

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

[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

4TH SITTING OF THE 1ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE 6TH LEGISLATURE

National Assembly Proceedings of

Thursday, 5th March 2026

LAYING OF PAPERS & REPORTS, MOTION, & BILLS

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1. **Prayers**

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

[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Seedy S.K. Njie, Read the Prayers.]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The Assembly was called to Order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, at this point, I think we will go straight to the corrections and approval of the Record of Votes and Proceedings.

Clerk, you may proceed.

2. Corrections and Approval of the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday, 4th March 2026

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday, 4th March 2026, is before us for corrections and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move that the said Record of Votes and Proceedings be considered and approved? Yes, Nominated Member Fatou K. Jawara, you have the floor.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I rise to move that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sittings of Wednesday, 4th March 2026, be considered and adopted.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Member for Jimara.

HON ESSA CONTEH [JIMARA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: It has been moved ans seconded, so I now put the question.

[Question Proposed]

Any corrections or observational issues Honourable Members may observe can do so by show of tags, and we will look at the records page by page, beginning with Page 1.

Honourable Members, on Page 1, Page 2, Page 3, Page 4, and Page 5. Honourable Members, let us move to Page 6. Yes, Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Just an explanation on the line under the speaker, Honourable Speaker delivered a ruling. So, he said, 'Honourable Speaker, delivered a considered ruling'. So, I do not know why they put 'considered ruling'. Why not just say ruling? And the ruling is explained. Do you have considered ruling and not ruling?

THE SPEAKER: It should be ruling.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: So, you just say ruling?

THE SPEAKER: Ruling, yes. Honourable Member for Wuli East, I am informed that it is correct as it is to differentiate between the rulings that we do often and the… You know, we make ruling daily, and this one was considered because I took time at least 48 hours or 72 hours and then delivered the ruling. So, they said it is considered and it should be published. Thank you.

Is that okay? Yes, Member for Lower Saloum. Honourable Members of Lower Saloum and Upper Saloum, this is not about neighbour here. Yes, I saw you Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes, we just wanted to get some clarification here.

THE SPEAKER: 'We'? You and who?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Me and him. Honourable Speaker, you know, if you look at Page 5, you see the following Members were absent with permission. I see, Honourable Fabakary Tombong Jatta, the Speaker, and I keep asking who gave him permission?

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members. Honourable Member, you would remember that there was a time, I am not sure whether it was you or not, but someone asked about it, and I said "I gave him permission". Of course, you know that. Yes, yes. I warn two of you when I was coming. Do you remember, I told the Member for Tallinding to warn you people? Go and ask the Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

Can we move to Page 7? Yes, Member for Sanimentereng

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. On Page 7, Question Number 003, having gone through the sentence, I have seen that the answer was partly answered. And I keep asking myself, why would the question be partly answered when I think it was fully answered by the Vice President. Are you with me, Honourable Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I am in line with you. Go ahead, please.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: I said on Question 003…

THE SPEAKER: It should be answered.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: It should be fully answered. I think the Vice President fully answered the question and this was agreed by the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Yes. You know, a question is asked whether the Minister or the Vice President referred or not, he has answered. That is the answer he gave. So, it was answered. It is not partial; it cannot be partially answered. It was answered.

Member for Lower Saloum, you have the floor. Okay, Member for Wuli East, … The Member for Sanimentereng observed, and we said that it should be answered. So, delete 'partially'. Yes, Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: And wherever it is because it is in two places.

THE SPEAKER: Wherever it is. Member for Wuli East, thank you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes. In Page 7, there is one where you have the following questions. There is an article "the" before His Excellency. So, I think we need to remove that.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, like the other day. I think they need to look at that. "Answered by 'the' His Excellency". But it should be by his Excellency. Can we move to… The Member for Sami, you have the floor.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Number 2, Page 7, "the following questions and number of supplementary questions were asked and answered by…" There is nothing said…

THE SPEAKER: On Number 2?

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Yes, Number 2.

THE SPEAKER: "The following questions and number of supplementary questions were asked and answered by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Water Resources." What is the problem?

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: You know, he was asked a question and supplementary questions, but that does not feature here.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sami, read where you are reading. Can you repeat it? Read it. No, use your mic. Can we move to Page 8, now? Yes, Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, question Number 008.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: It says: "he ask a question and generated 'no supplementary questions'".

THE SPEAKER: Which number?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: We just limit ourselves to "question" instead of 'questions'. "No question". It is okay.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Sanimentereng.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Yes. I concur with him, but then 'no supplementary questions'. I think the 's' should be deleted to maintain question. Had it been there were series of questions, you know, we could have added "s**"** but there is no question. I think 's' should be deleted. No supplementary question instead of questions.

THE SPEAKER: You know, this one here. They are just explaining to the reader what would have been anticipated. After the main question, supplementary questions were expected. But you know, it could be 1, 2, or up to 7. So, because of that, either way is correct. It generated no supplementary question or questions. It is correct. Any other on Page 8? No, we are not debating this.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Yes, Speaker. Page 8.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kiang West. On another issue,

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Page 8.

THE SPEAKER: Not the same issue. Please, do not bring the same issue.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Please, Page 8. There is no ruling. What is the ruling?

THE SPEAKER: I did.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: We are in corrections of records…

THE SPEAKER: You are alone.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: I am not alone. What I am saying is her amendment. It is correct that it generated no supplementary question. You said we are anticipating the number of supplementary questions that would have been asked if there were. But even one of all those you have anticipated was not asked. It has generated no supplementary question. That is, what is correct. It is grammar and what is she amending is what is correct. You cannot say no supplementary questions.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, can we move to Page 9? Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes. On the suspension and resumption of the Assembly, I see two seconds there.

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members. I recognise the Member for Wuli East. Do not call my name,

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I said under*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No, it is an offence. Member for Wuli East, you have the floor now.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I am saying it should be… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: I cannot hear you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: It should be "30 seconds" not '2 seconds'. The break we took; you announced 30 seconds, not 2 seconds. Have you seen it?

THE SPEAKER: Member for Wuli East, you are right that it was "30 seconds". Yes, next.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Question Number 051 was asked, answered and generated 5 supplementary questions.

THE SPEAKER: Question Number 051, second to last item on the page?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, it generated 5 questions.

THE SPEAKER: Majority Leader, Deputy and your people, please that… suspend it. No, go to the lounge. After Member for Wuli East, then Member for Lower Fulladu West.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: 051 should be 5 supplementary questions. We should add an "s" to the question. Have you seen it?

THE SPEAKER: Yes. You are right, Honourable Member for Wuli East. It should be questions; an "s" should be added. Honourable Members, order! Please, lessen your noise. Can we move to Page 10? Honourable Members, Page 10.

I will now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday, 4th March 2026, be approved with amendments.]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I wish to recognise the presence of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Lamin Samateh, and of course, a good number of officials. I understand we have some Permanent Secretaries and other public and civil service officials here in present. You are most welcome and Ramadan Mubarak, to all of you.

Honourable Members, order. Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 14[3], I am going to vary the Order Paper and allow the Honourable Minister of Health to perform his duties before us this morning. In accordance with Order 14[3], I hereby vary the Order Paper.

Clerk, the Minister of Health.

3. Bill:

i. **First Reading of the 'Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Bill, 2026' in accordance with Order 65** *[By the Hon. Minister of Health]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 65, only the First Reading of the 'Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Bill, 2026' will be done today.

Therefore, I will now invite the Honourable Minister of health, the person in charge of the Bill, to hand over a copy of the Bill to the Clerk of the National Assembly who will read aloud the short title upon which the Bill shall be deemed to have been read a first time. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

'Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Bill, 2026'

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Bill has been read a first time. The next stage of the 'Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Bill, 2026' is appointed for Thursday, 12th March 2026, for the person in charge of the Bill to move a motion for the Second Reading in accordance with Order 66[2], which reads and I quote: *"At the conclusion of the proceedings on the First Reading or on any subsequent stage of a bill, the next stage may be taken either forthwith or upon a day to be named, provided that Second Reading shall be taken no sooner than one working day after First Reading*."

