direct supplementary question.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Honourable Minister, are you aware of the recent increase in charges on some of the containers [**20** feet]and others. Thank you.

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, just as I mentioned the responsibility of determining the prizes at the ports is not under the Ministry of Finance. This have been a responsibility within the portfolio of the GPA and their line Ministry. Thank you.

HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Honourable Minister for that wonderful answers. Don't you feel this excess of bureaucratic process and....

THE SPEAKER: I think that was the commencement

HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: No is a supplementary.

THE SPEAKER: You are supposed to ask a supplementary question but if I heard you right, you said don't you think?

HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Yes, I am trying to correct it now if you give me time. Issues about clearing of containers in the ports are excess bureaucratic process and administration bottlenecks. Wouldn't you review those processes so as to ease the issues of clearing of containers because we find out that there are too much of bureaucratic process in clearing containers now in the ports.

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you Honourable Members, clearing arises in the list beyond the contractual time within the shippers and the importers. And as you have said, this is happening mainly because of this bottleneck they have in the size of the jetty to accommodate all the vessel coming in. So, that is a normal business cost in shipping is not extra ordinary, is part of the cost that you face. And the bureaucratic process, I do not know which bureaucratic process but ports all around the world have certain processes, you have to go through the customs, clear your ports, releases and so on and all these are stages.

So, if Honourable Members have specific areas where can be improved, we are open to those suggestions. Nonetheless, our Ministry with GRA are continuously improving the procedures and we trying to achieve efficient processing times for clearance. I can tell you from some of the reports our clearing time is faster than some of our sub-regional neighbours. Thank you very much.

HON. SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Ma. Honourable Minister, does your Ministry have any plan to privatize the Gambia Ports so that the level of corruption at the Ports can be minimize as it is happening in other parts of the world.

THE SPEAKER: [Recording not capture] but the question seems to be a new question instead of supplementary question which is not allowed.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, considering the fact that Ports Authority is one of the principal sources of revenue generation for this government, therefore, its proper management is really critical to the economy.

In term of the management you are talking about, could you inform or assure us that when it is been contracted out, the process is going to be transparent and the National Assembly is going to be involved, considering that there is saga surrounding other places like Senegal, the Dubai Port World link to the former President and his son. If it is to be contracted out can the process be brought before us for scrutiny?

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker, this new government is open to transparency and we don't just say it for the sake of lip service. We assured you that there are procedures and processes that will take place to get to the stage where we award contracts for the management of the Port or the expansion of the Port.

So it will be a very transparent and really accountable procedure that will serve the interest of this country.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 170/2017[By the Hon. Member for Illiassa]

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLISSA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker, could the Minister of Finance & Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly whether the Government have any plans to introduce policies that will discourage payment of demurrage containers so as to encourage more private investors into our Economy?

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker as I said previously, demurrage is charged by both the Shipping Line and Terminal Operators to better manage their space and capacity issues. In the case of the shipping lines, it encourages individuals and business to quickly return their containers. As for the Ports, this is good for space management at our already congested port. It ensures individuals quickly clear their cargo and free of space for incoming containers. Thank you.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION[S]]

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Thank you very much Ma. Honourable Minister in an instance where the demurrage incurred was caused by the GPA, because of their constraint in the availability of equipment needed in the discharging of cargos. Can the GPA think of waving this demurrage for the businessmen if the delay is caused by them or can your Ministry put a mechanism in place at least to control as a precautionary measure? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I did not get your question can you repeat it, because I am sure the Minister also did not get you.

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Yes! What I mean Ma is, sometime the demurrage incurred by the people or the businessmen is normally cause by the GPA because of their constraint in the availability of the equipment's. Can the Minister think of putting a policy in place so that in the event of instances demurrage can or waive for the businessmen?

THE SPEAKER: I think I had earlier on indicated that if there are suggestion by Honourable Members, it can be refer to the competent authorities at the Ministries. We are supposed to ask supplementary questions for clarification in cases of ambiguity. But since there is no ambiguity, you are making a suggestion. May I suggest in addition that you refer it to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs? Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you once again, the answer implies that demurrage is been charged to protect the shipping lines and the GPA, [the terminal operators]. But wouldn't the Honourable Minister also consider in the new dispensation that if this is not hopefully assessed to find out whether inefficiency is actually what is been demoted and been paid for, the likeliness of the new dispensation impacting on greater efficiency and protection of the actual importer would be a scarify. Wouldn't that be a cause requiring a review of the situation, constant reviewed of what is at hand.

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker, these are issues within the domain of the GPA under the Ministry of Works. Though demurrage charges are financial charges, but then we are answering this but I think the best person to answer this question would have been the Minister of Works. But if I may say, demurrage charges are based on long term established practice and rules. If your container is delayed for so many days, there is so much charge per day things like that. These are established practise within the industry.

Therefore, if there is inefficiencies on the side of the Ports, then we need to look at those and see ways to address it. But at the moment, apart from the congestion, the bottleneck that I have indicated, well I am here to receive a specific complaint on a particular area of inefficiency of the Ports, we are ready to look at all the issues that can improve their operational efficiency.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 171/2017 [By the Hon. Member for Illissa].

HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLISSA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker, Could the Honourable Minister of Finance and Affairs Economic inform this august Assembly why the Gambia Ports Authority's security insurance do not cover all associates agencies such as Customs, Health, NIA, the Police and particularly the Dock workers who toiled hard for their daily bread?

HON. AMODOU SANNEH [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Madam Speaker, may I say this matter should be referred to the Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure who are the line ministry responsible for the operation of the Ports. At this juncture maybe we cannot offer you an explanation as to the policies involve in the insurance, but I hope they comply with the industry standards as applied in other countries as well. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank You! Any supplementary questions? No! Then that finishes the questions for the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. On behalf of both side of the House, I say a very big thank you to the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs for the responses provided to the written questions. Honourable Minister, you are release.

Remember that the adjournment debate starts at 3'o clock and we are expecting Ministers to be present. The notices where earlier sent out. Thank you very much.

4. MOTION:

Motion for the review of the Remuneration of Commissioners of the commissioner of inquiry **[By Hon. Attorney General and Minister for Justice].**

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister you may wish to move your Motion. Thank you.

HON. HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, is always a pleasure to appear before you. Today though I come with my begging ball.

Honourable Speaker, I beg to move that this August Assembly consider and approve the remuneration for the commissioners appointed by the President of the Republic, to the commission of inquiry into the financial activities of Public Enterprises, Bodies and Offices as regard their deals with the former President Yahya Jammeh, to an additional amount of [D500, 000] five hundred thousand dalasi each for a period of 6 months.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members will recalled that His Excellency Adama Barrow, President of the Republic, established the said commission on 12th July 2017, pursuant to section 200 of the 1997 constitution and section 2 of the commissioner of inquiry act and appointed the following people:

1. Mr Suruhata Janneh as Member and Chairman of the Commission,
2. Mr Bai Mass Saine as a Member and
3. Miss. Abeosy George as a Member.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members will recalled that paragraph 8 of the establishment Order of 12th July 2017, provided for the commissioner to complete its inquiry within a period of 3 Months of its first sitting. However, it also gave the power to the commission to continue beyond that period if in its opinion it is necessary to do so. The commission now deems it necessary to extent its mandate to an additional 6 months from the date of expiring of the first 3 months in view of the following.

The emergence of new evidence which warrants the calling of more witnesses to testify before the commission. The nature and complexity of the evidence by witnesses before the commission, which will necessitate the procurement of the services of forensic accountants and auditors. The numerous public enterprise, bodies and offices that are the subject of this enquiry but are yet to be heard and the nature, time and

complicity of the investigations covering a period of over 22 years from 22nd July 1994 to 21st January 2017.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, we therefore request that this August Assembly consider and approve the increment of remuneration to an additional amount of D500,000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasi], for each of the said commissioner's base on the following;

- The extension of the duration of the commission's mandate to 6 months from the date of expiry of the first **3** months.
- The fact that the commissioners have now suspended their professional careers to devote more time to the work of the commission for an additional 6 months and having regard to the usual fees and charges of such professionals for comparative work in the private sector.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, this request today, this motion, is been made pursuant to section 16 subsection [1] of the commission of enquiry act **Cap 30 Vol 5** of the Law of The Gambia, which state and I quote; "*Subject to subsection 2 of the section, commissioners appointed under this act are not entitle to any enumeration beyond the actual expenses incur in holding the enquiry, unless such enumeration is specifically voted by the National Assembly*".

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, I beg to move that this august Assembly consider and approve the said request. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. Any seconder?

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question proposed, put and agreed to]

HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker! I will be very brief in my submission.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable, there were other tags can you continue so that I can take them down.

HON. SAINY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you very much, thank you Honourable Minister for that informed presentation. It goes without saying that there is no smoke without fire. The rationale behind this extension of time, has to do with the workload, the overwhelming workload that the commission Members have to grapple with and I think all of us will support this motion before us. Is very simple, is self-explanatory, it has to do with the workload that is why they are seeking for extension. And candidly speaking, if you look at the package that is offered to these able commission Members, it is quite small compared to 6 months of their professional careers. If they practice their profession for 6 months, they can earn far more than D500,000 [Five Hundred thousand dalasi].

That is my take Madam Speaker! And for that been the case, I rise to throw my weight behind this motion. Thank you so much.

HON. BAKARY NJIE [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor! I will also want to thank the personnel of the commission of inquiry for the wonderful job they are doing.

I think if you are following the commission of enquiry, we will all agree that the enquiry still needs some time and obviously their remuneration also needs to be increased. We thank them for their effort. I think it is necessary to give them all the support they need for the job they are doing.

Furthermore, I would like the Minister to inform this August gathering, if this D500,000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] is an additional sum to their pervious remuneration or this D500,000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] is for the next 3 months to come to make it 6 months. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister will clarify but for me it's clear on the motion paper, but is for him to clarify.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much Ma, for giving me the floor! I am in full support of the motion. We have seen and witnessed what is going on at the commission of enquiry. July 1994 to 2016, Gambians have experienced and we all learned a lot. Excuse my language, a group of soldiers delve into our economy and 'basterdize' everything for 22 years. To regulate that is not a child's joke.

Honourable Minister, you have my full support and it is **100%** and I would urge my Honourable Members to fully support this motion so that we will know what is hiding in the corner. I know there are many to come but these are just few that we have witness and every Gambian nowadays, our ears and our eyes are radio friendly or television friendly due to what is going on at the commission of enquiry. So without wasting much time, you have my full support Honourable Minister. Thank you.

HON. SAIKOU MARONG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJIE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, I stand here before this August Assembly to give my support to this motion because we have all witness what is happening nowadays with this commission of enquiry. Therefore, I therefore believe that the D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] is quite reasonable to be offered to these professionals. We all know these are season peoples, these are professionals in different areas. So, giving the D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] for the period of 6 months, I think it really worth it, because we are learning a lot from this commission of enquiry. It is definitely providing us with checks and balances necessary for our new democracy, which is important for us.

Honourable Speaker Ma, we have witnessed through this commission of enquiries, how our Central Bank has been used as an ATM Machine by some individuals who have sworn to the Holy Quran that they will defend the constitution of The Gambia. But instead they defend the interest of an individual. So, setting up this commission of enquiry and then providing them with this amount, to me the D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasi] is even small looking at the level of these professional these people are and what they are doing, is really amazing.

Honourable Speaker, these people we all know are not there to witch-hunt anybody. The commission of enquiry is not witch-hunting anybody but instead they are doing their job. The whole Gambia today is leaning a lot and we are all going to learn a lot from this. What has happened for the past 22 years, we are quite sure will never happen in this country again and we are able to establish this through this commission of enquiries and through these professionals that are helping us. So, giving them this amount, I think is fair enough. So, for that been the case, I am supporting this **100%**. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. When the first motion was made, I raise a question about consultation between the Ministry and the Finance Ministry and I was told that was not necessary because it's the same government and they should know. Many people have said that no travesty of good governance had ever been perpetrated without complicity of the legislatures. It is important Honourable Speaker, for me to state that as far as the constitution is concerned, the commissioners must be paid from the consolidated fund under section 50 and withdrawn according to section 151 of the constitution.

We have already appropriated to government what it should spend. And according to the Public Finance Act, once an appropriation is done then the controllers are informed on what they should spend and they will spend from that particular fund. What I do not know is where this fund is coming from to be paid and that is key.

Secondly, we only have about 3 months, October, November and December for the end of the financial year, and there will be another appropriation that will be discharged by this body. We are simply saying that, let's spend now for another 6 months when in 3 months the Ministry of Finance will be coming here to tell us exactly how the government intends to utilize public funds.

I think this issue needs to be considered by those who are bringing such issues before this National Assembly, knowing fully well that this National Assembly would earned their confidence and would want to sustain that confidence so that their work will be carried out with the efficiency they desire.

Honourable Speaker, I expressed in the first instance that we are dealing with the public enterprises inherited by a new government, which needed to be audited so that the new government will understand what it is inheriting and the defects in what it is inheriting before it inherits. That is the mechanism that I propose, which I felt would have been very consistent with the very spirit of ensuring that there will be no recurrent of what happened in the past.

I have emphasized that commissions of enquiry on someone who has already declared assets is not a very complex process, is asset evolution, whatever the person has not declared is no longer the property of that person and it is left to that person if government takes everything that has not been declared to go and show that it is his or her property.

And the issue of auditing the public institutions would have reveal everything that is been revealed now and obviously that is already within the budgeting structure of the state and the public enterprises. In fact is a requirement of the constitution for them to do so and I believe that would have avail us the facts that we now see.

But notwithstanding, we have already move too far to retract and those people who are actually carrying out their duties cannot be penalized for approaches which every government has the right to do in other to handle its matters. It is only history that will determine whether this was the best surface or maybe lesser in term of the best.

What is essential for me is to ensure that our goodwill will not compromise what is actually the position of the law. So, I would want the Honourable Minister to guide us properly in terms of this allocation, where is it going to come from? And if that cannot be answered, I have difficulty in making a decision, but the will is there for them to continue the work that they have started. Thank you.

HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you Madam Speaker! I was privileged to attend some sittings of this Commission personally and I remember sometime, somebody was telling me why would you be coming to this Commission and I told the person that I want to see and hear for myself what is happening since we authorised the Commission. But I remember when the Minister came here first I

was among those people who questioned the duration because I knew the task that was giving to them would go beyond 3 months. And really today my question would be, I hope the 6 months would be enough and that you will not have the opportunity to come back again to request for more time and more funds. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: --- Otherwise, not everybody who wants to speak would be given a chance. We all have a right I know but still it can be limited.

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I will just make it short because some of the points that I suppose to elaborate on are already been emphasized. So, as a result of that, I would just shorten everything.

To begin with, I will say of course yes! They must come back because we were with the notion that this is something that could have been completed just within a month or two months. But after starting this commission, it is known to everyone that this is something that is not just easy for it to be completed.

As a result of that Madam Speaker, all that we are doing here is guided by the constitution of The Gambia. What I am trying to put across is that the money that we are paying to these people is not a problem as stated by the Honourable Member for Serrekunda. It is a question of what was asked during the first motion, where the funding is coming from, where do they actually raise this fund is the question. But in the event that we can obtain this fund, we can even give more than this. But it is very important and essential for us to know the source of funding.

Again, it is not easy to investigate someone who had been in power for 22 years, it has to take a number of months, in fact it could be a year. I am with the opinion that they might even come back because at the end of the 6 months the job might not be completed. So, as a result of that I am in support of this motion because it is very important for any government to know where you are coming from. It is as well known to every Gambian that we have made a change and a lot of resources have been wasted but we do not know, how, where, when and by who. This is what we are trying to know as at now. It is important to all of us to know if the resources were wasted, how, where and by who, I think this is actually what the Commission is all about.

The only thing that we need is a comprehensive report from these people at the end of the day because most of the people are asking what would happen to these people at the end of everything? Who can answer to the question, not me!

Madam Speaker, I am in support of this definitely and looking at it they are very grateful because comparing their first payment and this payment, there is a difference. 3 months they are paid D300,000 [Three hundred Thousand] if my memory serve me well and this time, we are saying 6 months they will be paid just D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis]. Looking at it, it seems there is a gap in this, meaning they just losing to me. I am in great support of this and let them continue with it and at the end of the day let them present a comprehensive report for us to analyse. Thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Can we follow the procedure, we are approaching 1:00 p.m. Can someone move that we sit beyond 1:00 p.m.

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: I so move, Madam Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. MOMODOU S CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed Put and agreed to]

[That the House sits beyond 1 0'clock]

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I am indeed happy about this motion because I worked for the former Commission and this one also am here to approve. When the first motion came in, I stated that 3 months was not enough because I know the heavy load that these people were given. It is very small to me even this D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasi]. If they could make it one Million no problem for me because I know they are going to provide one billion that was missing, even when it is not provide but we will know how the Central Bank was looted and most of these people who ran away with our money. So definitely I am fully in support of this.

What I would like us to remember is, the world is 3 days, it was PPP, APRC and today is a Coalition government and after the coalition government somebody else will be coming in. Any work that we are doing, remember what is coming tomorrow and what has passed. If we are in that position, I do not have any problem that we are going to face tomorrow. Thank you very much.

HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you Ma! My issues have been addressed by some Members.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Thank you so much Madam Speaker! first of all I render my support to this said motion that the increment of D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] be paid to the commission Members. The fact that we all understand that the commissioners in the enquiry, are giving us relevant information as to how our country was looted by the former regime. Many of the people are saying or probably I say some other people are asking were the funds might come from, yes it is a question! But to my own view, maybe the Minister would come with the answer and I believe he has liaised with the Minister of Finance to ascertain exactly where the funds will come from.

But in my view I would suggest or I will say, The Gambia is basically receiving all funds from taxes we understand and the work of the commissions are also captured in the constitution, the service they are rendering is for the country.

So, I believe I will not question the Minister as to where the funds are coming from because in the former dispensation, we understand that a commission of enquiry was setup by the then government and funds were removed from the public accounts and paid to the commissioners if I am right and is still the same procedure. They were not wrong in doing that because they also want to shed light and understand where the first Republic started and where they end, so that is not a question for me.

And the issue of, like the Member for Serrekunda said, that he was suggesting that they go in for thorough audit of Public or Private Institutions within the country so that they understand what the former government has left before they inherit whatever. But then my own suggestion is that doing that without setting a

commission, probably those institutions will not be in a better position to give the government all what they need to know because there were conspiracies in the dealings so information would not come out.

THE SPEAKER: Yes! Honourable Member can you pause there and take your site. I think the Honourable Member for Serrekunda wants to raise a point of order! If I am right?

POINT OF ORDER

HON. HALIFA SIILAH [SERREKUNDA]: Yes, indeed! I did not mention a private institution, I said Public Enterprises.

THE SPEAKER: You can just correct your statement to read public enterprises and not private institution.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Thank you so much, public enterprise I mean. So I was saying they will not be able to give out certain information because there were conspiracies in the dealings. So setting up a commission to me is better for the government to understand exactly where the former government stopped.

So basically, it is in the right direction, the commission is setting more light on how our country for the past 22 years had been looted from one corner to the other. So in short I am in support of the motion, the Five Hundred Thousand is basically a good price for them. Thank you.

HON. ALH. MOMODOU LK SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Let me first say the Attorney General and Minister of Justice seems to be a very wise young man, bringing a motion of this nature. He talked about the constitution, he talked about the Commission of Enquiry Act, these are all laws and he also indicated in the motion the reason of expanding the time of commissioners.

Honourable Speaker with D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis], I stand to support this motion. Thank you very much.

HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Madam! As mentioned in our National Anthem; "let justices guide our actions". I think every people's representative here wants to ensure that citizens are told the truth. Gambians need the truth not partly but the whole truth and that can only be addressed by allowing the Commission of Enquiry to reveal what has been taking away, known and unknown from Gambians.

I think every goodwill ambassador of this country or every Parliamentarian should be in support of this motion. I rise to give my blessing and support based on the pursuance of the request been made, which is in accordance with the constitution. That said, the Commission of Enquiry **Act CAP 30 VOL 5**, laws of The Gambia state; "the commission appointed under this Act are not entitle to any remuneration unless- to cut it short- such remuneration are specially voted by National Assembly. I want to thank the Minister of Justice for that constitutionalism to put constitution in practise here.

And looking at the damage caused for 20 years or 22 years, to be honest 2, 3 months or 6 months' enquiry would not be sufficient enough. Therefore, is very prudent for us to think wisely and facilitate resources, appropriate and also approve this Five Hundred Thousand Dalasi to be giving to them so that we can know the dangers we just came out of. And this goes side ways of governance, accountability and transparency and also a lesson learnt to avoid recurrence of this nature. Every government will now bear in mind that Gambians are fully aware of their rights and if I do otherwise, such commission is always there for us and the Parliamentarians are also willing to sponsor such initiative so that justice shall prevail.

On that note, I want to thank the Minister and your humble self for allowing him to bring this motion to the Assembly. I give my blessing, thank you.

HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I also want to join the various speakers pertaining to the commission. What I want to say is that it is easy to destroy than to make. Twenty-two [22] years is not 22 days, if we task these people to find out things for us, I think we should not make them to rush on things. We should at least give them time. Six months to me is too small if we want correct information. I therefore support the motion.

HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I do not want to take too much of your time, only to join my colleagues in agreeing to the motion because what matters in the whole thing is, why the Commission of Enquiry is established? What matters is to bring out the truth!

An adequate report or a comprehensive report of what has been happening in the past 22 years. So here the amount of money needed and the amount of time needed does not matter much. What matters or the objective is to come out with a report, they know the time to get it and they know the resources that they need to get it. I think upon their request, it should not be in fact too much calculation, to give them more time and more money so that the objective of the commission can be reached.

As far as time is concerned, anything you are doing you have to calculate your time and you have to calculate your resources. These are the two things that have to help them to come up with the adequate report that we are looking forward to, that will finally inform the whole nation what has transpired in the past 22 years.

And like other speakers mentioned, it is also a platform to the nation that is teaching everybody, everybody is learning a lesson from that commission every day. So to make it short, I also join my colleagues to support the motion.

Thank you very much.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [BADDIBU CENTRAL]: Thank you Madam Speaker. I also rise to support the motion on the increment of remuneration of Commissioners to D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis].

Madam Speaker, this Commission is a road to justice and it has been evident that more revelations are coming and therefore they need more witnesses to come so that we can be better prepared for our Judicial System.

The public enterprises that need to come before the commission will help us to be very equipped so that justice will be done. Thank you.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you Madam Speaker! Madam Speaker, I would not like to take much of our time simply because the commission that is been setup now to look into matters that have been happening for the past 22 years is not an easy task, it is a very delicate issue. You assigned them to recovered billions of dollars for us and in turn we are paying them nothing other than Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis. What is Five Hundred Thousand Dalasi? If somebody is to recover billions of dollars for you, what is Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis?

To make it short, Madam Speaker and Honourable Minister, I give my **100%** support to this motion. Thank you very much.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker! I may not talk about the commission for now as what is laid before us is the motion for the increment of the remuneration for the Members of the Commission as it was done earlier. D300, 000 [Three Hundred Thousand Dalasis] was brought before us for each of the Commission Members for 3 months. If you look at the arithmetic, that means each commissioner supposed to received D100, 000 [One Hundred Thousand Dalasi] per month for 3 months D300, 000 [Three Hundred Thousand Dalasis]. Now this time around when the need arises, there is need for extension...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members with all due respect, I think we should all put our electronic appliances when we are in the Chambers. Really the interference is affecting the recording system. **[Undertone]**

Sorry am been told it is an internal alarm, I understand that it is a smoke alarm and the Honourable Clerk says that he cannot take it for granted. So, let's suspend the meeting and know why the alarm is on.

[Question proposed, put and agreed to]

[That The House Stands Suspended Until 3:00 P.M.]

HOUSE RESUMES

THE SPEAKER: Before we suspended the House, we were on the interventions on the Motion for the increment of remuneration for the Members of the Commission of inquiry and I will continue my list from there.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: Thank you Madam. I will start from where I stop and that is on—

THE SPEAKER: May be you can refresh our memory on the last two points you touched on.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH]: The Motion is on the increment of the remuneration and earlier on they were paid D300, 000 [Three Hundred Thousand Dalasis] for 3 months, this time around they are supposed to be pay D500,000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] for 6 months. Mathematically if you look at the figure you will observe that 3 months each Commissioner is paid one hundred thousand Dalasis per month and for 6 months each Commissioner is going to be paid D83, 333.33 [Eighty-Three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three Dalasis, thirty-three bututs] per month. That means there is a deduction of the payment and that is quite reasonable in my opinion for the Commissioners to be paid D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] for 6 months. On that note I support the motion.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, the Motion is asking us to increase the payment for the next 6 months and I do not have qualms with that as long as the source of the funding is legitimate, is coming from us the taxpayers because this is the work of the country.

The question I have is, which one should come first, should we continue to approve expenditure without knowing where it is coming from or should we ascertain the

source of the funding together with the approving for the expenditure? My take is that, what is likely to happen to us is that, we would eventually be entangled with supplementary budget which would amount to millions of Dalasis at the end of the day if we don't follow chronologically the approvals we are making.

The history is that, the former government and even the one before that will spend millions and millions of Dalasis only to come and say we have spent this and we want you to approve the supplementary appropriation and everybody would start asking how is that possible because the law is not saying spend and come to the National Assembly for approval. The law is saying come to the National Assembly, approve and then go and spend.

So if we continue to just accept things in the normal way then we will end up being like those people and we will lose credibility among the people and we are the representatives. That is my major problem, though I have no problem approving the amount considering the fact that it has reduced from hundred thousand each a month to eighty thousand. That is quite ok for me but then the question now is, what is the source of funding. We need to know that so that we can approve.

But at the end of day, let say in December then a supplementary appropriation bill comes here and say we have spent one billion Dalasis and we want you to approve it that is taking us back to the APRC government days. That is my question, if the Minister can clarify to our satisfaction that this is not the direction we are taking, I support the Motion fully. Thank you.

HON SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALLA]: Thank you Madam. First of all, I want to congratulate and thank the Honourable Minister and the Commissioners for coming up with this idea. When the first bill was brought here, we said is overdue because Gambian people need to know the financial transactions of the former government.

Secondly, I personally and together with other National Assembly Members who took part in the debate and gave support for the setting-up and remuneration of the Commission to start work are vindicated because from the revelation that is going on

from the commission of inquiry, every Gambian is happy and they are aware of the financial transactions of the former regime.

It is very clear that our money was uselessly embezzled by the former government. Gambia would have been a Silicon Valley if our money was used judiciously. Is a very good move and I really appreciate and applaud it.

I also want to give my support to the remuneration of the commissioners because they are doing a very good job, they are willing and they are also setting a paste that every public servant in this government should be responsible or else you will face a commission of inquiry in future.

The amount to me is not a problem, the only doubt the other Honourable Members have is source of the funding. I believe anything that is brought to the National Assembly for us to agree on it is from the consolidated fund, it is from the tax payers' money. So there should not be much question on the funding of it. Whether the budget can sustain it that would be the question.

I have already given my support to it and I also want to put it to everybody though the Minister of Justice might not be in the position for that, we are representatives of the people, anything that we do here there are people outside that will question it and want to analyse it and also we are the people, we should go to our people and analyse it better for them to understand.

There is a wrong information flowing in town. People are speculating that the Commissioners are paid lot of money and as such they believe the government has a lot of money and therefore they should see improvements in their conditions of living. I want to advice and appeal to the Honourable Minister because we know that every development has a side effect, this is a good move, is a good move from the government, is a good move from the Ministry of Justice and Finance but also the people on the ground what are they going to expect from this ratification? When we approve this, mathematically we understand but a layman on the street will believe that there is money in the economy so there has to be a little bit improvement.

I want to appeal to everybody, every stakeholder that at least something has to be done for this 2018/2019. The living condition of the Gambian people should be at least one step away from the previous government. On that note, I have no other doubt, I support the motion and let it go. Thank you.

HON. MAHTARR JENG [LOWER NUIMI]: Madam Speaker thank you very much for giving me the floor, I had intimated that I am not surprised that the Minister of Justice has come back to this august body asking for more funds so that the commissioners can continue probing into the activities of the former government and associates. It should not take us by surprise because time has over taken the events, the revelations that are coming from the commission are enough evidence to justify why we should not allow half information to be left to the people, instead we should give them fully fledged information they can go with.

We should not doubt the source of funding, because where would the Minister get the fund order than from the coffers. Where was this guy [the former president Jammeh] getting the funds he was dishing out to musicians, to celebrities, given them almost everything which was not at that time questioned now we are questioning this.

The people are very much pleased with the work of the commissioners and that has exonerated us even if we have to add more. A friend of mine, an Honourable Member has said it here from the very beginning, that what these people are paid is a pittance. That is the truth, what they are paid is small and time has over taken it. Now they need to have another added, as far as it is justified, as far as people are satisfied let us do it, we will never regret it. Honourable Minister you have my support. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: We are behind schedule because of the break that we took due to the alarm. 3:00 o'clock, as per the order paper we should have started the adjournment debate but because we had to be evacuated, we lost some time and I want at this point to recognise the presence of the Honourable Minister for Tourism

and Culture who is here for the adjournment debate. We are expecting other Ministers as well to join us.

In the same vein, may I appeal to Honourable Members to just shorten their interventions so that we will gain a little bit of time or we will save time so that Honourable Ministers will not have to wait for a long time? Remember we have a Bill, which we should have processed during the morning session but we lost everything. May I also take the opportunity to recognise the presence of my colleagues at the Bar. Thank you.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Madam, I would like to associate myself with the previous speakers. Madam I still standby what I said yesterday at the caucus meeting. We all know what has happened in this country for the past 22 years. The only comment I am going to make is concerning those asking for where the money is coming from, Honourable Member for Wuli East, if not from the budget, where else? As my colleague the Honourable Member for Lower Nuimi said, we are all hearing the revelations from the commission, I think that alone is a justification of whatever amount paid to these commission members is justifiable and there is nowhere we can tap the money from other than from the government coffers. The revelations that are coming from the commission, that monies came from the coffers of the government so why asking the expenditure, it has to be approved here before payment.

Sometimes certain comments, is everybody's right to say whatever you want to say but also is a right of others too to criticize and condemn what has been said in this House. The Gambian people are in this House.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Nominated Member, may I just draw your attention to the decorum that is required in this National Assembly. As I always said let us choose our words very carefully. Thank you.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Madam Speaker if I had offended or say anything that is offensive I withdraw it. Madam, for me personally I will recommend as I said yesterday we pay these people one million, because, the revelations we are hearing from them if even we pay them within 6 months more than 2 million we will never regret it because is a business. What they are doing is for the interest of the nation, to motivate them with such amount of money is not a lost. On that note I beg to move. Thank you

THE SPEAKER: ok in a sense you support the Motion?

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Yes, I do support the Motion 100%.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker, I would like to say that this exercise is very important because it is revealing a lot that we all appreciate and that we all need to know but then what next? There is a lot of information we are gathering from this commission but then it is only in figures as at now and for me I would say they deserve to be paid but then what are we going to achieve with all the information? Are we going to recover anything from all these funds that are being reported?

My take is yes they deserve to be paid but not from dipping further into taxpayers monies. They deserve to be paid a percentage of the amounts that are been reported that we can recover. I think that is my contribution but not taking from tax payers monies. There are other institutions that deserve monies to be injected into, the schools for example, the hospitals and the information that we are receiving from this commission is very crucial, I think people are talking about motivation, what is more motivating than telling them that there is this amount of money out there and if we recover this much we will pay this much. I think that way they would work harder. Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you Madam Speaker, I believe no one here is questioning the source of the money we want to remunerate the

commissioners is coming from. Everybody knows it should be from the consolidated fund. Well one can understand the interest, enthusiasm, the work being done by the commission. Of course the approach, whether that is the most expedient, the most effective, the most efficient, these are issues that one can always debate but nobody is questioning that they should not be remunerated.