Honourable Minister, thank you very much. You can go now. Clerk, we may proceed.

[Motion!]

THE SPEAKER: There is a motion from the Member for Lower Fulladu West.

HON BAKARY KORA [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Yes. I am moving on the motion under Order 53[k]: *"A motion agreed by the Speaker to be of a matter of urgency."*

I am asking for a stand down of 10 minutes because we have urgent internal issues that we need to discuss. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Order. Honourable Member for Foni Kansala,

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Why are you calling my name?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order! There is a motion moved by the Member for Lower Fulladu West and the motion agreed by the Speaker. Please, Order. Honourable Members, order.

I am not aware of the motion. Why is he moving the motion? I do not know why… Member for lower Fulladu. Order, Honourable Members. Honourable Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana, Member for Tallinding,
Member for Jarra Central, Member for Jeshwang, Member for Janjanbureh, Member for Basse, Member for Serekunda, Member for Kiang West, please take your seats. Majority Leader, please take your seat. Member for Niani, take your seat. Member for Jeshwang.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Speaker, why do you hold this session?

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order! Honourable Members, order, please. Honourable Members, order! Honourable Members, order, please. Can I hear from the Member for Lower Fulladu West? Please, Member for Lower Fulladu West. Yes.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: I rise up to withdraw my motion. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Clerk, let us proceed.

Laying of Papers and Reports:

Report of the Joint Committee of Public Appointments and Human Rights Standing Committees on 'Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025'

[Motion]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, there is a motion from the Member for Jarra Central. Can we hear that motion?

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I rise in accordance with Orders 53[e] and 68[2] of the Standing Orders to move that the bill entitled 'Intellectual Property Bill, 2025' be committed to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Lower Fulladu West.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the motion has been moved and seconded. I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the 'Intellectual Property Bill, 2025' be committed to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.]

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order from the Honourable Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, Order 17[f], yes. Majority Leader is unseeingly interrupting the National

Assembly. A member moved a motion. While you put a question, the Majority Leader was going around disturbing the Assembly. Can you put him to order? Honourable Speaker, you confirm it; it is correct.

THE SPEAKER: Order! Order! Order! Order sustained. Member for Basse. Member for Basse.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Speaker, Member for Basse has not done anything wrong. You are the one in favour of what these people are*... [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Order! Order! Please, sit down. Honourable Members, order. Honourable Members, order. Honourable Member for Basse and others.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Speaker, point of order Speaker. Point of order. Point of order. Speaker, point of order. Honourable Speaker, point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Honourable Members, please order. Let us take our various seats. Members, please take your seats. Members, please, let me address all of us.

Honourable Members, we have processes and procedures in this National Assembly, and we are guided by the Standing Orders. If Members disagree, we can do that with decorum and with respect. We should stop shouting at one other. If you do not agree and you want to move a motion, you know what to do. You want to stand on a point of order; you know what to do.

So please, in the circumstances, I think Members should address themselves. I am not sure whether it will be a caucus of the whole Assembly for the two leaders can engage their camps, but I want Members to solve this problem.

Minority Leader and Member for Brikama north.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, I am giving… please, please.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Honourable Speaker, Minority Leader is not saying anything. We are to vote. Minority Leader is not saying anything. We are going to vote. We supposed to vote.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: National Assembly is guided by procedure. Honourable Member for Lower Fulladu West raised a motion without… 53[k], permissible by the Speaker. And you very well recall that you are not even aware of what his motion is about. And then he went further to withdraw what he intends to move as a motion. If there is no motion on the table, I do not think there is any push and pull. The Speaker controlled the Assembly. Let the business continue. There is no motion, and let the business continue.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, motion. Honourable Speaker, motion. Honourable Speaker, by the submission of the Minority Leader, there was a motion on the on the floor. The motion raised by Kebba Jallow, you understand, as a member of ABC committee to commit a bill to the Committee of the Whole Assembly or a

committee. This is the problem between Members of the National Assembly. There is already a motion on the floor of the Assembly. And again, you should now be looking for a seconder of the motion. So, we continue.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you know where we stopped. And where we stopped is where we are going to continue unless and until there is permissible interruption in accordance with the law. If there is a permissible interruption, we will go ahead with the permissible interruption now. If there is no permissible interruption, we continue from where we stopped on the voting. If there is a permissible interruption, we will deal with that permissible interruption and then come back to where we are. Yes, Majority Leader.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Motion on the floor, please. There is a motion, Speaker, please.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you see. Order, Honourable Members. Honourable Members, there can only be few permissible interruptions. Point of order, a motion, clarification, observation, we know

these things. We know the processes. We are now in the voting process, but any Member who has a permissible interruption can do so if not, we continue. Yes, Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the floor. I understand that a motion has been moved by the Member for Central Baddibu, but because of series of consultations as you have seen me

crisscrossing between my desk and the Minority Leader and Member for Brikama North. We are doing some engagement.

However, because of the issues at hand, I would advise that the Member for Jarra Central withdraw his motion. I want to move a motion for him to stand down for 20 minutes. He will do it. Procedurally, he can withdraw it. No, no, no. The mover of the motion can withdraw his motion, and we now move a motion for standout. Yes, he will do it. I am not…, but he can do it. So, allow him to withdraw his motion.

Honourable Speaker, allow the Member to withdraw his motion as he is a Member of ABC. It is him. Yes, please. Yes, I agree with you. He is a Member of ABC, so he can withdraw his motion.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, now… Honourable Members, I said the 'Ayes' have it.

[Division!]

THE SPEAKER: Yes, division is called, please. All right. Let us vote.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Honourable Speaker, you said anybody who has observation.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we are going to vote on this one. After this, I am going to stand down. I will suspend the Assembly because you are not giving me the opportunity to continue proceedings.

Honourable Members, those in favour of the motion for the ABC to commit the 'Intellectual Property Bill, 2025' to the Committee of the Whole Assembly, raise your tags. Those in favour, raise your tags.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Yes, there is a point of order. Honourable Member, before you raise a point of order, can you allow me to finish this?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, allow us to vote, then you can come. Honourable Members, those in favour, please raise your tags. Honourable Members. Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 13, I hereby suspend the Assembly for 30 minutes. The Assembly is suspended for 30 minutes.

Assembly Proceedings Suspended

Assembly Proceedings Resumed

THE SPEAKER: The Assembly now resumes, and we will continue from where we stopped. Honourable Members, welcome back.

Clerk, can we continue from where we stopped?

- **Laying Papers and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: We were voting on the 'Intellectual Property Bill, 2025'. So, that is where we are going to continue from. Yes, we have to vote.

Honourable Members, there was a division on the 'Intellectual Property Bill, 2025' on a motion raised by the Member for Jarra Central which was seconded for it to be committed to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.

Those in favour of that motion, please raise your tags. The Intellectual Property Bill. Those in favour of the Intellectual Property Bill.

Honourable Members, order! We are going to continue from where we stopped. Those in favour of the referral of the 'Intellectual Property Bill, 2025' to the Committee of the Whole Assembly, please raise your tags. Those not in favour of the bill to be referred to the Committee of the Whole Assembly, raise your tags. And those abstaining, please raise your tags. Honourable Members, the results are as follows: the **'Ayes'** = **5**; the **'Nos'** = **18** and **Abstentions** = **0**. The motion is lost.

[Motion!]

THE SPEAKER: There is a motion from the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Order 53[e] and 68[2] of the Standing Orders, I rise to move that the bill entitled 'The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [Amendment] Bill, 2025' be committed to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: It has been moved by the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda and seconded by a member of the ABC. So, I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That 'The Gambia Investment & Export Promotion Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2025' be committed to the of the Committee of the Whole Assembly.]

Clerk, let us proceed.

[Motion!]

THE SPEAKER: There is a motion by the Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. Honourable Speaker, in accordance with the Orders 53[e] and 68[2] of the Standing Orders, I rise to move that the bill entitled 'Communications Bill, 2025' be committed to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Any second? Yes, Member for Kiang Central.

HON YUNUSA N. BAH [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: The motion *by the Member for Lower Saloum and member of the ABC* has been moved and seconded, so I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the 'Communications Bill, 2025' to be referred to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.]

[Division!]

There is division and so we vote. Those in favour of the motion for the 'Communication Bill, 2025' to be referred to the Committee of the Whole Assembly, please raise your tags; those not in favour, raise your tags; those abstaining, raise your tags.

Here are the results: ***'Ayes'*** = **16**, ***'Nos'*** = **5**, and ***Abstention*** = **0**. The 'Ayes' have it. The Bill is, therefore, referred to the Committee of the Whole Assembly.

Clerk, let us proceed.

4. Laying of Papers and Reports:

i. **Report of the Joint Committee of Public Appointments and Human Rights Standing Committees on Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025** *[By the Hon. Chairperson]*

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Chair. Please, Co-Chair.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I rise to lay the Report of the Joint Committee of Human Rights & Constitutional Matters Committee, and Committee on Public Appointments on*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Yes. That is on the prerogative of mercy. Yes, please. Yes. Please, go ahead.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I rise to table the Report of the Joint Committee of Human Rights & Constitutional Matters Committee, and the Public Appointments Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025.

Honourable Speaker, ***acknowledgement***, the Joint Committee expresses its appreciation to the National Assembly for the confidence reposed in it to scrutinise the 'Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025'. The Joint Committee conveys its gratitude to Honourable Alhagie Mbow, member of the Committee and sponsor of the Bill for presenting and clarifying the policy rationale and legislative intent underpinning the proposed legislation.

The Committee further acknowledged the valuable submission and technical assistance provided by the Office of the President, the Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's Chambers and the National Human Rights Commission. The Committee particularly recognised the National Human Rights Commission for its right-based observation, which assists the Committee in strengthening safeguards relating to fairness, transparency and non-discrimination.

It also commended the technical staff for their diligence in coordinating stakeholders' engagements, preparing briefing materials and supporting the clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Bill.

Introduction: The National Assembly at its Sitting of 11th July, 2025 considered the 'Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025' tabled by the Committee on the Human Rights and Constitutional Matters and the Committee on

Public Appointments for scrutiny and report in accordance with the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, 2019.

The Bill seeks to provide a legal framework and guidance for the exercise of the Prerogative of Mercy by President pursuant to Section 82 of the Constitution and to provide criteria for the composition, powers, functions and Secretariat of the Committee on the Exercise of Prerogative of Mercy together with a petition process and related administrative matters.

In discharging its ***mandate***, the Committee examined the Bill with particular regard to constitutional compliance, human rights safeguards, legal clarity, enforceability, institutional design, implication for appointments, and public accountability.

Honourable Speaker, the mandate of the Committee… Prerogative of Mercy Bill 2025, a Private Member's Bill, tabled by Honourable Alhagie Mbow was referred to the Joint Committee of Human Rights and Constitutional Matters Committee and the Committee on Public Appointments pursuant to the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

In accordance with the relevant Standing Orders, the Joint Committee:

- conduct stakeholders' consultation, including the receipt of written and oral evidence;
- scrutinise the provision of the Bill for constitutional compliance, legal soundness and policy coherence;
- report to the Assembly the findings and recommendations, including proposed amendments.

Honourable Speaker, ***methodology***, during the review of the Bill, the Joint Committee adopted a structured and evidence-based approach as follows:

- Preliminary briefing from the sponsor of the Bill outlining the policy objectives, constitutional foundation under Section 82 of the Constitution and the internal operational framework;
- Consultation with the stakeholders to seek their valuable opinions;
- Review of documents and position papers presented by the invited stakeholders;
- Convene validation meeting where Honourable Members and support staff of the Committee review various submissions;
- further scrutinise the clauses, and prepared and validated the report.

Honourable Speaker, we will leave the proceeding and scrutiny until during the consideration, then we can come up with the recommendations that we have as a committee.

So, Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, the Joint Committee supports the policy direction of the 'Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025' mainly to provide clarity and structure the petition and the work of the Committee on the exercise of mercy while recognising the constitutional nature of the President's prerogative.

However, the Committee recommends that the Bill be adopted subject to technical and substantive amendments highlighted above, particularly those relating to constitutional cross reference, drafting, consistency, terminology and effect of pardon.

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, the members of the Joint Committee are:

1. Honourable Madi M.K. Ceesay - Chairperson, Human Rights
2. Honourable Sulayman Jammeh - Chairperson, Public Appointments
3. Honourable Omar Darboe - Vice Chairperson
4. Honourable Seedy S.K. Njie - Vice Chairperson
5. Honourable Fatoumatta Njai - Member
6. Honourable Alhagie Mbow - Member
7. Honourable Muhamed Kanteh - Member
8. Honourable Kebba T. Sanneh - Member
9. Honourable Suwaibou Touray - Member
10. Honourable Yahya Sanyang - Member
11. Honourable Fatou Cham - Member
12. Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay - Member
13. Honourable Bakary K. Badjie - Member
14. Honourable Birom J.S. Sowe - Member

Subject Matter Specialist:

1. Miss Haddy Jabbi

The Support Staff of the Committee:

1. Mr. Marabi S. Hydara - Director of Committee Secretariat
2. Mr. Sainey Konteh - Director of Table Office
3. Mr. Mamadu A.M. Bah - Senior Assistant Committee Clerk
4. Mr. Tony F. Mendy - Senior Table Clerk
5. Ms. Isatou Sonko - Committee Clerk
6. Ms. Fatou Sanyang - Table Clerk
7. Ms. Mary T. Mendy - Research Officer

8. Ms. Mam Boye Singhateh - Table Clerk
9. Ms. Sainabou Ceesay - Assistant Table Clerk
10. Ms. Yama - Intern

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I rise to second motion.

THE SPEAKER: I now put the question.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members, those of you who may wish to take part in the debate may do so now by show of tag.

May I now call upon the Member to, of course, thank his colleagues?

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. On behalf of the Joint Committee, we want to thank the Members of the whole Assembly for at least understanding the prerogative of mercy and you, the Speaker as well as the entire staff and equally the stakeholders who were with us to ensure that their opinions as far as the bill is concerned are sought.

Equally also, we want to sincerely thank the sponsor of the Bill, Honourable Mbow, Member for Upper Saloum for coming up with this Bill, and I think it is important. If it is passed, it will really address some of these issues.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: So, I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this Honourable Assembly do adopt the Report of the Joint Committee of Public Appointments and Human Rights Standing Committees on the 'Prerogative of Mercy Bill, 2025'.]

Clerk, we may proceed.

ii. **Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture's Study Visit to SONACOS Groundnut Processing Factories in Senegal** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: I understand it is the Vice Chairperson who will table it. Yes, Member for Foni Brefet.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. ***Acknowledgement***: The Committee would like to thank the Office of the Speaker, Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly and the Managing Director of the National Food Security, Processing and Marketing Cooperation for facilitating this benchmarking exercise. We would also like to thank the Honourable Members and clerk of the Committee for their active participation, insightful questions and engagement during the study visit.

The Committee further expresses gratitude to the Government of Senegal for creating an enabling environment that allowed the Committee to observe and learn from SONACOS operational practice and also to the

SONACOS management and staff for their warm reception, detail briefing and patient explanation during the guided tour.

Introduction: The Select Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the National Assembly undertook a study visit to the Groundnut Marketing and Processing Facilities of Société Nationale de Commercialization de Origin de Senegal [SONACOS] factory in Kaolack, which is the largest groundnut processing facility in Senegal playing a central role in national oilseed processing and marketing in the Republic of Senegal.