My take is on the procedure, is it through a supplementary appropriation and if it is supplementary appropriation or any of those approaches who is the best person to come before the National Assembly? Is it the Attorney General and Minister of Justice or the Minister of Finance? We all learning, nobody knows everything we are all learning, this is a new dispensation and most of us are new in it, all these procedures, processes are new.

The Honourable Speaker admitted that she does not understand all that is contained in the Standing Orders so the issue is procedural, that is what we are asking. What procedure should we apply? Who should be coming before us to make request for our support? I think this is the issue, nobody is questioning the source, nobody is condemning the approach, what we are talking about is the procedure which should be made clear. Thank you.

HON. SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Madam Speaker. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Minister for the good work he is doing. The motion on the table for our consideration and adoption explained itself in paragraph 2 which states with your permission Madam Speaker "The interest of the new evidence which warrants quality of witness to testify in the commission". These people are doing good job and we are expecting more and more to come to this parliament. As we are also expecting the land commission into this parliament which we will surely consider.

Madam Speaker, I personally welcome and support this motion. We need more evidence to come in, afterwards they bring their own evidence. On that note I beg to take my seat.

HON. MADI MK CEESAY [SEREKUNDA WEST]: Thank you Madam Speaker. I give my support to the motion that it extends by 6 months simply because the kind of revelations that are coming from the commission are alarming and very shocking if a few people can just connive and loot the nation billions of Dalasis I think it is necessary for us to dig into the records and get them out.

I want to urge the commissioners to continue their good job. As said by some of my colleagues, if you look at the cost it has reduced. For those of us who were here when the Alkali commission was set up, we know the then government paid a lot of money into that commission which one cannot compare with what our own Gambians are doing for this kind of job. My only question is, is there any plans to recover the looted billions? I therefore support the motion and I beg to resume my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member and all other Honourable Members who have made their interventions and at this point I would want to call upon the Honourable Minister to respond to the issues raised and wind up the debate so that we can make progress. Thank you.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you once again Honourable Speaker, I wish to thank all the Honourable Members for their comments and contributions. I will perhaps like to address the questions that were raised.

I will start with the question of whether the five hundred thousand is inclusive of the previous three hundred thousand. The answer is NO, the five hundred thousand is in addition to the three hundred thousand that was approved for the first 3 months. This Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis request is for additional 6 months that the commission will carry its work.

With respect to where the money is coming from, am afraid I only have part of the response Honourable Member for Serekunda and part of the response that I have is that every budget allocation for the commission went through a process of discussion

with the concerned parties, the commissioners in this case and then when an agreement is reached, the Ministry of finance is engaged also and every money that has gone to this commission was approved by the Minister of Finance and I believed that this additional request will also be coming from the Ministry of finance.

I know that in so far as the 2018 budget circle is concern, we have factored other commissions of inquiry that will be established in that period. But we are also aware Honourable Members of the fragile state of our economy and that is why we are not exclusively relying on government for funding all of the commission's work. Very recently I engaged with the Members of the Fourth Foundation because we wanted to procure the services of forensic Accountants and Auditors and we know these are very expensive, the task at hand is very complex, it involves a lot of work across borders and it will cost the government a lot of money and I am happy to report that the Fourth Foundation has accepted to fund the forensic Accounting exercise that would be made available to the commission. Let me wrap up on this point that, we provide our budget to the Ministry of Finance and they approved this budget and that is the part I can answer. Where exactly the money comes from I guess that is a matter for the Ministry of Finance to provide details of that to this august Assembly.

On the auditing of public enterprises, again to the Honourable Member for Serekunda, I agreed with you that an audit exercise of the public enterprises is but one tool that could have been used. The setting up of a commission of inquiry of this nature is another tool that could be used. The 1997 constitution allows for establishment of these kinds of commission but this commission should not be seen as a substitute for all other forms of investigation, if anything else it will only compliment other forms of investigation that may be embarked upon. But the benefits of having a commission like this are many, first:

1. It will keep the people informed about the nature of the transactions that were occurring during the period of the previous government.
2. Furthermore, it will instil public confidence in the process because it would be a transparent and creditable process.

3. Moreover, it will simultaneously provide useful lessons for everyone in government.

As I said here the last time, the benefits of high office comes with the burden of responsibility in government. So the advantages of having this commission are many and I believed that it is a useful tool in our inquest into the financial transactions of the previous government.

In terms of the time frame of 6 months, Honourable Members it may well be the case that I will have to come back before you to request for another approval to remunerate the Members of the commission. It may be the case that, that will not be needed, we wanted to adopt a careful approach to the commission because if we set a long time there are budgetary implications, there are planning implications we would have had for example to discuss with the commissioners' appropriate pay for the duration. So we decided to adopt a standard, a phase approach and I think it takes nothing away from either the work of the commission or the Ministry of Justice. If anything else it provides Members of this august Assembly an opportunity to keep on scrutinizing the work of the commission.

That is the reason why we are asking or rather the commission is asking for a 6 months extension. Beside they are best players to determined how much time they need. That is not unfortunately within the control of the Ministry, I am just the messenger and should they need to extend the time, am afraid I will have to come back here and bring a request for approval.

The report of the commission perhaps I will combine that with the question whether or not there will be recovering efforts. Well the commission is mandated to submit this report to His Excellency the President at the conclusion of its sittings. Allow me to add that if there is going to be any recovery, if I say because we do not know what the commission is going to conclude. This will be the first step towards that recovery efforts, the commission's report. So we don't know whether we will recover or not, it depends on what the commission states but if the commission states that we will recover be rest assure that we will recover every last butut.

In terms of who is the best person to make such a request for remuneration, I think the question is not so much to be with making the request for remuneration, the question more for this august Assembly is how can we justify the increment of remuneration and the question therefore is who is placed to make that justification? I believe the Ministry of Justice been the lead Ministry in establishing this commission, been the Ministry that has in so far as government is concern the closest link to this commission, I think can make the request otherwise the task will be divided between the Ministry of Justice that defend the request and the Ministry of Finance that comes and make the request. That would be my response to the Honourable Member for Banjul North.

I believe these were the pertinent questions that require my responses and I urge once again that this Assembly approve the increment of additional amount of D500, 000 [Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis] for the commission members. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister and also I thank Honourable Members for their interventions and imputes. I think it has added value and substance to what we were all going through.

Adoption

[Question proposed, put and agreed to]

[The increment of Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis for the remuneration for the Members of the Commission of inquiry]

5. BILL

I. legal Practitioners [Amendment Bill, 2017] [By Hon. Attorney General & Minister of Justice]

THE SPEAKER: Before we allow the Honourable Minister to proceed, may we recognise the presence of the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs. As I said earlier on we are still expecting more Honourable Ministers for the adjournment debate.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you once again Madam Speaker. Honourable Members I beg to move that the Bill entitle the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill 2017 be read the second time.

Madam Speaker, this Bill seeks to amend the legal Practitioners Act by increasing the representation of the Gambia Bar Association on the General Legal Counsel and its committees to the previous membership levels.

The Bill also removes the discrepancy and contradiction relating to the requirement of privilege by reinstating privilege as an eligibility requirement for enrolment to practice. It is envisaged that these changes will benefit all stakeholders and promote and protect the best interest of the legal provision.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, the Gambia Bar Association is the umbrella organisation promoting and protecting the best interest of the public and private Bar. And the General Legal Council is the statutory body that is responsible generally for the regulation of the legal profession in the Gambia.

Section 5 of the Legal Practitioner's Act, volume 2, chapter 701 of the revised laws of the Gambia 2009 had provided that 4 legal practitioners of not less than 7 years standing to be nominated by the Gambia Bar Association should form part of the composition of the General Legal Counsel. Unfortunately, this was subsequently watered down with the coming into force of the legal practitioner's Act of 2015. Which provided that 3 legal practitioners of not less than 10 years standing will be nominated by the Gambia Bar Association as part of the GLC [General Legal Counsel].

Yet again this was further watered down with the coming into force of the Legal Practitioner's Act 2016 which provided that only 1 legal practitioner of not less than 10 years standing shall be nominated by the Gambia Bar Association to form part of the general legal counsel.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, the General Legal Counsel regulate the legal profession in the country including discipline and issues surrounding professional conduct or misconduct. It is unthinkable that the association with the greatest stake in this organisation is only represented by 1 member, 1 representative to regulate

their affairs, it is difficult. We cannot speculate as to the motive but we clearly see the result. It means that others who have less or little to do with the legal profession are being empowered to decide on the faith of lawyers in this country as if they were incapable of doing same for themselves. This resulted predictably in an impasse between the Gambia Bar Association and the General Legal Counsel. The Bar refused to take up its seat in the council because it felt if I may add rightly that it was perhaps even under presented by that 1 representative. And the Bar has since not taking up its 1 seat and the situation is undesired one.

We want the Bar to be partners, we want the Bar to take full charge of their own affairs, we want the Bar to come back and sit on the General Legal Counsel because there are implications as well for their absence. If the Bar is not part of the General Legal Counsel, well who knows what issues may arise that will challenge the constitutionality of decisions of the General Legal Counsel.

I am not sure, I don't know the answer, am just saying these are the issues that are exercising our mind but in order to resolve this anomaly, we are proposing an amendment to the legal practitioner's act of 2016 in other to restore the 4 persons membership of the Bar in the General Legal Counsel.

The other amendment Honourable Members, is that I am requesting you to take away my powers, my administrative powers to sign the regulation that will bring into force privilege in this country.

It is an additional bureaucratic obstacle that is not needed. We are looking beyond persons here, we are looking at institutions, why should the Attorney General and Minister of Justice have the power with his signature alone to bring into force a law that is passed here by this House and assented to by the President. As at now, until recently, I think I only signed off on the regulation about 2 days ago but since the 2016 Act became law, I am not yet aware of any privilege that was formerly registered. What it means actually is that I can decide not to sign the regulation and the situation would remain the same, it means any subsequent Attorney General or Minister of Justice can do the same. It is a potential for abuse and the reason why am asking you to take it away from me shows the sincerely of this government to empower the different stakeholders in their different or respective vocation.

There are other amendments but those are just, I would not say minor but they only increase efficiency but these are the 2 broadly speaking, these are the 2 main amendments that I would like to highlight for this House and I conclude by asking for your support to pass this Bill and make it law.

Madam Speaker I thank you and I thank the Honourable Members.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

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

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

The floor is now open to Honourable Members for interventions. Am going to limit Honourable Members intervention for only 3 minutes. Thank you.

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the opportunity to add my voice to the Bill that is brought before us for consideration. Technically Gambia is developing gradually; I must thank the Minister of Justice for been honest and fair to himself. Someone coming to you and say take away my powers to avoid abuse, to avoid excess bureaucratic process or delay of some relevant issues that need not to be wasted and this is actually welcome.

The second issue is, the Bar Association has been deprived, and these were calculated mechanisms by the former regime for the Bar Association to be control. The Bar Association do not have a say on their own matters rather putting in or injecting people who have little understanding or no say over what they are presiding over. Basically to be honest with you, it is very honest to allow increasing number of representation in the Bar to preside over their matters which they will have much understanding so that proper scrutiny, rigorous analysis can be attained for effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. Basically I rise to support the Bill. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. What is been manifested is the importance of self-regulation in any professional enterprise. The constitution is very clear, under section 100 before any Bill is introduced, the purpose needs introduction, the explanatory remarks should explain the purpose, the deficit and the aims to remedy and essentially this is what we are been told. Consideration is to reduce ex-official members and increase a membership of those who are of concern with the particular issue.

Looking at the 2 professions, we have seen that in the first 2016 the official representation seems to be much more and under the current recommendation of the clause, it is clause 4 talking about representation of the Chief Justice, the Minister, a Judge of the High Court and one legal practitioner who is in the service of the Government appointed by the Minister and then the four representation from the Gambia Bar Association and a layperson. So we are talking about 5 to 4.

I would just want the Minister to explain why the Vice Chair Person is the Minister? May be there is a justification for that I would want to know because I have seen him humbling the whole counsel so that the people who hold due responsibility would be unofficial representation. Would it have been much better to have **[interrupted?]**

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have one more minute to go.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: We have to abide by the rules but what I want to say, I would have wanted to say more but it will come in my adjournment debate. So essentially what is important is also to bear in mind the constitutional compliance, really Honourable Speaker if we start receiving these Bills once they are published it will be much better so that we can engage in consultation with the stakeholders because the constitution requires under section 101 subsection 3 that Bills would have to be published in the Gazette within 14 days before they are introduced in this National Assembly which if we have and we will ask the Clerk to make that a particular policy in ensuring that once they are published we get them during those 14 days so that we can engage in consultation with the stakeholders to be able to really contribute more. Otherwise it would have to come before us as a certificate of urgency. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much but on the part of Clerk I am sure we have been compliant. But the Honourable Minister of Justice will also add to that. Thank you.

HON. SIDIA JATTA (WULI WEST): Thank you, I think the introduction of this amendment Bill is long overdue because I find something in the Act which to me is a contradiction because the law provides that when a Bill is passed here and assented to by the President it becomes law. It automatically comes into force but article 15, subsection 2 of this Act is saying that, that subsection will not come into force until a Minister appoints and signs it. So I find that contradicting but it is good that you have brought it out for the anomaly to be rectified.

Secondly, the other thing I find interesting in the amendment Bill is that, the issue of privilege, you know laws deal with lives and properties so it is important that they are giving a certain amount of experience in addition to their academic qualifications. Certain amount of experience before they start handling cases in court.

I think it is a good idea that somebody has to spend a certain period of time under an experienced practising lawyer for a number of years before he or she assumes that responsibility in courts. I think for me these two things are fundamentally important in the amendment Bill and they should have come long time ago. Thank you Madam.

HON. MAHTARR JENG [LOWER NUIMI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. We have now seen and realize that we are living in a new dawn, a dawn where responsibilities are being devolved. The government is very responsible and open. We are privileged to partake in these very important discussions trying to make amends to certain things that were and that continued to be wrong. This is why we stand to say we have a government in place; we have a legislature in place that is open to best practice. The trust and the confidence people have in this government and in this body is overwhelming and things are revealing themselves day in day out. We are being given the opportunity to discuss certain things that would not have been possible.

At some point during the last regime, the members of the Bar Association had to walk out because of some 'kangaroo' characteristic of the courts. This is clear evidence

that justice is being brought to the fore of the people, fore of the Assembly, fore of democracy. We stand to be part and parcel of this decision to reap the Minister of his powers and give it to this counsel. Honourable Minister once again I pledge my support. Thank you very much.

HON DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you Madam Speaker, I just want to add my voice to the previous speakers in support of this amendment Bill for three [3] reasons.

1. The reducing number of nominated members of the Gambia Bar Association from 4 to 1 in the subsequent years before was to me a measure to undermine the whole purpose of the Bar itself.
2. Also reducing the number of years in practising experience for a lawyer to open his/her own firm from 10 to 5 years is actually a good move in trying to address the lack of home bread lawyers in this country.
3. The other reason is, the act is in contradiction with the constitution for the reason been, it is provided in the constitution, once a law is ratified by this House and assented by the President there is no need for it to go back to the Minister for signature. I think that move was just a delaying measure in terms of trying to execute certain Executive powers.

On that note, I am in support of this amendment Bill and I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member, if there are no more intervention then I would —

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you Madam Speaker, just to add my voice to the previous speakers in support of the Bill. Going by the huge amount given to the foreign judges Madam Speaker, I think we need to help the Gambia Bar Association to move from commitment to action. On that note, I am in support of the Bill. Thank you.

HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I have seen in the Legal Practitioner Amendment Bill that the Director of the Law School and the Dean of University are not part of or are deleted which I don't know the reason knowing that they are very important because the Director of Law school, train future lawyers to be lawyers. So I think to me, it will be necessary if at least one of them is among this counsel.