The visit form part of the Committee's oversight and learning mandate to embark best practice in groundnut value chain development, Agro processing and marketing system relevant to The Gambia. The groundnut sector remains a critical pillar of rural livelihood, food security and export earning in The Gambia. SONACOS, as a leading regional actor in oilseed commercialisation and processing, was identified as strategic learning site.

The study was conducted from Tuesday 13th to Friday 16th January 2026 and was undertaken in line with memorandum of understanding signed between the National Food Security, Processing and Marketing Corporation of The Gambia and SONACOS in Senegal in March 2025.

The visit was consistent with the objective of regional cooperation and integration within ECOWAS's framework, particularly in the areas of border trade. It provides members of the Committee with an opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge on groundnut processing, value addition

and marketing system through direct engagement with SONACOS officials and site visit to processing and marketing facilities.

The main objectives of the study tour are to:

- provide members of the Committee with practical exposure to ground processing and marketing operations at SONACOS;
- learn about farmers engagement model, practicing mechanism and quality control standards, access value addition by product utilisation and export strategy;
- examine institutional, technical and commercial model supporting groundnut value addition in Senegal;
- engage SONACOS management and technical staff on policy, regulation and operational framework;
- identify best practices relevant to strengthening the groundnut sector in The Gambia within a regional integration context;
- support parliamentary oversight and policy dialogue relating to agriculture, rural development and regional cooperation.

Methodology: The study visit employed a qualitative observational and interactive methodology to achieve its objectives. This included visiting, briefing for members, structured presentations of National Food Security and SONACOS officials, face to face discussion with SONACOS management, guided tours of marketing, storage, processing and export facilities. Detail observations are not taken on operational offices in quality control and compliance measures, and comparative analysis with National Food Security operations in The Gambia. This approach enables the Committee to gather comprehensive first-hand sign into SONACOS system and operation.

The delegation comprises:

1. Honourable Omar Darboe - Chairperson
2. Honourable Amie Colley - Vice Chairperson.
3. Honourable Sainey Jawara - Member
4. Honourable Lamin J. Sanneh - Member
5. Honourable Alieu Baldeh - Member
6. Honourable Yahya Sanyang - Member
7. Honourable Birom J.S. Sowe - Member
8. Honourable Nfally Kora - Member
9. Honourable Omar Jammeh - Member
10. Honourable Bakary K. Badjie - Member
11. Honourable Yunusa M. Bah - Member
12. Mamadou A.M. Bah - Secretary to the Committee
13. Mr. Lamin Fofana - National Food Security staff
14. Mr. Thomas Roberts - National Food Security & Office of SONACOS

This part was explained. This year granted trade season in The Gambia from 9th January to 2026.

The delegation held an interactive meeting with the official of SONACOS. In this remark, the Chairperson of the Committee, Honourable Omar Darboe, informed the Senegalese counterparts that the visit was necessitated by the bilateral agreement signed between the National Food Security, Processing and Marketing Corporation of The Gambia and SONACOS aimed at knowledge sharing and cooperation in key technical areas.

He emphasised that the visit was intended to provide Honourable Members of the Committee with a deeper understanding of SONACOS operation, which would strengthen the Committee's capacity to conduct effective oversight over National Food Security and support the cooperation in delivering its mandate.

During the meeting with the delegation, the Director of SONACOS Industrial Unit in Kaolack, Mr. Faye Joof, informed members that the SONACOS currently operates 5 industrial facilities across different regions of Senegal. Each with specialised functions within groundnut and enable oil value chain.

In Dakar, refining and processing of various eatable oil services as a major industrial and strategic site; in Durabele, production and refining activities; in Kaolack, groundnut traditional and co-processing operation; in Louga, decorating and sorting of groundnut seeds; in Ziguinchor, tributary of groundnut seeds and related processing activity.

Mr. Joof emphasised that this decentralisation industrial structure enables SONACOS effectively cover major production zones, improve logistics and enhance value addition within Senegal groundnut sector.

Joof further explained that SONACOS operates a Public-Private Partnership [PPP] model on the weak license private businessmen. Authorities of SONACOS purchase grant directly from farmers. These private operators' function within regulated framework set by SONACOS, ensuring compliance with prescribed quality, standard pricing, guidelines and delivering obligations to designated SONACOS facilities.

These PPP arrangements enhance farmers access market, improve crop evacuation efficiency, and allow SONACOS to leverage private sector capacity while maintaining oversight and quality control.

Issues raised by the Honourable Members and responses to SONACOS during the discussion with SONACOS officials: Honourable Members, clarify groundnut cleanliness, standard and method to prevent aflatoxin contamination, particularly for groundnut delivery by License businessmen using trucks.

In response, Mr. Joof explained that SONACOS placed strong emphasis on the purchase of clean groundnut to ensure complex and systematic sampling. And screening procedure is applied to every truckload of groundnut bags delivered to the factory, specifically 6 bags are sampled per truck. 2 bags taken from the top of the whole load, 2 taken when the truck is half loaded and 2 taken from the bottom. These samples are then screened to assess the level of cleanliness.

Mr. Joof further informed the delegation that SONACOS apply a tolerance threshold allowing maximum of 2% of dust date tables and other foreign substance even though the government paid on acceptance 0.816% delivered exiting. These thresholds are subjected to counteractive measures in line with quality standards.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please summarise.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Okay. Honourable Speaker, I want to explain here where the Senegalese government also normally pay 305,000 per metric ton while The Gambia pays 38,000 per metric ton. The Director also explained that the Prime Minister of Senegal recently visited

the Kaolack Facility on underscoring the high-level political commitment to the Secco. He further revealed that the government has allocated 25 billion CFA from its support of the groundnut oilseeds sector. They also take us around from one place to another.

Recommendation:

1. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Service and Food Security through the National Food Security should strengthen cooperative product marketing society Secco to procure and improve efficiency while at the same time licensing private buyers to operate on the National food Security oversight.
2. The Ministry, through National Food Security, should ensure that quality control is enhanced through investment in laboratories and screening equipment at depots accompanied by systematic sampling and testing protocols to ensure clean and aflatoxin free groundnut.
3. The Ministry, through National Food Security, should ensure that pricing mechanism for farmers is standardised to provide fair compensation and predictable income while incentives such as CPMS commissions should be maintained to encourage timely delivery and compliance with quality standards.
4. The Ministry, through National Food Security, should ensure that infrastructure development, including an upgraded depot, storage facilities and mobile selling unit is upgraded, which is critical to handle increased value and reduce post-harvest loss.
5. The Ministry, through National Food Security, must ensure that capacity building and knowledge sharing is promoted through training for depot staffs, CPMS personal and private traders as well

as exposure visit and learning exchanging with regional operations like SONACOS.

6. The Ministry, through National Food Security, should ensure that logistics and transport support is strengthened by improving flight and river transport systems to facilitate efficiency in equation of groundnut, particularly during peak season.
7. The Government should ensure that adequate support in terms of financial and technical assistance is also aligned with national trade and agricultural policy to prioritise the revelations of the groundnut sector as strategies for rural development and export initiative.
8. The Ministry, through National Food Security, must ensure a robust monitoring and evaluation use ERP system and regular assessment of depot operation, quality standard and processing efficiency, which is essential to identify and address operational gap and sustain engagement.
9. Honourable Speaker, we changed the nineth one also. Can I please read? The National Food Security should adopt 1% threshold on dust and foreign material in groundnut from Secco. We changed that place.

In conclusion, Honourable Speaker, the study visit to SONACOS provided valuable insight into an integrated and structured approach to groundnut marketing and processing. They expressed oversight of a practical lesson that if adopted appropriately, can contribute significantly to revitalising the Gambian groundnut sector and enhancing rural development.

Furthermore, the study was timely and highly beneficial. It enhanced the Committee's understanding of best practice in groundnut processing and marketing, and provided practical lessons that can support the

Committee's legislative and oversight responsibilities. The knowledge gained will contribute meaningfully to policy discussions and recommendations aimed at improving agricultural development in The Gambia.

I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion, and also to take part in the debate and I will be very precise. Honourable Speaker, I must thank the Office of the Clerk and the Members of the National Assembly and the clerks of those committees involved and the Ministry of Agriculture that gave us this…

Honourable Speaker, what is happening in our country does not exist in other part of our neighbouring countries. We must thank the Government of the day for empowering the farmers in this country.

Honourable Speaker, in the case study in Senegal, the government does not involve in buying groundnuts from the farmers. Yes, the policy will be based on the government; whereby the pricing of the groundnut per kilo or per ton will come from the government. But the buying and selling of the groundnut must come from the private sectors and this private sector is regulated by the Government.

But in our case, the Government will put in money, buy groundnut, give prices and fertilizers to the farmers. But in case study of Senegal, it does

not happen like that. We must thank the Government of the day for the bold step taken to safeguard the farmers.

Honourable Speaker, in this case, I think the case study done in Senegal should apply to our country because they have even started giving license to private sectors. You understand, all this boring the dust and stones down there are controlled by the private sectors. If you bring groundnut that is dirty, in fact, the Government will even put a sanction on you. If there is a number of tons that you get dust, you being the trader or the private sector will send back to get a clean groundnut. If you do not do so, they levy charge on that dust.

Honourable Speaker, I think our Government also should to stand in that way whereby the company will take charge. And again, we allow the private sector to trade the groundnut whereby the Government will stay and control the policies of the trading season.

Honourable Speaker, I am a member, I cannot go or waste the time of the Plenary, but then the Committee also proposed an amendment whereby if you permit to read, then I can read for us to add it in the report. And when we are adopting the report, if you permit me, Honourable Speaker, because recommendation nine… Yes, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. We agreed as a committee because it was an oversight that we want this august Assembly to allow us to amend Recommendation 9, which the Member read. We will delete it and there is a caption that we want to propose for

amendment. If you allow me to use my phone, then I can able to read it. Oh, okay.

THE SPEAKER: Please, go ahead.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: The Member said, to save time, we can ask the clerk to write and give it to the Committee Chair to correct it in our report.

On that note, I submit.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Is it that bulky?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, it is not that bulky.

THE SPEAKER: How many pages?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, it is less than a page.

THE SPEAKER: Then, please, read it.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Okay. Thank you very much. Then I will use my phone to read it. Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, the proposed amendment of only Recommendation 9 is by removing the entire word and replacing it with this one that I am going to read.

The Ministry, through the NFSPMC, should establish the enforcement of penalty mechanism whereby groundnut suppliers, private buyers and CMPS delivering groundnut containing foreign materials such as sand, dust, stone cells and other contaminants exceeding a strict threshold level to be determined by the corporation shall be subjected to fine and/or administrative sanctions. Such sanctions may include suspension or banning the supplier from participating in groundnut trading season for a specific period. These measures will serve as a deterrent against deliberate alterations, promote compliance with quality standards and safeguard the integrity of the groundnut value chain.

Honourable speaker, I submit.

THE SPEAKER: Let us vote on this first. I will now put the question to the Honourable Members.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members who wish to take part in the debate may do so by show of tags. We will begin with the Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the floor. That is why I said earlier on that let the Member keep the amendment because in legislation, you do not legislate law and also give the reason the outcome you want to address. You can put the sanction there, but not say this gears towards addressing so and so in law.

So, we can look at the drafting process, the text itself, so that at the appropriate time they can forward it to the Office of the Clerk. When we are about to do the Consideration Stage, then we can insert it there, but the way it is read has even given intent that…

THE SPEAKER: Majority Leader, it is a report on a study tour.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Allow me to land. You know, they are making the recommendation now.

THE SPEAKER: You know, you are talking about… use your legislation.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I am coming. The Standing Orders say that in the constitutional of a bill, the report of a committee shall be considered, you understand. Now…

THE SPEAKER: Majority Leader, please take your seat. Member for Kantora and Majority Leader, Order! Majority Leader, I am addressing you. Please, do not entertain your deputy. No, this is not a report to a bill. This was a visit. So, it is not for a legislation continuation. The Member for Jeshwang, you have the floor.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Thank you to the Committee for their tour in Senegal.

Honourable Speaker, I would have to ask a few questions before I go further. Yes, for me, part of the study tour should have been for Members of the Senegalese Parliament to join our Gambian National Assembly Members to learn best practices. How do you do oversight on others? They all went on a study tour to SONACOS, for what? When it comes to

operations, it is the National Food Security that should go and learn the way they do their operations. If I am coming…*[Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the study tour was not the Committee on Agriculture of The Gambia to the Committee of the Parliament of Senegal.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Can you allow me to land, please?

THE SPEAKER: No. In any institution, this study tour was not on… Please, when I am speaking, you do not use your mic. So, this study tour was not for the Parliament of Senegal. They went to SONACOS.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKEER: Yes. Thank you. Please, go ahead. Continue, Honourable Member.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I rise on Order 29[1]: *"Every Member shall restrict his or her observations to the subject under discussion."*Honourable Speaker, here, the Members of the National Assembly went on a study tour, not particularly going to see our counterparts, Members of the Senegalese Parliament. No. We went to tour a company.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, do not make a statement. Thank you. Honourable Members, the order from the Member for Lower Saloum is sustained. Please, Member for Jeshwang, you are rising on the subject matter.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, I am rising on the subject matter. This is about SONACOS of Senegal. What is the responsibility. We have to be very honest here. I mean, come on, please, agricultural members, keep quiet. This is your own show. Allow me to speak.

THE SPEAKER: Oh, Honourable Member for Jeshwang, no, you cannot.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, am I giving the floor or I should sit down?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you know, when the Speaker is speaking, you should take your seat.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: I am asking. Should I sit down or am I giving the floor?

THE SPEAKER: Sit down. Honourable Member for Jeshwang, please, do not address them; address the Speaker. Do not engage in quarrel with them, Please. Please, continue.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, I am not quarrelling. But if they are murmuring, you should have stopped them. They know I am going to talk that is why they are murmuring as they are members.

Honourable Speaker, the way I am seeing things and the way they are seeing them is different. They went on a study tour to SONACOS as a committee for best practices. Who are the implementing body? It is not the Members. The implementing body is National Food Security, for they are the ones doing the implementation of this product.

If you go there to learn, it should be for the National Food Security to go and see what SONACOS is doing so that we can apply the same thing in The Gambia. But as an oversight body, we went to SONACOS to learn what? What are we going there to learn? The one doing the oversight is for a reason.

If you are doing oversight on a body, you go in there to see the way Senegal is doing. But if you are going to SONACOS to learn the way Senegal is operating, it should have been GGC with the Committee and advise GGC on that.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. Honourable Member, there was a point of order, and I ruled on that. I want you to abide by that. Honourable Member, please abide by that.

And when you look at the constitutional provisions of Section 109, Work of Committees, committees can go on a study tour or benchmarking to any institution for best practices, and once they learn, they come back to the National Assembly.

In the event of bills, parliaments make recommendations to institutions. And in our service of enacting law, the best practice that you have seen for yourself or what you have learned, you can ensure that those things

are in our own provisions and are captured in the report also during Consideration Stage.

That is why parliaments around the world go on benchmarking and study tours or visits to various institutions to learn so that their oversight will also provide those recommendations on institutions for implementation and/or form part of a bill they will enact.

So, I do not think it was a mismatch or not in the best interest of the Committee. Please, I want to urge you to just go straight to the report and forget about that part, please.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: I think you are misquoting me. You are misquoting me. Yes, we are new, but you are aware that what I am saying is very clear.