The other thing is reducing from 10 years to 5 is very good, is a welcome idea because we have young lawyers who should practice. The other thing is that these are very important documents and I would like if these documents are given to us at least one week or so for us to go and make consultations because most of us here are not conversant with law. Thank you.

HON. FATOUMATA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I am just seeing this amended Bill for the first time and is unfortunate that I have not had time to go through it thoroughly but what I have noticed is that the amendment 4 of section 5, it states that the counsel shall consist of:

- A. The Chief Justice who shall be the Chairperson and the Minister who shall be Vice Chairperson.

The Minister made emphasis that this amendment is due to give the Gambia Bar Association or Legal Practitioners a bit more independence. So what I am thinking is, why should the different arms of government be both the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson? Why not give one of those positions to the Bar Association. Thank you

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you Madam Speaker, thank you Honourable Minister, I was expecting the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to bring the reform election bill to this humble Assembly for consideration. If he can remember Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister tabled two [2] Bills before this Assembly namely the Bill to remove the upper age limit and the second bill that we dealing with now called the Legal Practitioner Amendment Bill 2017.

Honourable Speaker if you can remember, we all knew that this august Assembly need to amend bills that are very much concern to the people of this country. On that note, the election reform bill that put many innocent people behind bars during the past dispensation **[interrupted]**.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Jarra Central what is before us is for Honourable Members to make their interventions with regards to the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill. You are at liberty to bring a private members bill to amend any law that you want but for now, it is the prerogative of the Honourable Minister of Justice to bring a bill of this nature. You have your right and you can exercise it. If you want to make an intervention, it should be on this bill that is before this Honourable Body. Thank you, either you proceed or you take your seat and we go ahead.

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you Madam Speaker. May I just remind the Honourable Minister of Justice to bring the election reform bill for consideration. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: You can't yourself, it does not have to come from the Minister you can bring your own private member bill.

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: I will do that Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I think in the absence of anymore intervention I would call on the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to answer or respond to issues raised by Honourable Members and wind up the debate. Thank you.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker and I also thank the Honourable Members for their contributions and comments.

With respect to the question on size of the General Legal Counsel between the 2016 Act and the proposed amendment, I wish to bring to the attention of the Honourable Member for Serekunda that the numbers remain the same. If you count the individual

numbers in the 2016 Act are nine [9], if you count the number in the 2017 including the proposed 4 representatives then you get the same number 9 that has not change.

With respect to the Bill, I agreed that the bill upon publications should be brought to the notice of the Honourable Members, this particular propose amendment was Gazetted on 11th September 2017. Well in advance of the 14 days' constitutional requirement.

With respect to the removal of the Director of Law School and the Dean of the Faculty of Law, this is what I can say, this bill was drafted in consultation with the Gambia Bar Association, we have had opportunities to go over it, we agreed with a consensus that in view of the need to restore the membership of the Bar to its original number of 4 we may have to remove some other members and if you look at the composition of GLC it is as representative as is possible under the circumstances.

The Dean of the Faculty of Law or the Director of Law School may not necessarily be a lawyer. In fact, to the best of my understanding the current Dean of the Law School is not a Lawyer. What we looked at is a representation that will promote self-regulation rather than diminishing it.

With respect to the Minister being the Vice Chairperson and the Chief Justice being the Chairperson, I am sure members of this Assembly understand that hierarchy is very important matter in the Law and the Chief Justice been the highest judicial office holder in the land naturally has to be the Chairperson. You can't have a Chief Justice in a committee and then have him subordinated to somebody else.

With respect to the Vice Chairperson, the Minister, if I may say by convention is the leader of the Bar so all the lawyers that you see in this country fall behind the Minister and this so far as the membership of the Bar is concern and as the principal legal adviser of the government, he also enjoys certain hierarchical status and that is why he is the Vice Chairperson of the General Legal Counsel. This is the highest body that regulates the legal profession in this country and naturally the Chief Justice and the Attorney General if they are included in this body must logically assume very senior position if not the most senior 2 positions.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, I don't have much to add to this debate expect to thank you and to thank the Honourable Members for their support for this amendment I think it serves the best interest of the legal profession in this country. Thank you.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: Is just a clarification, my issue was not about the number in the counsel, it was official representation versus unofficial representation. Am saying it seems to be an increase in the non-ex-official members. That was the point, is backing the position. He was talking about the numbers that I said something and he mentioned that 9, 9 so he was elaborating on the numbers. Am saying my position was looking at it, it seems that the non-ex-official representation has increased so in that sense self-regulation is back. In a way that is my point.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU {ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE}: Am not sure if I still understood the question Honourable. If I may put it in my own words and please tell me if I got it or not with your permission. I just wanted to be sure you are "saying that there has been an increase in representation of non-ex-official members".

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: I said the official representation has been reduced by removing the Dean etc and then increasing the number of the Bar and one. It means that you have more representation on the other side. That is what am emphasizing.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU {ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE}: Thank you Honourable Member for Serekunda, you will notice that out of the 9, the Bar has 4 representatives and there is still 5 more including of course the Hon. Chief Justice and the Attorney General but again the ideal is to promote self-regulation and we need to empower the group that has the biggest stake in this to assume their responsibility. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister and thank Honourable Members for the clarifications.

The House will move into committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Committee stage

The House resumes

Legal Practitioner Amendment Bill 2017 [By the Attorney General & Minister for Justice]

THE SPEAKER: May I call on the Honourable Attorney General to report to the whole House what transpired at the Committee Stage.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I the Attorney General and Minister of Justice report that the Bill entitled the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill 2017 having

gone through the committee of the whole House without amendment be read the third time and passed. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER:

Adoption

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[That The Legal Practitioner's Amendment Bill 2017 having gone through the committee of the whole House without amendment has be adopted]

May I take the opportunity once more to thank everybody for their contributions, suggestions and their statements. Also the Honourable Minister of Justice. On that note we move to the next item on the Order Paper.

Motion

1. Motion on the Adjournment Debate

"Be it Resolved" that, this Honourable Assembly do adjourn sine-die

[By Hon. Majority Leader and Member for Kombo South]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, as we move closer to the end of business for the Third Ordinary Session in the 2017 legislative year, that is the Motion on the Adjournment debate, may I please draw the attention of Honourable Members to the provisions of the Standing Orders No.9 [4] and [6] clause 9[4] which reads: "...on the completion of business at the last sitting of each meeting, the Majority Leader or the Minority Leader, or in their absences any other member shall move a Motion for the adjournment of the Assembly Sine-die".

Clause 9 [6] reads: "During the debate on the Motion on the Adjournment of the Assembly, no Member shall speak for more than 15 minutes except that the speaker may at his or her discretion allow the mover of the Motion extra time for his or her reply".

I would appeal to Honourable members to kindly take note of all the Provisions of the Standing Orders regarding the debates on the adjournment.

Before I call on the Honourable Members, I would want to use my discretion that I would allow Honourable Members 7 minutes each during their contributions. May I now call on the Honourable Majority Leader to move the Motion?

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you Madam Speaker, I rise to move that, "Be it Resolved" that this august Assembly do adjourn sine-die. I would like to take this opportunity to bring out the summary of what had transpired in this august Assembly during its Third Ordinary Session from the period 27th September to today 5th October 2017.

Madam Speaker, in the course of our deliberations we have considered and adopted Record of Votes and Proceedings of the daily Sittings of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, we had Questions and Answer sessions with Ministers in regards their various departments and portfolios. The Honourable Ministers came to answered oral questions asked by Honourable Members. The Honourable Ministers that came before this august Assembly were as follows:

1. Office of the President was ably represented by her Excellency the Vice President and Minister for Women Affairs,
2. The Honourable Minister for Defence was also represented by her Excellency the Vice President and Minister for Women Affairs,
3. The Attorney General and Minister for Justices,
4. Honourable Minister for Trade, Regional Integration and Employment,
5. Honourable Minister for Basic and Secondary Education,
6. Honourable Minister for Tourism and Culture,
7. Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs,
8. Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs.

Madam Speaker, we also considered and adopted the followings reports of our various Parliamentary Delegations:

1. Report of the parliamentary delegation to the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Pan African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa from the period 8th -19th May 2017, laid by Honourable Sidia S. Jatta -Wuli West and head of delegation.
2. The second report of the Parliamentary delegation to 48 ACP Parliamentary Assembly and the third ACP-EU JPA Session in Malta from the period 14th -23rd June 2017, laid by Honourable Halifa Sallah -Serrekunda and head of delegation.
3. Report of the Gambia delegation to the High Level Regional meeting of Members of Parliament of ECOWAS, Mauritania and Chad for adequate Health Finance, demographic dividend, population and development policies held in

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from the period 20th -22nd July, 2017, laid by Honourable Ousman Sillah - Banjul North and head of delegation.

We also consider the following Motions; we witnessed the tabling for consideration and adoption of the following Motion:

1. Motion for the Establishment of an Inter-Parliamentary friendship group between the National Assembly of the Republic of the Gambia and the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China by Honourable Alhagie Mbow Member for Upper Saloum.
2. Motion for the reactivation of the Inter-parliamentary friendship group between the National Assembly of the Republic of The Gambia and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.
3. The Motion for the Review of the Remuneration of Commissioners of the Commission of Enquiry by the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justices.

Madam Speaker, we considered and passed the following Bill during this session:

1. Legal practitioners Amendment Bill, 2017.

Finally Madam Speaker, this Assembly is today starting the Motion on the adjournment Debate for this Assembly to stand adjourn sine-die.

With these few remarks Madam Speaker, I would therefore seize this opportunity once again to thank our electorates for electing us to be representing them in the National Assembly. We want to take this opportunity to assure them that we will live up to expectations serving the supreme interest of the people of the Gambia without fear or favour, affection or ill will. Also I would want to take this opportunity to thank you for the way and manner you handle the affairs of this august Assembly and pray that Allah the Almighty grant you strength and wisdom to continue to stair the affairs of this Assembly.

I would also thank my Honourable colleagues for their foresight and dedication to duty during this session. I would also like to thank the Clerk and staff of the National Assembly Service for the support and services rendered to Honourable Members.

To conclude Madam Speaker, this is an opportunity for all of us to thank our Honourable Ministers for taking time out of their busy schedules to come, listen and participate in the adjournment debate. This shows the commitment of our Ministers who are here to listen to the adjournment and on that note we also want to congratulate and thank them for taking the foresight to be with us.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NIUMI]: I so second, Madam Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[POINT OF ORDER]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Madam Speaker I would want to draw your attention to standing Order 9 [6]..." during the debate on the Motion on the adjournment of the Assembly, no Member shall speak for more than 15 minutes except that the Speaker may at his or her own discretion allow the mover of the Motion extra time". So the Speaker cannot restrict Members to less than 15 minutes that discretion is not embedded in the standing Orders.

THE SPEAKER: That is my discretion and I will go by it [Applause].

HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor to throw my comments on the adjournment debate. I just want to talk on few issues that I think we really need to take into consideration. We are a country that 70% of our population actually depends on agriculture. However, every year we have not seen for the most part any influence in agriculture and I think there are things that we actually need to take into consideration.

There are various projects under the Ministry of Agriculture and some of them for the most part are meant to help our farmers to increase productivity and also to move

away from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture. However, most part these projects are actually not yielding diffidence and I think is very important in this new Gambia that we sit and actually check and reconnect with the farmers to actually understand what to do to ensure that their issues are actually resolved. For example, we have various projects right now that are assisting in terms of crop production, vegetables growing etc. After you prepare a document for example to access a funding, one of the things you will be ask for is to contribute 50% of the requirement.

Now if you take a farmer or a group of farmers from Njaw Sawal in Upper Saloum who want to actually engage in commercial agriculture and they need about D1.5 million or D2.5 million to establish that kind of agricultural infrastructure, you ask them about 50% contribution towards getting this access, you are talking almost D750, 000, how would a poor farmer from Njaw Sawal going to get that kind of money.

I think it is very important from the Ministry of Agriculture to all the other stakeholders to ensure that in some of these policies or projects, they engage the farmers themselves for them to actually understand what the farmers need and to listen to them properly. I am 100% sure if they listen to them they will tell them exactly what they need and how best they can help them instead of making policies that may not actually work in the best interest of farmers.

Now a case in point is the agricultural mixed-farming centres. If you go to Njaw Sawal mixed-farming centres, there are two sites, one of the sites the fence has already collapse and no activity has been going on for the past twenty-four months. Nothing absolutely in that mixed farming centre. If you know the kind of money that was spent in that mixed farming centre, we are talking about millions of Dalasi that was spent there and not even a single activity has so far taken place. So how exactly are we helping these farmers? We really need to reconnect with the farmers to understand what they need so that we can put in policies or programmes and also projects that would help them to move away from subsistence farming to commercial farming.

The other intervention I am going to move on Madam Speaker with your indulgence is money laundering in this country. Being an ex-Banker we have seen over and over again how moneys move from one person to another or from one commercial institution to another and we are 100% sure that this is not done properly.

We have the financial intelligence unit in this country, what exactly are they here for? Reports are generated weekly and submitted to the Central Bank of The Gambia.

Some of these reports clearly shows movement of money from one person to the other or from one community to the other. What exactly have they been doing for the past few years to ensure that money laundering and terrorist financing are halted in this country? The Central Bank of The Gambia that regulate the flow of money and custodian of Commercial Banks has seen report daily that are submitted to them and these are statutory reports that they actually get and have seen huge withdrawals in dalasi or foreign currencies. But what actions are they taking? We really need to task these institutions to ensure that the mandate that has being given to them by the constitution of this country is fulfilled. If you cannot fulfil a mandate that is given to you constitutionally, I think the best thing to do is to give way to someone who can ensure that rules and proper procedures are follow to ensure that money laundering and terrorist financing is halted in this nation.

Another area madam speaker that I would like to highlight is, during the last adjournment debate or during the last Questions and Answers Session if I may remember; a question was post to the Minister of Information, Communication and Information Infrastructure by my humble self on the need for the nation to use ICT to move ahead. He concurred that 1% investment in ICT –has been proven all over the world- generates 10% in gross domestic product. What exactly is the Gambia waiting for? If 1% investment yields 10% returns, then what are we waiting for. I would suggest to the Ministry to create an ICT agency for this government. ITC agencies in various countries - developed and underdeveloped countries- have been the other of the day. These are the agencies basically that would advise the government and help the government to develop policies that would anchor most of this ICT related project in this country.

Now, if you check various Ministries in this country, their ICT requirement is different from each other. Why is that happening? Is because we do not have an agency that would help to coordinate basically what actually they need.

So I think there is a need for this government to create an agency that would handle all ICT infrastructure for the government to ensure that this government uses ICT to

the its advantage. Because there are lots of things that they can do to help move this economy forward.

My last intervention Madam Speaker, is for us to be commissioners of various things especially in developing infrastructure in this country. Various infrastructural buildings, whether private or public, when they were been built there was no consideration for the disable or the physically challenge people. You go to certain government offices for a physically challenge somebody to get to a particular office is a problem. I think there is a need for our various Ministries especially for Ministry of Works and Transport to take it into consideration that whenever a government is building any kind of infrastructure there is a need to think about our fellow physically challenged people so that wherever they want to go, be it hospital or office they can go in there without any hindrance. Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

HON. MADI M.K CEESAY [SERREKUNDA WEST]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I would like the government to consider issues around rent in this country. Rent is skyrocketing and some landlords also are making very unlawful demands. There are some landlords that would asked for 6-12 months' pay in advance which is contrary to section 18 [1] and [2] of the 2014 Rent Act but this is happening. I think it is high time the relevant Ministries and departments reactivate this rent issue. Majority of Gambians living in the urban areas are living in rented premises and with such difficult conditions will really make life difficult for them.

The other unlawful demand some landlords make is to asked payment in hard currency which is contrary to section 17 of the 2014 Local Government Act. So these are all acts that are going on and it never favours our ordinary Gambians. So whatever Ministry is responsible should really reactivate the rent issue so that people that do not have their own property and are living in rented properties could also enjoy the laws of this country.