THE SPEAKER: No, do not go back there, please.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: I am coming.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, no. Please! Honourable Member, just continue, please. Are you done? Member for Upper Saloum, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: 'Merci boucoup'; thank you, Honourable Member. I think we must thank the Committee and also the National Food Security Institution for such a wonderful visit. You know what we do across the region; I think it is important that we try to find out exactly what is happening in other countries.

I remember a few weeks ago when the Government of The Gambia announced the price of groundnuts, everybody seems like hell broke loose

and they were saying all kinds of things about why the Government of The Gambia is giving this price and did not give the other price. And forgetting that, everything that the institution is doing is actually pre-finance. And pre finance the buying of the groundnuts in The Gambia is very expensive because if you are using commercial banks, we have very, very high interest rates.

Now, when you look at this report, it is actually telling you that SONACOS actually is a PPP [Public-Private Partnership]. Essentially, the government is not actually taking money from the national coffers to give them to go and buy. But in The Gambia, it is completely different. And that is the reason I think, Honourable Speaker, we need to continue to support this institution because what they need is capital intensive.

Now, the fact that we have given them ***almost 300 million*** in the last budget so that they can recapitalise, I think we need to do more in this coming budgetary session because access to finance in The Gambia is very, very expensive because most of what we have are commercial banks and microfinance institutions. When you look at the interest rates, they are in double digits because we understand the cost of funds by these commercial banks also is very high.

So, that is the reason we need to do all what it takes to ensure that we get enough financing so that they can actually turn around their operations. If you look at them, for the past 20, 25 years, in fact, the name actually has kept changing. They keep changing from the previous two Governments until now. but still they are yet to turn a corner. But I am glad that now we are seeing light at the end of the tunnel. And I think

this visit by the National Assembly in SONACOS actually has shed very, very clear light on how this operation is done in Senegal.

Now, the fact that our own institution, the National Food Security, is actually processing some of the groundnuts into cakes, I think this is a step in the right direction because value addition in agriculture is very, very important. Otherwise, the cost or the price that you will get at the end of the day will be really very limited.

Honourable Speaker, I think the only thing I would add is that we need to work together to ensure that we have very high yielding seeds for our farmers. When that happens, we will be able to get better pricing. Above all, the issue of Aflatoxin could also be reduced. Again, the presence of Aflatoxin in our groundnuts actually has a negative effect in the pricing as well, particularly in the World Market.

So, when you see the testing being done by SONACOS at a very high level to ensure that they try to eliminate it as much as possible, I think the same can also be done in our own institution here, where we will be able to ensure that we have groundnuts or products that are Aflatoxin free.

So, we want to thank once again the Committee for going out to know exactly what is happening in our neighbouring country and above all to ensure that the price across the border and the price in The Gambia, if you look at it, can actually be very, very comparable. But above all, the Government of The Gambia is providing a very, very high discount in terms of fertilizer compared to the other region.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Lower Fulladu West, you have the floor.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much, Speaker. I would join my colleagues to thank the Committee for the study tour, for it was very informative.

During this study tour, they identified the role of the private sector. Once the private sector grows, it lessens the burden on government. And they have given us a good history of the transformation of the involvement of the private sector. And then we also hope that in the recommendation, I would see what strategy do they think the Ministry of Agriculture and the Government should emulate to ensure that the private sector is well enticed to make sure that this bigger burden of subsidy would also come down.

And I also thank them for highlighting that, in Senegal, it is the government that license private people to do business, and this is one of the things that we have to bring in. And just recently, we just enacted a bill which highlighted that the importers and exporters must get license. So, meaning, it is like, it was in conjunction with your tour, we learned these things.

And I also want to thank the leadership because if you look at the sales of groundnut, The Gambia is paying more than any in the sub-region because we are paying at least 38,000 whilst the county closer to The Gambia is paying about 35,000. This is telling you the agenda of the plight of farmers in the current administration. And we thank the leadership, the Ministry of Agriculture, for that.

And we want to also thank the National Food Security Corporation for going with these people to identify some of these challenges so that we can improve better on what is happening on the other side. I remember that some countries also come on study tours here.

I want to give an example of Rwanda. Rwanda came to this country to learn about the primary health care and also the IFMIS system, and they also improved. Today, it is a model, so we will want to look at the study tour that you people have gone to do and improve better so that other countries can come and learn from us.

In short, I just want to tell the National Food Security that, yesterday, I was lucky to have 15,000 tons of rice which I distributed in my communities because we are farmers working towards the drive, ensuring that there is food sufficiency. And we are going to do that 'insha'Allah'.

So, I thank the Committee and I am very grateful. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Niamina West, you have the floor.

HON BIROM SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank you very much, Speaker. I also want to join the debate as I am a member of the Committee, and I benefited from this trip. Meaning, I was part of the Committee that went to have first-hand information on how SONACOS operates. I would thank my Deputy Chair for ably presenting the report and also thank my able Chair who is not present, and all other members of the committees. I thank the Office of the Clerk and also the National Food safety staff that we went together with.

My first observation will be to refer you to the objectives. I just want to dilate a bit on the objectives and also with regard to the key observations that we came along with from Senegal. Referring you to the objectives where you have… The main objectives of this study were to examine the institutional, technical and commercial models supporting groundnut value addition in Senegal and as much as to practice and replicate them here in The Gambia.

The whole thing was geared for us as of National Assembly Members, who are expected to support this institution and the ministry when they are on cry of financial muscle and support at the policy levels on making are laws, so that we can have first-hand information on how Senegal transforms on processing and adding value to this product so that they will not go out. And the products are sold within the country and the sub-region.

This was very beneficial and a lot of knowledge were gathered and encouragements that is why you hear and see us now. Since this is acquainted in us, we are very much ambitious to help the Ministry, especially the institution, to transform to that direction.

And in that case, we have learnt much support that the Senegal SONACOS had received from their government. We know we are also doing well, the Ministry and the institution, but this will help us to be able to sensitise other members so that whenever issues of that nature arise, we would not hesitate.

The other issue is to talk to or encourage the Ministry of Agriculture to support this institution in transforming, particularly on the PPP; that is to give license to private stakeholders so that they will be stakeholders

between them and the farmers. As the previous speaker said, this will help lessen the burden on Government. As we all know, Government is doing a lot in the Agric sector. A lot of finance is going there; a lot of subsidies are going to agriculture, but the result is the problem. People are asking the result. Much is going, but the result is not as much as we expected.

So perhaps, the Government will have to relinquish some of this to private stakeholders so as to be between them and the farmers so that the burden will be less on the Government. According to the report, SONACOS is not doing much expenses on the seccos contrary to The Gambia here where there are a lot of expenses on the seccos. So, there is no secco that is between the government institution and the farmers.

So now, the private license owners are going directly to the grassroot to buy groundnut and bring direct to the institution. Whereas now the institution will just be a buyer and no more expenses within the institution. All the transport, other expenses and all other mechanism are done by the license owners.

So, this was geared to sensitise us, open our minds so that whenever the Ministry and the institutions sought support and help from us geared towards transformation to that direction, we will not hesitate.

So, I will also plead to Members for us to work towards this direction with the institution and the Ministry. And I will also advise the Ministry to take a giant step on this transformation so that the institution will reach where we aim them to be.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Janjanbureh, you have the floor.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: No, I decline. I just wanted to observe a colleague then.

THE SPEAKER: All right. Thank you. Member for Jarra West, you have the floor.

HON ALIEU BALDEH [JARRA WEST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I wanted not to debate on this, but I have to add my voice to emphasise on the importance of this tour to SONACOS. This tour was conducted by the Committee and staffs of National Food Security, Processing and Marketing Corporation. We are talking about recapitalisation of National Food Security, Processing and Marketing Cooperation, and then we find it very difficult to have this recapitalisation.