Madam Speaker, coming to issues that affect my constituency [Bakoteh dump site] is still an unsolved problem. The conditions at the site are still bad. Sometimes ago the Minister of Environment visited the place and he made some commitments and pronouncements, because I live very close to the dumpsite, I have not seen any sign

of improvement yet. In his responses to questions by Honourable Members in this House, the Minister did say that they are going to resolve the issue because there was an impasse and an order was given and dumping has restarted. But then with condition that there are going to be bulldozers that will be permanently stationed at the site so that any waste that is dumped at the site would be properly managed. This has not taken place, because I haven't seen any bulldozer at the site. He also said that there is going to be fine sand laid on top of the rubbish so that the odour can be control, and this has also not happened.

The third thing he promised this House was that they will build a fence around the premises and that has not happen. I think the Minister or the Ministries responsible i.e. Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Local Government have stake in this dump site. And we all know when certain people went on their own way and took the law into their own hands and refused dumping to be done on that site, it has affected everybody in the KMC. Rubbish were found all over and if we do not want to go back to that scenario again, I think the Ministries responsible should respect their commitment and do exactly what they told the nation. People suffering from the dump site are Gambians like any other and are tax payers. Their money should be ploughed back in the form of development and one form of development we want to see around that area is for the Minister to fulfil his commitments.

Last but not the least, the Civic Education Departments need to be reinforced because their role is very important. We know in this new dispensation people are interpreting democracy anyway they like and anyhow they want. To help ease the matter I think government needs to give support to the section that is responsible for Civic Education so that people's rights can be easily spelt out at their own time. Thank you.

HON. BABA GALLEH JALLOW [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. First of all, I will start with health because it is so vital that if you are healthy you can achieve so many things. Last Saturday, the then Kombo North Constituency which is demarcated into three now namely; Sanimentereng, Busumbala and Old Yundum paid a visit to the psychiatric centre at Salagi locally called Tanka Tanka where we have mentally challenged youth accommodated. When we went there, the conditions of that psychiatric centre were so deplorable that all their bugler

proofs were on the ground. The worst of all is the food they were served was very poor. We are told that sometimes when they have admission at nights they used their mobile phones for light, there is no electricity and the place is so dark.

On one instance, a young man hit a security guard with an iron rod that resulted to a broken hand because there was no electricity and the security did not know who was coming. The government had definitely abandoned that place and I think these are youth who we think are not with their senses and should be helped to bring back their senses. If these youth are ignored and turned away it will be really a mess.

I am urging the Minister of Health to pay a visit to that psychiatric centre and see the conditions of the workers and patients in that place. The conditions are very serious especially at night when there is no electricity and even the bulbs in the rooms are all damaged. In fact, we asked them whether the Minister of Health do visit there and they said no. The place is isolated and dumped. I am urging the Honourable Minister of Health to pay a visit to that area and see the condition to make sure that their health facilities are improved.

Secondly, I have a local community in my village called Ghana Town, it is part of Brufut and this settlement has been there before I was born. Last Sunday I had a meeting with them and what they reported to me was the immigration officers harassed them. This is because there is no issuance of ID card to the young ones who were not 18 years before this change of government. The other complain was unemployment. Their youth are educated here and finished their schools here and they are denied employment because of their names. There was a time during this WASSCE examination one of the best student in the Gambia came out from this community and we are not calling that individual a Ghanaian but a Gambian. So they felt that they are isolated in this country.

The other thing is we all agreed in this Assembly that any project that is coming to your constituency you the National Assembly Member should be aware of it. It comes to my noticed that the Conference Hall at Bijilo is in my constituency. During the opening, nobody in Sanimentereng including me knew that there was a project been opened in that area. People came from Banjul and Serrekunda to grace the occasion when none of the Sanimentereng people knew that there was a project in this

constituency. So I felt this issue should be addressed but unfortunately Ministers concerned are not here so I rest my case.

THE SPEAKER: [undertone]; and actually at the level of the National Assembly we make sure that notices are sent out to all Ministries to ensure their present here during the adjournment debate, but unfortunately we have only three Ministers here. I have received communication from only three Ministers as to why they cannot be here.

As usual, this is a cause for concern, even the Minister responsible for National Assembly Matters has not shown up in the course of this sittings and nothing was communicated to the National Assembly as to why. If for some reasons Ministers cannot be present in person, they have technocrats; their Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries should come and listen to the concerns so that they can report back to their Ministers. Really this is something that I think we raised in the 1st and 2nd sessions and it appears to be persisting so I do not know what can be done. *[Undertone]*

My attention is being drawn to the fact that the Honourable Minister responsible for National Assembly matters is out of the jurisdiction and that one of his permanent secretaries is here sitting right there. We wouldn't know that he is here, maybe if he was sitting somewhere near here we would have probably asked. Notwithstanding, I am sure he travelled just over the last couple of days, we have been sitting for the last ten days and we have not being informed of anybody from the Ministry responsible for National Assembly Matters. I think we should all try to improve on that.

The last time the Vice President was overseeing the Office she was here with us throughout the Adjournment debate. We applauded her for having spent the whole time with us to answer to the issues and concerns raised by Honourable Members. I am saying this just out of concern, I am really concerned like everybody else because they should be present.

HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. What I have before me here is the issue related to the Minister for Tourism and culture. There is an island in my constituency called Kunta Kinteh

Island, this island size is being eroded year in year out. I think there is a need to claim part of island that has been eroded by the river or to put up a mechanism to maintain the island properly as it is a very important historical place as far as the history of this country is concern.

The other issue is with regards to the decentralisation of tourism as it was alluded to by him [The Minister of Tourism] during the Question and Answer Session. We are also appealing to the Ministry to consider and put up something in this area which will be beneficial to the local people in that area.

Also the issue of our popular root home coming festival to be restored which has been taken from us by the previous regime. I deem it befitting for the Ministry of Tourism and Culture to restore the festival to the people of Upper Niumi most particularly the people of Albreda and Juffureh who are more concerned.

The health centre in my constituency at Nema kunku, the road going from Bakalary-Madina to that Health Centre is terribly bad especially during the raining season it becomes inaccessible by the people of that area. If you look at that cluster is a four village cluster where you have Madina Sidia, Bakalary, Mademba kunda and Nema kunku. There are more than [three thousand five hundred] 3500 residents in that area but even the ambulance that was donated to the people of that area is not getting any fuel allocation from the Ministry of Health. I pursue the matter with the Minister of Health and had a meeting with him to consider allocating fuel for this particular ambulance. The driver of the ambulance is not being paid. He is on voluntary service for almost five years. I approached the Minister to consider staffing the drive but still to no avail.

In short Madam Speaker these are my concern for my constituency. So I thank you very much.

HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. This is very important simply because we have lot of issues affecting us as constituency, community and a country at large. There is a very important area that I want to lay emphasis on and that is the issue of flood as we are in the rainy season. I happen to come from Brikama where there are highways constructed all over without

a proper drainage system. We are in the rainy season and we know most of the flood that occurred in Brikama almost 80% to 85% are caused by those highways without drainage system. If you look at the recent heavy rainfall on 23rd September, there were lot of areas in my community particularly in Gidah whereby we have to relocate certain family members as a result of flood most of their houses collapsed. So I want to seize this opportunity because I have been going to the National Road Authority and to engage the Minister for Works and Construction so that they can make their feasibility study to ensure that when fund is available let there be a proper drainage to address this problem.

My second intervention is going to be on access to community taps. If you could remember in the first Republic, there was a very serious reaction by Brikama youth that they will not buy water from community taps. As a result, even when the APRC government came into being they were saying that was another factor that warranted the coup. So, at this moment in all the communities at Brikama, people are buying water D5.00 per bucket which is very serious. We have taken it up from community level to talk to different authorities regarding this issue but is still going on. We are saying the community is paying their taxes, collecting rates from the market and other places. Let the local government Ministry work with council to make sure they don't charge people for using community taps, if not this will bring more problems.

The other issues I want to talk about is the Brikama District Hospital. Brikama happens to be the headquarters of West Coast and almost all the villages access the health centre for health delivery services. Interestingly, we know there is an issue regarding electricity provision in this country but nonetheless, there are instance whereby some of our households are with electricity when our major health centre will be without electricity for 12-18 hours which is very serious and it is costing some people their lives. So we are urging the Minister of Energy to take up this issue with NAWEC, to make sure that there is special attention to Brikama Health Centre so that we can have electricity even whereas our houses are going to be without electricity because the health centre is everybody's place.

The other issue I would want to emphasise is the Military range in the mist of our town. This has been an issue and it is going to be an issue unless there is proper attention to make sure that we address the issue of the Military range. This place has

been encroached by people and at the moment people are using the area. So therefore we are saying the place is not only occupied by people but there are schools in that particular area and we definitely know that the security service needs training in other to meet certain international standard and sometimes they used sophisticated weapons, using live bullets in that particular area is very dangerous because you cannot move people in those areas. The area is already surrounded by people. So we are appealing to the government if they can think of relocating the Military training range to a better place where people will not be affected.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I thank you so much and I hope these issues are going to be considered. Thank you.

HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity to participate in the adjournment debate. I would first of all like to talk on Tourism. We all know that tourism is the second largest foreign exchange in this country and we did asked the Minister about how to expand tourism to the rural Gambia. He gave a positive remark that it would be expanded but how soon is not known. I want to put it to the Minister and the government that rural Gambian need eco-tourism and community base tourism so that tourist would be expose to the rural Gambia and they would be able to participate in the development of our communities and our culture as well. Therefore, we need eco-tourism and community base tourism so that communities in the rural Gambia can enjoy the flavour of tourism and it can create employment for the youth residing in that area.

The second area I would like to talk about is the fishing centres. Fishing production in the Gambia is very low and fish is nutritious. We need fish for our body development in other to promote our nutrition value. Therefore, the government should try to invest in both coastal and inland fishing. Inland fishing centres need to be revamped or be supported so that the materials are available in the rural Gambia. We have some centres like Jurunku, Salikenneh, Jinak in the northern part of the Gambia and Essau. The youth could be supported to take fishing as a profession and contribute in the nutrition value of the country.

Madam Speaker, river transportation is also highly needed in the new government. Since the demised or sinking of Lady Chilel, river transport has been an issue in the country. For us who are young we never enjoy it, so we feel that from Baddibu to Kiang or from Banjul to Basse there should be easy transportation for people to be able to move from one end to the other.

Madam Speaker, the other point that I would want to talk about is our international image. I know the government and the Foreign Minister is doing a lot to build our image internationally and there are lots of bilateral agreements that are going on but we should know the kind of people to engage with. We should be very careful with people we want to do international trade with and the people that we are inviting into this country.

Madam Speaker, the natural resources we have in the Gambia are very limited and the foreign investors and foreign partners most of them are interested in those natural resources. If they are not jealously guarded they will be exploited and it will not benefit the country. So we have to be very much careful with international partners and those people who come for business particularly Gambia we all know, we are in a haste to develop this country but we have to know the people to partner with because some of them are international criminals.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about over speeding of drivers. Last time I talked about it, I mentioned that three of our school going children were knocked on the road at Minteh Kunda and this time is No-Kunda, where school going children were knocked on the highway. Maybe by the next adjournment debate it can increase to ten. So I don't know what the government is doing. What are our police officers doing about it? We spoke here and to be honest Madam Speaker, the villages have something that would not help the peace of this country. They intends to put bumps on the road using tree trunks and that is not the civilize way of doing things. So the government needs to intervene to save lives of small children going to school. We need to secure these innocent children and protect them.

Madam speaker, I am talking because I am so shocked, I just attended a funeral two weeks back. Government needs to take urgent action. We have lots of policemen in

this country. Every village with a school should have a police officer posted there during school hours so that drivers can limit their speed.

Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity.

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]: Thank you very much. My intervention is on a domain that is almost similar to the crises that you vented out here regarding the absence of Ministers at the adjournment debates. The disregard that is shown by Ministers to this House is inherited. It used to be like this but the most disturbing part is, Minister will give you their telephone numbers and you call them you will not reach them. So you could see the reflection here, why Ministers would not attend sittings to hear things that concerns their Ministries. I believe the National Assembly and the Ministers should work hand in glove in the development of this nation. We highlights the problems faced by our electorates, they tell us the solutions and we take the solutions to our people.

When you visit a Minister, the security will tell you the Minister is not receiving anybody. You go to the secretary, the same thing. These people are so locked up in tinted glasses that even if they are coming you will not know which Minister is passing. We need to work together. You give me your telephone number if I make a call answer my call. Its courtesy, even if you cannot do it answer my call, that would erase feelings of inferiority complex but is disgraceful. Some are very good, the moment you call them they pick the phone and talk to you but some give you disregard. That does not help and that would not help and shall never help us.

My neighbour, the Honourable Member for Upper Nuimi mentioned the island of Kunta Kinteh been eroded. Many years back, that island was disregarded and unless the present Minister and his team come to salvage that island, that island will end up being a kitchen. The only thing they have there is a wharf were tourist can anchor their boats. Almost everything is dilapidated, the boat picks people from the main wharf on the land and cross them to the island. Is the Ministry of Tourism and the National Council for Arts and Culture receiving any benefit from there? If one talks of James island, I am also dishearten to talk about the fact that Fort Bullen is being eroded. Fort Bullen would soon be nowhere because its facing the waves and the

ocean. This is what we have and this is the situation that we have in the country, which are important islands for tourism to be disregarded. Perhaps these people don't even have time for that, sweet talks end here and that should be.

Madam speaker, if we do not change our attitudes and be committed, talking of the failure of the last government, we would be worst. You do what we want and nobody will say anything. We are talking about security here, nothing. The Minister was here to tell us about big things only to have burglars breaking into two or three shops in the North Bank; Charmen, Fass Njaga Choi. This is disheartening, we talk, we plead and nothing comes out of it.

Madam Speaker, this is very disheartening, discouraging and embarrassing. Thank you very much [*Applause*].

HON. LAMIN F.M. CONTA [KOMBO EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker once again. I will deal with the concerns of energy. Energy is very essential in terms of any development and is a key component of standard of living as an individual or a nation. The government through the Ministry of Energy should do everything humanly possible to ensure that there is affordability and sustainability of electricity in this country. And I would urge the Ministry to ensure that this is extended to the rural communities.

Madam Speaker, no country can heavily invest in any developmental agenda without the provision of electricity. Therefore, I hereby challenge the government through the Ministry concern to ensure that the energy sector is revived and vibrant.

On the area of Tourism, it is one of the industry that can reduce unemployment. All year round tourism is a strategic objective of the Ministry I understood but we are urging the Ministry to engage stakeholders to ensure this initiative becomes a reality. Again, the Ministry should be conscious of standardisation of the hotels so as to accommodate and provide good services for the retention of customers. I want the Ministry to consider Tumani Tenda in Kombo East which is also a community base tourism site, and I urge the Ministry to visit and see for themselves how best it can be improved.

Madam Speaker, road infrastructure is very essentially and key. Road networking is essential because it improves movement and the standard of living of the people in any country. Therefore, I am appealing to the Ministry of Communication Transport and Infrastructure to look into the problem so as to facilitate the movement of the people. The buses that plight the Southern part of Senegal [Casamance area] through The Gambia to Senegal is very alarming because accidents are rampant nowadays. I think the authorities of these countries [Gambia and Senegal] should come forward to ensure that there is a mechanism in place to ensure there is a solution to this problem.

HON. SAIKOU MARONG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the floor and I once again thank the Honourable Ministers that are present with us.

Madam Speaker, I will first and foremost start with the poor healthcare within my constituency Latrikunda Sabiji. We have a health center at Farjikunda and this health center covers areas like Latrikunda Sabiji, Farjikunda, Abuko, Piccadilly, Wellingara and even Sinchu, most of these people come to Farjikunda Health Center. To my dismay Honourable Speaker, I went to Farjikunda health center on Tuesday night for a surprise visit and upon arrival; I was told that the hospital didn't even have cotton which is very_serious.

It was not long ago we ratified a loan or grant for the Ministry of Health and these people are telling me that all those basic needs are not available at the health center, a health center that covers the areas of Latrikunda, Farjikunda, Abuko, Sinchu, Wellingagra, telling me that when some people got wounded and come here we refer them to Jammeh Foundation or Bundumg Maternal Health center, which I believe is definitely not fair to the people of Latrikunda constituency. The Health Minister needs to address this urgently.

Madam Speaker, on the issue of Electricity at the Farjikunda Health Center, I was told that sometime they go for almost 24 hours without electricity. Could you imagine a hospital or health center having to stay without electricity and water for 24 hours? This is very_serious and Latrikunda is not a small area. I would like to urge the Minister

of Health to please pay particular attention to Latrikunda Sabiji Constituency Health Center because it is very important as it serves large catchment area.

Madam Speaker, going to Farjikunda Dumos , Abuko and Farjikunda Bajonkoto, these are large settlements that don't have access to water and electricity talk less of good road. If you go to Farjikunda or Abuko during the rainy season you will definitely be surprised and I believe these are part and parcel of KMC. Farjikunda and Abuko should not be left behind.

I always talk about the road infrastructure, the road congestion from Brikama to Westfield or Brikama to Serrekunda and I will keep talking about it every day, every time.

Madam Speaker, all of us here are affected one way or the other, that highway-even weekends talk less of Monday to Friday-travelling from Tabokoto to Westfield is always a nightmare and we have feeder roads. I keep saying this over and over, we have good feeder roads which when constructed will ease the traffic but sometime you approach some of the Ministers what they will tell you is we will send the technocrats to go and observe. I believe it is high time to put things into action, we should be more action oriented in this new Gambia.

We are not supposed to be like the former Government that makes big pledges without action. This time around we want the government of the Gambia to be more action oriented.

Madam Speaker, I am an ex-Banker but the tax that the Bankers pay in this country to me is definitely not fair. 30% of Bankers salary goes to tax and these are Gambians. I think the government needs to look at this very well.

Madam Speaker, the last is ICT. The Honourable Member for Upper Saloum said that no country these days can do without ICT. So, like the Gambia if we really want to make a difference in this world we have to pay a particular attention to ICT and invest more on ICT. How many of the ICT Institutions today are providing jobs for youth and how many people here are having their own internet café talk less of the printers, their photocopiers and these are self-employment. It is only ICT that is quick at

creating job. I think the government of the Gambia should pay particular attention to ICT. Thank you.

HON. BAKARY NJIE [BUNDUNKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Coalition Government for giving us what we fought for and that is democracy and freedom of speech where each and every one is free to say whatever he/she wants to say or do. But Madam Speaker, I find it very difficult to understand when a Commission of Inquiry's probing into former President's activities while other people are putting on his T-shirts and celebrating him. I think that is too much because the Commission of Inquiry is going through his activities and along the way so many people are affected or hurt while many people are mourning and yet still his billboards, T-shirts, caps all sort of things are been used to celebrate him in this country. I think something needs to be done about that, to stop does kind of activities until the Commission of Inquiry finish it activities.

On the other point Madam Speaker, during the last flooding that affected almost all parts of the country, we realize that most of the assistance went to Kuntaur while there were victims around here in Kombos, in Serrekunda especially around Bundung and those people still didn't receive any token of help from anybody and they listen to the Radios and watch Televisions seeing donations going over and over to those people. I think the NDMA should also think about other areas that are also affected as they need help as we speak.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of my Community Bundung I would like to thank the Ministry of Health for changing the name of Jammeh Foundation Hospital to Bundung Maternal and Child Health Hospital.

Madam Speaker, this hospital is specialized in child health and there are many constraints which if addressed will be good for the community. The Child Health Hospital didn't have specialist doctors in pediatric, obstetrics and gynaecology. Even the numbers of medical officers as at now are reduced from 8 to 5 and with the right specialists in that hospital, the maternal and child health related referrals from Farjikunda or Banjulinding and other communities by extension will save the Ministry

the amount of money pay to the riders for health. The generator currently in that hospital is also not in a good condition. Just recently during the rainy season, electricity went off when they had some cases there. The patients were all referred to Banjul otherwise they would die. So we are pledging to the Minister of Health to please look into these issues and address them. I beg to take my seat.

HON. DEMBO K.M CAMARA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. The concerned Ministers for the subjects I want to deliberate on are not here; the Minister of Finance, Trade and Minister of communication but without them I will just try to elaborate on certain issues until next time when they are here.

First of all, the reason why rice and sugar are very expensive in the country is simply because people are accusing custom officers but they have not done anything. Custom officers are controlled by the Ministry of Finance otherwise the price of rice instead of D1500 will be reduce to D145.

Because they are giving them indicated value, they are controlling custom officers that the price of 20 tons of rice is \$350 per ton. If you come in terms of rice or sugar also they give them 350 dollars per ton and if you import oil from anywhere in the world maybe Germany or anywhere you have to pay about 15 dollars on duty. And also the Minister of Finance also give them target that they have to generate about D550 million to D600million every month. So at the end of the month, if there is no money, custom officers will force themselves or force the importers to appraise their values so that they can be able to meet their target.

In the final analysis, the consumers suffer. If the Ministry of Finance leaves custom officers to work on their own then we will not find ourselves in such situation but it is so unfortunate that the Finance Minister is not here, I would like to reserve my comment until when he is here.

In terms of clearing, if you go to ports and wants to clear a single container you cannot even clear it. If you go to Maersk line you pay the destination fee, you pay the record fees, you go to the ports you pay charges and they even introduce...agency, what for? And also the worse thing is that you are paying scanning fees to customs and in the

last estimate, the scanning was not mentioned in the budget and every container is paying about \$30 for scanning and that did not reflect in the estimate.

Bicycles, cars anything you want to clear at the ports you have to pay scanning fees and you don't even know why you are paying for scanning. So, for that been the case I will reserve my opinion until when the Finance Minister is here and the Trade Minister.

Madam Speaker last point is, we are tired of swimming in Banjul, Banjul is a swimming center ok. Thank you.

HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Thank you so much Madam Speaker once again. When I speak, I speak on behalf of over 44, 000 electorates within my constituency who deserve the attention of the authorities or the government. In short we are not privileged to have a tourism attraction center in old Yundum neither do we have adequate farmland for farming or river for fishing that is why our youth are not engaged in fishing and yet still the social amenities are lacking within the constituency. And I stand here to also share what challenges I have within my constituency.

First I will talk about Public Schools. In the entire old Yundum Constituency, we have only a Junior Secondary Schools. Of course, we have Senior Secondary School belonging to the Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat. We don't have a Public Senior Secondary School and every year when our kids want to go to grade 10, they either come to Banjul or go to other places like Serrekunda.

The Minister said some communities don't have land that is why they are not able to build schools in these communities. I have a land probably if the Ministry will be ready to provide a Public Senior Secondary School within my constituency very soon.

We don't also have a Skill Training Center. Most of our youth are idle, we don't have a skill training center and we cannot employ all of them, why not we provide skill training centers to engage the youth in skills training. We have only one skill training center that I know that is the Maibena skill training center that is been supported by Child Fund or Kombo North Federation and is not doing well.

Market management is a problem within Old Yundum Constituency. The Old Yundum market, I said it here the last time that the market has been abandoned by the vendors and most of the time they sell on the street. The drivers are also using the same road causing serious traffic congestion. The Area Council is not taking up to these issues. I mean we have met them and we talked to them about it still nothing is happening. I believe from here we will be able to engage them through the Minister of Regional Government and Lands.

Old Yundum Constituency also don't have good roads particularly in areas like Yunna, Labakoreh and Mariama Kunda. These communities have only one main road leading to Sukuta. Over the years, this road is always in a very bad condition. When it comes to health, they don't have a community health post and they always travel all the way to Sukuta health center which is very far and the road is not in a very good condition. Most of the time, some women in labour deliver on the way before they reach the hospital, which is very serious.

Energy, I believe is a general problem but then within my constituency I also need an extension in the inland because I talk about Yunna and others they don't even know what is electricity, they don't have it and this is a concern.

In Sinchu Baliya, I will share this one; over hundred compounds in Sinchu Baliya after the health post are located within an area that experience floods annually. During it rains they sleep in water and they wake up in water and nothing has been done to help them. I share this with the relevant authorities to understand because I have been there on several occasions with the Disaster Management Agency and nothing has been done up till now.

I also talked about the health posts within the Old Yundum Constituency. We only have three (3) community health posts, one in Latria, Sinchu Baliya and then the other one in Sinchu Alagie that is sponsored by a donor. Only 3 health posts for a Constituency of 14 villages, this is serious and I believe the Minister of Health will have to consider this at least to engage the communities if they have adequate land so that they can also establish some community health posts within the entire constituency. Madam Speaker, thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Please may I draw the attention of Honourable Members that we are complaining about the non-attendance of Honourable Ministers at the adjournment debate. So I think is equally wrong for Honourable Members to absent themselves and I notice that people are just leaving individually which is not fair. I can see Members going one by one and really is not fair, if the whole Assembly leaves what will happen? And we are complaining that Ministers are not here. We should be responsible enough and stay until the end of the session. Thank you.
[Applause]

HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Madam Speaker, the greatest concern of every Gambians today is water and electricity and I commend the President for paying a visit to NAWEC in other to understand the electricity crisis but what I didn't hear them discussing was the issue of water. In my area, Tallinding, people have access to water between 3:00am and 5:00am, which I think, is inconvenient for them.

Madam Speaker, in my Constituency, besides just 2 hours of water supply which is insufficient, majority of the areas in Tallinding are underdeveloped especially in term of road infrastructure even though Tallinding is the center of Kanifing Municipality. In some areas of Tallinding, people find it difficult to access the main road. I would therefore appeal to the government to help us in constructing the main road in the constituency especially the one linking the main highway to the river.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, just last week I paid a visit to Tallinding Upper Basic School where we conduct a cleaning exercise and the school is in a very horrible condition because they have a poor sanitation and the School Environment is not correct at all. Am appealing to the Minister of Health to come to their aid and improve the sanitary conditions of the school. Thank you.

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]: Ma, thank you very much for giving me the floor. Am not going to take more time as I will just be very brief.

First of all, as a National Assembly Member serving the interest of every Gambian. I want to appeal to the new Government to understand that the expectations of the

Gambian people from this new government is that, come November or December, Gambian citizens and Gambian civil servants are highly anticipating for improvement on their living conditions with regard to salary. This is an appeal from my people.

The Gambian people are appealing that in the event salaries cannot be increased due to budgetary constraints, let grade 1,2,3, to be wiped out from the pay scale because those earning grade 1,2,3, the salary cannot sustain them because we all know the prices of the commodities.

Madam Speaker, coming to my constituency, Busumbala, we were part of Kombo North now divided into Busumbala, Sanimentereng and Old Yundum. I have about 36,000 (thirty-six thousand) electorates but this constituency is very unfortunate. I start from Busumbala as a village, on the West is 7 kilometers and on the East is 5 kilometers from the highway but this community has no good road, no hospital and no sufficient water supply. So, they are appealing for that.

When you come to Yundum, Yundum as you all know is an ancient city but Yundum is very unfortunate. We are in the center yet we don't have a standard market and no garage.

If you go to Westfield and Serrekunda today and pretend that you are going to Yundum, drivers will never take you. I am talking about myself as a National Assembly Member, let's try to board public vehicle and go to Westfield, try to come back and see what would be the reaction from the people. Went I entered the vehicle and then the driver move for some distance and asked where are you going? I said am going to Yundum, he said; '*wahchal du ma jel Yundum*'. Literally meaning [*get down, I am not going to Yundum*] and the driver was going to Brikama. Then I asked him how can you say you are not taking Yundum and you are going to Brikama? The driver replies from Westfield to Yundum, the fare is insufficient, is not good for them but then the fares are not decided by the people in Yundum but by the government.

When I went to the traffic officers Ma, the officers I met on the ground what they told me is pathetic. They told me that we are not given orders, "Honourable if we are given orders we will do our job". You wear a uniform, a declaration has been made by the relevant authorities that this is the fares and you see people suffering yet still you are saying you are not given orders. Where should the order come from? That is my

problem. The Yundum people are suffering from the transport issue every day, our women are struggling and fighting with the drivers.

Madam Speaker, when you come to Banjuliding, Honourable Member from Brikama mentioned about buying water, if you could remember the former Chairman of AFPRC claimed that he decided to take over because the people of Brikama were buying water. Presently in Banjuliding people are buying water, we cannot stop it, we have done everything possible but we cannot stop it. If the Area Council cannot pay bills of public taps, let them extend waters to their compounds. They will install water in their compounds and stay away from public taps but we cannot get waters install in our compounds and we pay money at the public taps.

Madam Speaker, Yarambamba as an Estate are still dancing to the tune of the former Government because their electricity is being cut off because the former President has a problem with the Estate owner Mustapha Njie. Because of that, all the street lights are cut off. The Yarambamba residents are appealing to the new Government to reinstate electricity.

Madam Speaker, when you come to Lamin as we all know. The whole of Lamin has been eroded by erosion. From Lamin to Mandinaring the road is bad, 2 vehicles cannot even pass together. The place is also very congested. I want the National Road Authority to consider improving the road condition. In fact, they have promised that they will look into the issue after the rainy season and I believe the rains are over now. Also from Mandinaring to Brikama, that area is been left out and is rapidly developing yet there is no electricity, no accessible road, no drinking water for those communities.

The Minister of Tourism is here, I put it to him the other time that Mandinaring is a good community for tourism. The community is close to Denton bridge and Juffereh is also accessible from the community. I am appealing to the Minister to reconsider improving this community for tourism.

I also want to join my Honourable Member from Latrikunda Sabiji though people will say that now I start driving but the congestion from Westfield to Tabokoto makes traffic very difficult after close of business for the day. Am appealing to the new government to look into those issues.

I also want to appeal, schools are opened, there are no schools in the Gambia that have a correct watchman, the Minister of Education will try and put materials there when you go there in 2,3 weeks after, all the materials disappear because there is no watchman. If you go and asked the school authorities what is the problem? They will say no watchman is willing to take up the job due to the low wages. We are appealing to the government to look into these issues, our schools are not secured and if we want quality education security of schools is important. Madam Speaker, I take my seat. *[Applause]*

HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]: Thank you very much Madam. I will be very precise. I was looking forward to witness this adjournment debate as it enables us to deliberate on matters of concern in our constituencies. My deliberation will be informed by my recent visit to my constituency and as people's representative, I need to report about the challenges of my Constituency.

The People of Kantora keep singing the same song in my ear and it is my responsibilities to deliver the message. I have overhead the issue of road conditions and I went to Nyamari via Missira, at the border security personal and customs officers that are there are facing challenges in terms of mobility and also bad road network and this has actually driven away drivers to use that road to come to Basse. I also endeavored to reach Fatoto Police post, that police post is as bad as a jungle. The building was built since colonial era.

They are human beings; they are police officers who took up a national duty to complement Government effort in strengthening Gambia's sovereignty as far as security is concern. They should be catered for in terms of improving their conditions of work.

I keep telling them that they are not forgotten, Kantora and Tumana are taxpayers and mandated to certain portion of what they are paying. We keep begging the government to consider them for 52 years now and is high time the government assure and consider them.

I said it here in this Parliament, people are raising matters about security and this is a great concern. We have received lot of reports, stolen car batteries, stolen motor bicycles and the likes. Why the recent increase in crime and criminality in this country we don't know but it is high time for the government to have a rethink on the policy of lottery or gambling in the Gambia. It has become rampant and this is never a solution to youth unemployment.

Research has shown that gambling centers are hiding places for criminals, gambling are source of violence or conflict in communities. Gambling are source of threat, stealing and other issues in communities and such are the root course of security challenges that we are facing now. Government should rethink and provide another means or mechanism to solve youth unemployment rather than operating gaming or lottery centers all over the country.

It has become a perpetual attitude of Ministers not coming to listen to adjournment debate in the Parliament, we have a role to play and they too have a role to play. I think is high time for us to inculcate the mechanism or method of the Westminster Foundation. All these matters raised are repetitions, it's best for us to give them a report and then they will come and tell us which points they addressed and which points they cannot address and give us the reason why. That is the only mechanisms to at least ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Without wasting much time, I think my time has elapsed and thank you so much for your indulgence.