So, we learnt what Senegal is doing, so our people now are moving to another level. When I say to another level, they are now moving to turn our groundnuts to produce oil that we can eat in this country and also export, which SONACOS is doing.

So, the Committee and staff of the corporation have to go there to know how they are doing it, which is very, very important. When we come back here, we have started the capitalisation, but it is still not enough for them. We will do a lot so that we can reach at that level or close to the level of SONACOS, which is very, very important.

We have seen that the corporation will need a minimum of 50,000 metric tons. The money involved is almost $35 million. So, we need to work hand in glove with the corporation so that they can have what they need. And

we are the only people who can support them because the national budget is here where we divide it. So, that is very, very important.

This committee is like other committees; the Monitoring Committee going with GPA, the FPAC Committee going with Central Bank. It is the same thing. There is nothing different in this. So, let us understand. We are all in one idea, and that is how to have our groundnuts turn into oil that we can also use, like Senegal is doing. We have seen how much they have given to SONACOS, the Prime Minister visiting SONACOS, their government putting that money to SONACOS. That is very, very important. So, let us also do the same thing by helping our people and our farmers. That is my contribution.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Member for Tumana, you have the floor.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Anyway, I do not have much interest to contribute, but I think it is important for me to add my voice.

Honourable Speaker, I think benchmarking is very, very important because it gives us deep understanding of what is happening in other jurisdictions. And in this particular case, definitely the Members part of the trip gathered a lot of understanding and know how.

The tour inspires us to definitely support our National Food Security because this is what the government of Senegal did until SONACOS is where they are standing. So also, the same thing applies to us here. When

we give support to National Food Security, we will be in a better standing, definitely speaking. And this is very important, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, we have been talking about recapitalisation of the GGC, so therefore, the Members need to see something, somewhere that will inspire us so that we can also go in for giving them money. So, I think this is very important.

With those few remarks, Honourable Speaker, I beg to my leave.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, may I now call upon the mover to respond to issues raised and wind up the debate?

HON AMIE COLLY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker. I would like to thank all the Honourable Members that debated. I did not have much to respond here because I can say all the points that I supposed to respond were clarified by fellow Honourable Members.

So, it is like going to SONACOS is something that I definitely want to explain to be clear to the people, especially my fellow Honourable Member, who is my son, the son of Jeshwang. SONACOS is definitely doing a great job that our National Food Security is not actually doing.

In the National Food Security here, we normally process, add value to our groundnut, but we stop at processing crude oil. Okay. No problem, Honourable. We process only crude oil, and we definitely want to pass that level. Right now, SONACOS process oil as a finished product, package it and in fact export it, and that is what we wish to do in The Gambia.

The Seccos of the National Food Processing here in The Gambia, that is GGC, are doing a great job compared to the price they normally give to

our farmers per ton. Senegal is not doing that. We also learnt that the Senegalese government has sponsored SONACOS with a huge amount of money. And if we did not go to that place, we would have refused GGC's request for billion because we would not know the amount of money required to reach at that level of processing.

So, Honourable Speaker, I would definitely want to thank the National Assembly Member together with National Food Security for the great job they are doing for this country. But I wish for them also to at least support the private businessmen with the strict laws; the committees' strict recommendations for them to abide by that so that we can have clean groundnut without Aflatoxin.

Thank you so much. I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this Honourable Assembly do adopt the Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture's Study Visit to SONACOS Groundnut Processing Factories in Senegal with amendments.]

iii. **Report of the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, Ombudsman and IEC on Its Visit to the Parliament of the Republic of Senegal** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: Chairperson.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, once again, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I rise to

table the Report of the Study Tour to the Republic of Senegal by the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, Ombudsman and IEC. Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, I will try to summarise it so you can take note. Okay.

So, Honourable Speaker, ***acknowledgement***, the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, IEC, Ombudsman and Religious Affairs wish to formally express its profound appreciation to all institutions and individuals who invaluably supported, cooperated and contributed to the successful undertaking of the study tour to the Republic of Senegal.

The Committee extends its sincere gratitude to the leadership and Honourable Members of the Assembly National de Senegal for the warm reception accorded to the delegation and for facilitating the high-level engagement with the relevant sectoral committees.

Honourable Speaker, the Committee further acknowledged the cooperation of the Government of Senegal, particularly technical officials and administrators who provided detailed briefing on institutional framework governing infrastructure, planning, environmental sustainability, cultural heritage preservation and decentralised religious administration. The insights shared on Senegalese integrated planning model and the operational structure of its decentralised Hajj Commission were of immense value and practical relevance.

Special recognition is accorded to the Embassy of the Republic of The Gambia in Dakar and the Embassy of the Republic of Senegal in Banjul for their diplomatic facilitation and logistical coordination which ensured

seamless execution of the visit. Their support reaffirmed the enduring fraternal relationship between the two-sister republics.

The Committee equally accorded its appreciation to the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly and the Directorate of Committee Secretariat for the meticulous planning, documentation and administrative arrangement that underpinned the delegation effective participation. The professionalism of the support staff reflects the institutional maturity of the National Assembly and its commitment to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy.

The Committee also acknowledged the continued support of the leadership of the National Assembly of The Gambia for prioritising regional cooperation as a strategic pillar of parliamentary development. Such engagements are not ceremonial; they are investment in institutional learning, oversight enhancing and policy innovation.

Honourable Speaker, ***Executive Summary***, this report presents the outcome of the study undertaken by the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, Independent Electoral Commission, Ombudsman and Religious Affairs to the Republic of Senegal in October 2025.

The visit was conducted within the framework of strengthening parliamentary diplomacy, enhancing institutional capacity, and promoting structured knowledge exchange between the two-sister republics. The study tour sought to consolidate inter-parliamentary collaboration and benchmark best practices in the areas directly align with the Committee's mandate.

The delegation held comprehensive engagement with the Assembly National de Senegal and its sectoral committees responsible for urban and regional planning, sustainable development and ecological transition, decentralisation law, labour and human rights, culture and communication as well as Senegalese Hajj Commission Delegation General de Pelerin age. This interaction provides practical insight into Senegalese legislative oversight mechanism, institutional coordination models, and policy implementation strategies.

A central observation arising from the engagement was Senegalese integrated approach to infrastructural planning and environmental sustainability, urban renewal, housing development and transport infrastructure are aligned with the ecological transition policies supported by structured inter-ministerial coordination and active parliamentary scrutiny. The alignment between development, planning and sustainability objectives reflects a coherent governance framework that embeds environmental considerations into national policy architecture.

The delegation further examined Senegalese decentralisation framework, which is grounded in legal reform granting substantial autonomy to local government authorities reinforced by physical transfer mechanism and coordinated oversight structures.

The role of Parliamentary Committee in monitoring decentralisation, safeguarding human rights and promoting labour standards was noted as robust and proactive with oversight tools including inquiries, field visits and structured stakeholders' engagement.

The study tour also yields significant insight on community participation and cultural governance. Senegalese approach to cultural heritage preservation coupled with strategic communication mechanism within Parliament strengthens civic engagement and public trust. The permissibility of local language in Parliamentary deliberation was observed as an inclusive measure that deepened citizen participation in democratic process.

The Committee identified several cross-cutting lessons, including the importance of strong institutional coordination, legislative independence, structured inter-committee collaboration and sustained capacity building for members and Committee staff. Shared challenges were acknowledged, particularly in relation to resource constraints and the need for strengthening civic education.

Honourable Speaker, ***introduction***, the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, IEC, Ombudsman and Religious Affairs of the National Assembly of The Gambia undertook study tour to Senegal to engage with the National Assembly of Senegal and learn from their rich experience in governance, urban planning, infrastructure, hajj affairs*… [Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Chair, you are saying introduction now; what were you doing since you started?

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: That was the Executive Summary.