THE SPEAKER: We would at least allow the Honourable Ministers to respond to some of the issues raised. I have a list, am going by the list so we will continue tomorrow according to the list. According to the list, I have Honourable Member for Jarra East next. Thank you.

HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]: Thank you Madam Speaker, for giving me the floor. Madam Speaker, I will be very laconic in my submissions. I start with transport, you will agree with me that the issue of mobility must be understood within the framework of necessity as opposed to luxury and this has taking me to the

presidential largesse that we have been accorded. As a NAM and a representative of my constituency, it will amount to sheer ungratefulness if I fail to register my gratefulness through your good office for giving us these beautiful vehicles. Thank you very much for a job well done.

Madam Speaker, on health, you will quite agree with me that we have a village in our constituency called Ndonkoroba, it is on the Trans-Gambia highway and there is a good Samaritan there who built the Health facility single handedly but the state of the health facility as I am talking to you leaves much to be desired and imagine this was undertaken by a good Samaritan of that village.

It doesn't have the necessary drugs. Yes, it was established during the former dispensation but am here by urging this Coalition Government to take that health facility into account for health is paramount for development.

Youth, the youth of my constituency need assistance and you will agree with me that the youth of any nation are the backbone because of the pivotal role they play. So their development is in the best interest of the nation. I would urge this Coalition Government to factor in greatly the development of youths' visa-via skills development and you name it.

Last and not the least Madam Speaker, that has to do with freedom of speech, the enlargement of the democratic space which is largely due to the coalition government now my humble self plus my other compatriots can stand and express their viewpoints in an atmosphere of openness and candour. People can speak their minds without looking back so that is a move in a right direction. As a result of this enlargement of the democratic space, I want to pay tribute to the Coalition Government for a wonderful job because is not easy, all of us are witnesses to what used to transpire here during the former dispensation.

The country was under the iron grip of a dictator Madam Speaker, these are even under statements went it come to his demeanor because we know the former Head of State, when am asked to describe his demeanor I will just say he is quite ruthless, heartless etc, I thank the present Government for giving us the democracy that we are enjoying.

We are all witnesses to the revelations that are emanating from the Commission of Inquiry and I want to thank the Minister of Justice for initiating this wonderful commission. I want to thank our able Ministers and their technocrats for leaving their busy schedules to come and listen to our deliberations. To this end Madam Speaker, I thank you.

HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. You realize that must of the time when I rise up to speak I normally start with the electricity situation in kiang but this time around am not going to talk about that because the issue is addressed. So, am happy to report that.

The first issue I want to talk about is the Education situation in the country especially the Higher Education, we have University of the Gambia that enroll large number of students every year but if you go there right now you will find out that students find it very difficult to even have a space or to even have seat to sit-down to attend lectures. So I urge the select Committee on Education to pay a particular visit to the University of The Gambia particularly the law faculty. I was there this morning, the situation is really disheartening and the university still continue to charge people exorbitant amount of money. Failing to understand that must of the time public Universities are cheaper than the private universities and then this is the only University where they have a policy of denying students to take their exams because they either fail to pay their tuitions fees or late to pay their tuition fees. So, the Select Committee on education, I would please make this appeal to you to visit the University of the Gambia and see both the Kanifing as well as that of Brikama campus to see the exact situation there.

The other issue is an appeal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, you realize that we have a large number of Gambians in Italy than in any other countries. Most of the times some of us receive telephone calls from those Gambians appealing to us to see to it that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an Embassy in Italy to look into their concerns. I am appealing to the Honourable Minister to consider the issue.

On the Health Sector Madam Speaker, I have an opportunity to go round to some of the major Health Facilities and what I was told is that throughout the country, we don't have a dietician. So, I urge the Ministry of Health to train somebody in that field. We know in the Gambia here what the doctors refer to as lifestyle diseases are very common in this country, high blood pressure, diabetic here and there and we don't have people, we have general practitioners who give general advice as to what to take at what time but if you have somebody who is a train dietician it will really help us. People are paying much attention to malaria and HIV/AIDS but hypertension is killing lots of Gambians as well as diabetes more than any other disease because some people don't know what to take at what time. It is very important that we get a specialist in that area.

The other issue is our capital Banjul, sometime I even feel ashamed to tell some people that this is our capital taking into account the situation in Banjul in terms of roads, the drainage system. I think government needs to do something to address the situation in Banjul. The roads are bad and this is the first point of call. Most of the time you realize that when visitors come, they are always eager to go and see what is in the capital, what are some of the things that are available, how does the capital look like. So the impression that they have about the capital is what they are going to take and that is what they going to explain to people, that we visited Gambia and this is how their capital looks like. I think something needs to be done.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank His Excellency the President for appointing the Vice President. Of course this is a demand from the public and that move to appoint a Vice President is really a fitting response to public demand. I really thank the President. And on that I will join my Honourable colleague from Jarra East to thank the President again for the wonderful gesture through your office that is been extended to us by making the issue of mobility a thing of the past. On that note Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for giving me the floor.

HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. First of all, I would like to thank the Ministers and other representatives in other department for coming to listen to this very important debate.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that for any country to develop, there are key things that needs to put into consideration such as Education, Agriculture, Health, Road and Energy. These are very key for any development.

Madam Speaker, I would like to register my thanks to the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education for changing Pachonki LBS to a Basic Cycle School, I know this is going to reduce dropout rate and increase retention rate. But Madam Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education that last year they have established a school in Tandi kunda, this school was established in 2016 but there are no structures for that school.

The structures that are there was built by Niani - Sami diaspora and I thank them for a job well-done. But still there is much to be done, there are no furniture, no teaching and learning materials in that school and I believe they also should be like other schools because they are also paying their taxes. The Ministry should put this into consideration.

Madam Speaker, the Health condition, people are talking about health if you look at the whole Sami there is only one Health Center which is in Karantaba and is very far from other villages from Sallikenni up to Sami-Tenda. I think the Ministry should now put things into consideration, they should consider rural areas because those areas are not fortunate to have pharmacies. The other areas can easily go to pharmacies but places like Sami some areas are very remote, they don't have access to pharmacy and when they go to Karantaba Health Center, they are refereed to Bansang which is very far and the road condition is also very poor.

During our question and answer session with the Minister of Works and Communication, he mentioned here that there is no road which is a minor road, all roads are major roads, this is what he exactly said but there are certain roads in Sami that needs to be put into consideration like Sallikenni to Jarumeh, Laminkoto to Kunting, Demfaye to Chakan, Tabanani etc. those are very far and there are business centers there and people find it very difficult to transport their goods. The Ministry of Works, Communication and Transport should put that into consideration, they should consider those areas. That is my headache because looking at only one health center

in Sami, we have to cross to Bansang and that is the only road that people can pass through and that road still now is not put into consideration.

We also want electricity, we want to know what is happening in the Gambia and also beyond and with regard to the selection of lady Councilors Madam Speaker, the selection of lady councilors has been alarming in the whole country especially the type of selection criteria been used. I would like to appeal to the Minister of Women Affairs to conduct the selection again in other to restore democracy. Thank you very much Madam Speaker. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members, may I at this point before we adjourn to complete the adjournment debate tomorrow called on the Honourable Ministers to respond to some of the issues raised. I want to call on the Honourable Minister of External Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad.

Please I see some Honourable Members packing up, we are still not done as the American would say, session is still on so please

HON. OUSAINOU DARBOE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GAMBIAANS ABROAD]: Honourable Ministers, Honourable gentlemen of this august Assembly. I am fortunate not to be the Minister of Health, so, there is not much on my plate this afternoon.

I will like to register on my own behalf and on behalf of the Minister of Works; with whom I share responsibility for the International Conference Centre, we want to apologise purposely to the Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, for really not sending any formal invitation to the constituency of Sanimentereng. But as regards the Honourable Member himself, we always assume although our assumption has turnout to be wrong, that the protocols of this august Body would address that issues so that every member of the National Assembly would be invited to such occasions. But then I want to assure all Members of this House, that in so far as it concerns matters that deal with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we will ensure that the protocol

department addresses this issues so that the Honourable Members and other people who should attend such occasions are inform accordingly.

But certainly, there had been some unofficial communication and I can assure the Honourable Member that certainly there where "*kanyeleng*" groups from Sanimentereng, who were there and this was because they have been informed although maybe not in the way they should have but our apology.

I appreciate the expressions of appreciation in our efforts to rebrand The Gambia, to give Gambia a good image. But I want to assure Honourable Members that in our efforts to do so, we are not working through groups or through individuals or through what you may call public relations groups or what you may called lobby groups; we are not. We rebrand or create Gambia's image with our development partners, we talk to them directly, we talk to governments directly and there are no middle people. So, we can assure you that nobody of any shady character will be engaged by us in our effort to give The Gambia the image that it deserves.

Indeed the rebranding of the Gambia and image making of The Gambia should not lay surely with the Minister of External Affairs or the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We must recognize the fact that statements made on the floor of this Honourable House, can have very far reaching consequence and their interpretations and the way they are received by people outside the world can also have an effects on our image, it can also have an effect on what type of government we are and what type of society we want to build.

That of course reminds me of the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda; he is surprised about billboards carrying the former President's image, am not sure whether I have seen any such billboard or people putting on t-shirts carrying on the former President's portrait. One thing I am sure the Honourable Attorney General is a better person situated to make this clarification, but as far as the Minister of Foreign Affairs is concern, the status can have negative effect; we must realize that APRC is not been investigated, we must realize that it is President Jammeh currently who is been investigated and who knows whether his associates will also be a subject to investigation.

APRC as a political grouping and their Members can manifest their support for their party in a lawful way and this include putting on T-shirts and if we come to the House and say that we should take steps, we will be sending wrong signals to the world. We cannot do what APRC has done, we cannot beat people for putting on t-shirts just because they do not belong to the parties that fought through the ballot box to ensure that APRC political dominance comes to an end in this country. So, this is part of our rebranding and we must all join it together. We must in this House take postures that will really project The Gambia as the nation of tolerance, as the nation of all-inclusiveness.

And I want to appeal to Honourable Members that, we shall really take this responsibility together and say that the new Gambia is different from The Gambia pre-first December 2016 in that way. We can definitely say yes the new Gambia is here and it has come to stay.

Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member for Kiang Central, has raise the issues of large presence of Gambians in Italy. I quite agree but I believe apart from Spain, the largest concentration of Gambians in Europe is in Italy, this representation in Italy or where you have huge concentration for Gambians is certainly a matter that is receiving our urgent attention. But we have been thinking of the geographical location of Spain, Italy, France, Belgium and in all these places we have diplomatic representation. Is it really prudent at this state to open a full flagged embassy in Italy? Let say engaging our very serious consideration and my ministry is really working on the plan of really having a Consul General instead of a fully flagged embassy and I think the Consul General there could really attain to some of the problems that is engaging the attention of the Honourable Member for Kiang Central.

Now I agree and I do really apologise to everybody that some of my colleagues are absent, there are complain in accessibility but certainly I believe that with time this will not be a complain. I know of some Honourable Members who have people in there residency even up to 12:30 midnight attending to them and I know that there are Honourable Members who have been received by Ministers at awkward time and at different places under short notices and we will want to cultivate that amongst every Member of the cabinet, because after all as it is been stated; we work together, a National Assembly would have absolutely no value or without very little value if it does

not work hand-in-hand with the Executive and the Executive will also find it very difficult to function as an effective Executive if we do not have our doors open to the Members of the National Assembly and this might even minimize the incident of questions been sent in advance. Because if you can go to the Minister, have discussion with him on issues of concern that can really reduce the incident of asking question in the National Assembly.

Having said so, I just want with trepidation to really touch an issue, which does not fall within my portfolio, but just to say that I am aware of some donations, contributions to the flood victims of Kuntaur. And this year also off course donations where collected by individual groups who have really identify this area, probably because of their connections to the people and they have identified them, it might be that these were donations given to the government for distribution but they have not even handed this. I know of a situation where they have not even handed over this donation to the National Disaster Agency. They go to the community, meet the National Assembly Members and the Governor and hand these to the people of Kuntaur. So, we should really bear in mind that there may be issues or occasion, when people really donate not to the government to assist Kuntaur but they are donating to the people of Kuntaur, because maybe they say we come from Sami and we share the same border with Kuntaur or we come from Nianija because we share the same boarders with Niani.

Madam Speaker, it has been an honour for me to be here, am not sure if these are some of the matters raise in the debate. But I am sure the Attorney General will really deal with that in more elaborately. Certainly, it is not uncommon for part of an act of the National Assembly to come into operation different times, even though it has been assented by the President. To postpone the effective operation of an act of the National Assembly on the occurrence or on the signature of the Minister or of the President is not uncommon. So, is not really doing something that will appear to be unconstitutional, we do have it and it is not uncommon and it is supported by practise and as well by Judiciary matters but I think the Honourable Attorney General will certainly deal with that in a more elaborate form and I thank you and I hope I will continue to have fruitful engagement with you the Honourable Members of this august Assembly. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister, we appreciate your responses to the concerns raised by Honourable Members of this National Assembly.

May I now called on the Honourable Minister of Justice, if he wishes to partake and respond to the question touching on his portfolio? We hope that tomorrow, we will have more Ministers present at least in the morning when we start at 10 o'clock. Thank you.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE]:

Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I am not sure I have lot of comments to make but perhaps I will comment on the issue of APRC or perhaps t-shirts bearing the photo of the former President. I wish to do so by just drowning your attention to two constitutional provisions. Section 26 of the Constitution "the political rights", thus give every Gambia citizen of full age and capacity, the right without reasonable restrictions to take part in the conduct of public affairs directly or through fully choosing representatives. And then Section 33, which I think is more pertinent one, "protection from discrimination" and I refers specifically to 33 [1,3 &4].

33 [1] says; "All persons shall be equal before the law".

33 [2] says; "subject to the provision of subsection 5, no law shall make any provision, which is discriminatory, either of itself or in its effects".

And then subsection 4, goes on to defined discrimination "to mean affording and this is important as far as I am concern, affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property bars or other statues, whereby person of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restriction to which persons of another such description are not make subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description". Basically we can't afford to discriminate against any political party or groups or associations so long they are operating legally in this country, they have the freedom to manifest their political thought in whatever way they deem it fit in accordance with the constitution. So, that is the comment I wanted to make clear on that point.

I believe I heard the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs discuss the issue of the effective start date of the legislation, am afraid I stepped out briefly so, I must have missed that part and that was the sense I was trying to get from the Honourable Minister, while he was here when I was called upon. But perhaps when I left the chambers, the issue was brought up, I must have missed that. So, I want to be guided by Honourable Speaker, in this regard what must I do?

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Minister, I don't know who raise the issue or what specifically was the issues.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: It was not during adjournment debate anyway, but I think is the issue of whether, you can suspend particular legislation to be acted on at a later date rather than the date it was enacted. I think that was the issue that was raise.

HON. ABUBACARR BAA TAMBEDOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: I believe that was in relation to the effective start of the privilege requirement when I was moving the Bill. So, I will perhaps leave it at that. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: That was with regards to the Legal Practitioner's Amendment Bill. That is why, because I was thinking of intervention during the adjournment debate. Thank you very much Honourable.

May I call on Honourable Minister for Tourism Arts and culture?

HON. HAMAT BAH [MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE]: Madam Speaker, let me first of all extent my very special greetings to the Honourable Members of this House and to my very special colleagues, senior members of the coalition, my partners that when I see this House and I think of the scarifies; *[Emotions]*, *[Applause]*.

The great job and huge scarifies they have invested into this country in the last 24 months is the dividends that we enjoy today. *[Applause]* and that is the Member for Wuli West, Honourable Sidia S Jatta *[Applause]* and the Member for Serrekunda Constituency. Notwithstanding, the sacrifice of others, these are people I have worked

with closely during the most difficult time in the struggle to get to where we are today. Honourable gentlemen, you are part of the history, you will be remembered for ever. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I got the notification very late this morning,

POINT OF OBSERVATION

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Please! Madam Speaker, I like to remind....

THE SPEAKER: I will take it for the last time, if you ask for the floor I think the proper procedure is to wait for it to be given to you. You can go ahead.

HON. MAJANKO SAMUSA [NOMINATED]: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the Honourable Minister that during the hard times of the struggle, it was not only Honourable Sidia Jatta and Honourable Halifa Sallah, but Alagie Darboe of United Democratic Party, who on the 7th day of October, the first day meeting of the coalition 2016 and I Majanko Samusa, on this date....

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Nominated Member you have to listen to the chair, if you are raising a point of order, a point of order deal with procedural matters but the Honourable Minister has the exclusive prerogative to recognise anybody. And the recognition of x does not mean the exclusion of y, you know, it does not. So, I think I will allow the Honourable Minister to continue.

HON. HAMAT BAH [MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE]: Madam Speaker I got the notification this morning very late. But before I proceed, I want to say I shared the same cells with some of them in prison. And I have the right to choose and to say what I want to say, we are in the most democratic institution in this country.

When I got the notification this morning, I was obliged to cancel my engagements because I was in this august body when we suffered immensely in trying to bring Ministers to this National Assembly. It was a huge problem because in this constitution of the Second Republic, the clause for Members of Parliament to confirm Ministers

Appointment is absent. And I think we are among the few countries left with that. Any Minister appointed in most democracies, the National Assembly has a say, to say yes you can stay in the job or no you can go we would not confirm you.

And I think as we go on into our new democracy and of course with the new constitution we want to enact, the Assembly needs to be empowered because all these Ministers, all of us together whatever we do the justification has to come to the Assembly, for approval. I think is a learning process for all of us to work together. Our interest and the interest of His Excellency President, Adama Barrow and all members of his Government, is to build a democratic Gambia, democratic institution that nobody cannot abuse tomorrow and we cannot do it alone we have to do it together. So, I have hope in this august body and under the leadership of Honourable Speaker and her Deputy we can achieve that Honourable Members.

I would also like to beg your indulgence Honourable Speaker, issues have been raised that are not within my Ministry but I have knowledge of some of those issues and if you permit me I can throw light on them for the good of this country and for the ultimate good of the government of Adama Barrow.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Upper Nuimi talks about the Kunta Kinteh Island by extension all other islands and all other historical sites in this country. My Ministry realize that the issues of culture, arts has been neglected since independence and that is why Madam Speaker, during my question and answer session I recommended that a special select committee on art and culture be created by this august body. So that we can work together.

My Ministry has started engaging partners, first to make a complete survey of all the sites and engage development partners to restore these great assets that we are going to leave here and others will come and find them. And I can assure you Honourable Members, that we would not let any more historical site of this country disappear from our map, we are doing that.

I have engaged the American Ambassador who is very keen to support and help and again we have also engaged 2 other partners who are prepared to come and give support. But you cannot ask for support unless you make a total assessment of what you require, what you need, what needs to be done in these places. And that is

another element that we have to try to work on. But with a committee in place, we can collaborate and work together; use the expertise of some of you, I know that the NCAC has been inviting some Members to be attending their meetings and support who are very much familiar with the writers' problem and so many things. I think one of them they always used is the Honourable Member for Wuli East, who has attended most of their meetings, because he has expressed, key interest in making sure that some of these things are addressed.

So, we will work together with this august body to make sure that we protect and preserve these historical sites for the good of our country. That much I can guarantee him.

Nuimi is the next stage of the tourism development area and be rest assured that we have got cabinet approval in the changes of our policy towards the issues of land and we hope to generate necessary funds to make sure that they are reinvested in the infrastructure throughout this country, particularly the Lower Nuimi and the Upper Nuimi sites. Because that is where you have roots, James Island and we will do what it takes to support the process there and get to where we are going.

But I want to tell the Honourable Member also, don't make the mistake, root festival does not belong to you, it belongs to The Gambian nation [Applause]. It belongs to this country. We are evaluating the entire root festival; we believe it was meant only to spend money because we have not seen much dividends in it. Therefore, we need to completely restructure and transform this festival, to make sure it brings something to this country. Is very easy to invite people, stay in hotels, jamboree, enjoy yourself, at the end of the day what does it bring to The Gambian People? If you use taxpayers' money, there must be a return for it and we are evaluating this so that we will have a different root festival that would give us what this country needs, that is positive results.

I attended a similar one that they are just starting in Ivory Coast, I was privileged to see what happened there and I believe we can learn from others and I also believe that our Ministry has come to bring back the National Troop that was disbanded by the former APRC group. Where other tribe's culture were being negated, only one side was being promoted, we believe we should have a national character in what we do,

every ethnic group have the right to share representation. And again in that process we would like to work with the Assembly, each and every one of you come from different part of The Gambia and it is only fair that everybody has a say and it is represented in that National Troop.

And we also plan Madam Speaker, to have – National Youth's Cultural Festival this is the only country where you cannot find a National Youth's Cultural Festival, where we can gather all the cultural talent of this country and expose them for the world to see. We are small but we are great in what we have and we must make sure that we take good use of that and I said we cannot do this as a Ministry, as a Government alone, we need the support of this august body so that we can work on it.

Madam Speaker as a result of my promised, my Ministry has written to the Clerk of the Assembly to select somebody to join us in one of our trips to Europe in November, so I think it is important that the National Assembly Members accompany Ministers in certain special meetings so that they can know what is happening and when they come back to this august body, they can report accurately to the body because I may write a report that may not reflect what you have experienced and I think this is something we may need to encourage across the board. We cannot select anybody, it is not our right to select who comes and who goes, but it is our right to request that Members of the select committee, if we can afford one or two, we write and request your good office to do the selection and that we will continue that policy.

The Member for Central Baddibu talks about Eco-Tourism, be rest assured that Eco-Tourism is at centre stage of all policies and programs of our Ministry and we will do what it takes to make sure tourism get to everybody. Although we have suffered, the destruction of our forest cover in the last two years is unprecedented in the history of this country. It still happen based on our shared greed I would call it, the most prestigious, the most important trees that survived for hundred years, where taken off within minutes and hours only to see them out of the borders of this country, people generating thousands of dollars when Gambians where getting nothing. Our youth should have been helped to develop a strong furniture industry that we need in our tourism sector, that we need for ourselves, we were deprived of that right. This government is out to restored that, but if you destroy your forest cover, your Eco-tourism is death. It is therefore our responsibility as Members to restore our forest

cover for the good of our children and those yet unborn because they need to come and see.

Madam Speaker, somebody talks about river transport, the Member for Central Baddibu, during my consultation with development partners to invest in what we called a river steamer that takes tourist throughout this country up to Fatoto round about. I met partners who are interested to bring boats, big ones that could employ over 200 Gambians or so. But they said to me look, in your country, we have been there and what we have realized is that the last survey of your Gambia River was 1942; they told me in Europe where I was having a meeting and I did not argue because you never know where they got their facts, you have to be very careful.

When I came back here Madam Speaker, I wrote to the Gambia Port Authority, Ministry of Works; I got the reply that the last survey was 1941, 1941 was the last time we had the survey of The Gambia River. You think any insurance company would insure a board to come and cruise in the river that was last surveyed in 1941? No insurance company will insure that and if they don't have the insurance you cannot board the people on board. Now what do we do? The select committee and others should now engage them to make sure that there is a contract awarded, the funds are raised to have a fresh survey of our river. That we can now promote our country for river transportation.

So, it is important that – yes, we talk about river transport but people need to invest their monies where they think they can get returns in their investment and this is key. And you cannot allow your tourists to get into the boats that are not insured, this government will not allow it and nobody will allow it to happen. So, river transport, there is lot of efforts that are going on but I think the serious ones will get to research everything before they come in and I am sure we have people who are serious and ready to come on board. Let's hope that we can resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

The Member for Lower Nuimi, talks about the island. I have already responded to that, we do not need to go back to that and he talked about stakeholders to be consulted in our all year round tourism, I think this country had been let down by many people

who called themselves knowledgeable in tourism, experts in tourism by just sitting down making memo's or writing letters in newspapers.

We started tourism 52 years ago or even more, I said it here before, is easy to sit on a table and write something and send it to a newspaper, pretend that you know and some of these people are those who drove some of our major key players in this country at the time. When 'all-inclusive' came here, they started writing everywhere, campaigning that 'all-inclusive' should leave this country not thinking about the jobs of Gambian youths, not thinking about the tax revenue that government will get towards our development. They were sent out of this country, they went to Cape Verde. Now Cape Verde has 800,000 tourists, Gambia after 50 something years we are still at 150.

Let me repeat it again, be careful of those who tell you we are stakeholders. The genuine stakeholders are investing heavily and respected, the likes of- I don't want to name names- but I would tell you the proprietors of Djembah, the like of Omar Jawara, and Malick Sallah, I can name them, respected internationally today. And they are investing heavily into the tourism sector. And this are genuine stakeholders, they don't sit in the office and write.

We must be careful of critics for the sake of criticism because they want something that you did not give to them and they start writing. Nobody blackmails me as far as am concern. I will engage any genuine Gambian or non-Gambian who is interested in furthering the very interest of this sectors. And I can assure you that I don't want to name, there are people I have called, I have never known them in my life, I called them because we are trying to recruit people, they were shocked that I called them; I said am calling you because you have the knowledge and I have read about what you are doing, you are intelligent and this country needs you. That's the type of work I do. But I don't touch people because they write and they want to be recognized, they use all strategies to be recognized, to be made important when they cannot deliver. When they are those who in fact make us suffer. So, be careful of who you called a stakeholder, be watchful. We will engage anybody that we believe is of interest and important to this country.

Madam Speaker, somebody talks about the issues of commodities, if you allow me I would say that to be honest and to be sincere to the Barrow government, commodities have gone down immensely compared to what it was. Let me give you an example, there was an investor who came to this country, before what used to obtain, when you are a Gambian, you get involve in the sectors, and they will go and import huge and flood the system. You will not sell, when you lose your money they wipe you out of the market and then they come back and put the price up. This country is lucky to have somebody and I want Honourable Members to go and visit the facilities, is important.

He imported onions, Irish potatoes which we should not be importing now, we should be producing that in The Gambia. Most unfortunately we are still importing it, we should not. Importing vegetable oil, importing sugar and they went on and brought the prize down as if they were going to finish this guy. You know what, last week this guy ordered cooler containers that can keep these products for one year and every day the price is coming down. So, if somebody says is going up I want to defer, because the facts are there and I can ask you to go and see, nobody ever though that somebody can think of fighting this cartel, to break them to make sure that we start enjoying cheap basic commodity in this country.

The Barrow government has brought that I can assured you that if you go next to the Eco-Bank at Jimpex, the massive stores and the containers are there all full to capacity. The guy can sell for the next one year all this product, noting will affect them. So, if you reduce your price and think that you will finish these people you are going to finish yourself. So be rest assured that the price of commodities is coming down considerably. And that is my statement in this house, you have the right to meet them but sometimes you have to measure them because people are also doing what they have to do. They are doing their work Madam Speaker for the information of the Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji talks about the health centre, electricity, whatever, I think to be honest, I can confirm to you that the Ministry of Energy is working on a plan to put solar in all the health centre and schools in the Gambia. I think these plans are almost at an advance stage. This I can confirm. Am giving you authoritative source. Yes! Plans are on the way not even to connect them with NAWEC

but to give them solar throughout this country, the Barrow regime is ready and it will soon be on and you will definitely see it soon. You will not have the issue of electricity anymore in the Health Centres and Schools throughout this country.

Madam Speaker, the issues of water was in cabinet last week, this has to do with the water pumps and I think the Ministry of Energy has taken measures. Tallinding was mentioned particularly because I think depending on the place that you live and the nature of the setup of Tallinding, when light goes off, when there is a problem with the light before it comes back it takes time. But Fajara and couple of other places, I can assure you that the Minister has taken measures to address the situation of water in your area, be rest assured that it will be over.

The gentleman who talks about Ndonkoroba, when I was on tour with the President, it came up as an issue and if you will confirm, the Minister of Health has sent some doctors to this health centre. [Interruption]

Madam Speaker, a lot of things are ongoing on, we inherited a broken system, is our responsibility as Members to educate the people to be patient. What was here 52 years, this government cannot fix it in one year. And it's our role to educate the public to tell them what we are doing because they must understand that. When we came to power, we have complete relationship broken with international communities. We are not with the World Bank, we are not with the IMF, we are not with any other external institution, it took us time to restore that and now that has been restored. Now Madam Speaker, the International Community is focusing on Gambia, everybody is coming to support us. I can assure you in the next few months to come you will see some very positive development in all the areas you are talking about.

I understand the pressure you are faced with; Members of Parliament must be obliged to raise issues that concern their constituency. But in doing so, we should not insinuate the people to believe that nothing is been done. That is why I defer with you, you can raise your issues but raise them in a manner not to project that nothing is been done by this government. Because we are doing what it takes, we started from zero and today [Interruption].

Madam Speaker, I advise the Honourable Member to liaise with the Minister, am sure she is back, liaise with her for some of your problems. If you have difficulty with the statement I made here, come back to me.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Minister, Honourable Member as I indicated the last time, Point of Order deals with procedural matter, the Minister is on his feet, if you have something substantial when it is your turn you can raise it up. But really we cannot be interrupted.

HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]: But Honourable Speaker Am been misquoted.

HON. HAMAT BAH [MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE]: Madam Speaker, the Member for Kantora, I want to defer with you regarding gambling, this afternoon I confirmed \$1.3 Million Dollars investment before I came to this body. I want to create jobs, gambling has nothing to do with thieves, if you want to be a thief, you can be a thief, been a teacher, been a doctor or anything else Madam Speaker. I want to defer with this gentleman on that. We are here to create jobs and will create the job, this afternoon I want to confirm to you \$1.3 Million dollars and another \$1.2 million dollars on the way to make sure that we have these centres to create jobs for our youth. They have the right to gamble, Don't classify gamblers as thieves and criminals Madam Speaker, and I do not think is fair and I think you owe it to them to withdraw that statement for the records.

On a final note Madam Speaker, the gentleman talks about the chairs at the university, I am reliably informed by somebody that the Ministry of Higher Education show it himself and he has taken steps. Somebody has come in to support and to provide the chairs and he is now on the process of giving the order for these chairs to be provided for the university students. That is the information I can tell you on that Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by thanking you, you learn very fast. It is not easy to handle people of such diverse intelligence, knowledge, and experience together. I can tell you that I watch the deliberations of this august body and I am very proud

with Members. But again as I said, our efforts to make you comfortable in this House should continue. I have realized some things that needs to be adjusted, when we are private together I will work on it to see what best we can do to improve on it.

On this note Madam Speaker once again, I thank all of you for your attention. It is my pleasure. *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: On behalf of both sides of the House and indeed on my own behalf, I also say a very big thank you to the Honourable Minister for all the responses, the clarifications made and I am sure the Honourable Members appreciate and now understand most of the issues.

In addition, I want to inform this august Assembly that the Honourable Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture has fulfilled his promised and commitment, I think he made a commitment here 2 days ago that they will make sure that Members of the National Assembly accompany them when they go on trade fairs. So, I was pleasantly surprised this morning going through the mail folder when I saw the letter asking for nominations from the relevant select committee to be included in the delegation going to the Trade Fairs. And I think that is very practical, very pragmatic, proactive and I think that is how things should work.

There has been concerns raised that National Assembly Members don't usually attended meetings of States when most of the issues discuss there will eventually come back to the National Assembly, Which I think is right. The relevant select committees should accompany the Ministry going on foreign mission so that they would have first-hand information and when they come back, they will report to this Honourable august body.

And on that note, I think this is a convenient point for us to adjourn the sitting with regard to the adjournment debate till tomorrow Friday, 6th of October to continue the adjournment debate at 10:00 AM.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

***[That the House stand adjourned until tomorrow Friday 06th October 2017
@10:00pm]***