THE SPEAKER: 'Subhan Allah'.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: So, ***objectives***, Honourable Speaker, the main objectives of the study tour to include:

1. Exchanging best practices in the governance and management of urban and regional planning frameworks;
2. Understanding Senegalese institutional setup for housing and infrastructure;
3. Learning about the operational structure of Senegal's Hajj Commission and its coordination with relevant ministries and other stakeholders;
4. Promoting collaboration between the two National Assemblies on sustainable development, ecological transition and inter-parliamentary diplomacy.

Honourable Speaker, ***day one activities***, we met the Committee on Regional Planning, Urban Planning, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport. We also met the Committee on Sustainable Development and Ecological Transition.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we lack quorum. I am told by my assistants that we lack quorum.

Honourable Members, the rest of the reports are all on environment and then the motion. So, do you want us to break for 10 or 20 minutes and come back, then we will do the next reports, or do you want us to continue? It is up to you. Deputy Majority Leader, do you want…

Honourable Members, what are your decisions? Honourable Members, it is now 2 or 3 minutes to 2. It is now 2:00. We can break for prayers for 20 minutes. Is that okay? Please, let us endeavour to be here by 2:20. Is that okay, Honourable Members?

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Honourable Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Bundungka Kunda.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Okay. Then I am just suggesting if we can just finish up this report, then we can go for break.

THE SPEAKER: We cannot continue. Now, Honourable Members, the Assembly is suspended for 20 minutes, and we shall resume at 2:21. The Assembly is now suspended.

Assembly Sitting Suspended

Assembly Sitting Resumed

THE SPEAKER: The Assembly now resumes, and we will continue from where we stopped. The Member for Bundungka Kunda, please, summarise. You took a lot of time on your executive brief.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I will go straight to the recommendations of the report.

Recommendations, based on the findings of the study tour, the Committee recommends the following:

a. Strengthening inter-committee collaboration on matters relating to infrastructural development, environmental sustainability and decentralisation to enhance coherence in oversight and policy implementation;

b. Formalising coordinated national planning framework to improve alignment between sectoral policies, development programmes, and institutional responsibilities;
c. Reviewing the Hajj Administration Framework of The Gambia by drawing on the institutional model and operational practices of Senegalese Hajj Commission to improve efficiency, coordination and service delivery;
d. Institutionalising structured member-exchange programme and capacity building initiative between the National Assembly of The Gambia and Senegal to promote continuous learning and sharing of best practices;
e. Enhancing targeted legislative training programme for members and committee staff, particularly in the area of parliamentary oversight, strategic communication and human rights protection;
f. Strengthening bilateral cooperation in cultural heritage management to support preservation, education and promotion of cultural tourism;
g. Promoting and formalising sustainable Senegambia parliamentary dialogue mechanism to reinforce inter-parliamentary cooperation in support of regional integration and sustainability.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, ***Conclusion***, the study tour undertaken by the National Assembly Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, IEC and Ombudsman to the Republic of Senegal was highly successful and met its stated objectives. The delegation recorded its profound appreciation to the Government and National Assembly of Senegal for the warm hospitality, their openness in sharing valuable institutional experience and best practices.

Honourable Speaker, the composition of the delegation is the Members of the Committee.

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Any seconder? Yes, Member for Lower Fulladu West.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much. I rise to second the motion and also suggest that we allow the readings of the other reports, then we can move an individual comment. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members who wish to take part in the debate may do so now by show of tags. Member for Jeshwang, I saw your tag. Oh, no. You know other reports are all on environment, so we can do them jointly.

HON SHERRIF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I will thank the Committee Chair and his team for a job well done. I mean you went out to do a study and came with some recommendations and resolutions.

Honourable Speaker, to the Chair, you mentioned about the autonomy of the local council authorities in Senegal, so my question is, after the engagement with them, what have you learned from them? What did they tell you and what is the way forward? The other question is with regard to their government. Is government contributing towards their local

governments as a form of a subvention or an amount of money being given to the local councils or are they 100% autonomous? I think that one is also important.

Also, with regard to your study tour, you mentioned about trying to create studies for the Committee here in a form of trying to build your capacity as a committee. I think that is welcoming for the Assembly to act and then also build the capacity of your Committee Members and then also the staff within the Committee. Honourable Speaker, I think the idea was good and I would recommend that we approve the report as it is.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, may I now call upon the mover of the report to respond to issues and wind up the debate.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I want to use the opportunity to thank the Honourable Member for Jeshwang for his questions about what we have learned as far as the Local Councils of Senegal are concerned.

Basically, there is a difference somehow between the Local Councils of Senegal and The Gambia. In The Gambia, we have governors, but for them they have "Prefee". So, the "Prefee'" works with the local councils like the Mayors. But basically, what we learnt there is like there is no competition between the "Prefee" and the Mayors; they always work together. So, the "Prefees" are appointed by the President and the Mayors are elected by the people.

So, for that being the case, these are some of the things and at the same time the central government also give them some amount of money. But that one normally goes through the "Prefee", not the council. They work together with the Mayors to ensure that at least there is development activities of the central government happening. So, we even went to an extent to ask them whether there is no push and pull between them and the "Prefee". They said no. Because they are strictly civil servant, they always execute government activities.

The other thing you said was local councils and their autonomy. Actually, they have autonomy in terms of collecting revenues within their jurisdiction, so they have that financial autonomy wherein. They can collect rates and other things to plough it back to the community. So, for that being the case, I think these are some of the things as far as your question is concerned.

I want to use the opportunity to thank the entire Committee and the support staff, our clerk, and also the Office of the Clerk for facilitating this study tour.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Chair and Honourable Members. I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this Honourable Assembly do adopt the Report of the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands, Ombudsman and IEC on its visit to the Parliament of the Republic of Senegal.]

Clerk, we may proceed.

iv. **The 4 Reports of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO affairs:**

- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs on National Environment Management Bill, 2025** *[By the Vice Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: Vice Chair, you have the floor and please summarise.

[Motion!]

THE SPEAKER: Yes, the Member for Basse want to raise a motion.

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: I am raising a motion for the Plenary to allow the Vice Chair to read all the reports then the contributions can come after him presenting all the reports.

THE SPEAKER: Any second? Yes, Member for Lower Fulladu West.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: I rise to second the motion, yes.

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, it has been moved and seconded, so I will now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Assembly considers the various reports as related to the Environment Committee simultaneously.]

Clerk, now we will deal with the reports. So, procedurally, I think you will call all the reports, then the Chair in laying will have to present all of them at once and be seconded or he should lay one after the other; I am not sure.

So, Clerk, we will move them one after the other, then we consolidate the debate. Then, Members debating can debate across the three reports.

Clerk, please, let us proceed.

- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGOs Affairs on The Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill, 2025** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*
- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGOs Affairs on the Waste Management Bill, 2025** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*
- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs on The Gambia National Climate Change Bill, 2025** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: Vice Chairperson, yes, Report of the Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs on the National Environment Management Bill, 2025.

HON ESSA CONTEH [JIMARA]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, on behalf of my Chair, Honourable Yaya Gassama, and the Committee, I stand before the Assembly today to present the reports on the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGOs Affairs.

On the ***National Environment Management Bill***, Honourable Speaker, I want to start with the acknowledgment.

Acknowledgement, the Select Committee on Environment wishes to place on record its appreciation to Honourable Speaker and the leadership of the National Assembly for the confidence reposed in the Committee to undertake this scrutiny of the Bill.

Honourable Speaker, the Committee further acknowledges the cooperation and technical inputs received from the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources; National Environment Agency; other relevant public institutions and NGOs that provided clarifications and policy review perspective during the Committee's consideration of this Bill.

Honourable Speaker, the Committee also recognises the contribution of the Committee Secretariat for their professionalism, diligence and technical support in facilitating meetings, analysing the submissions and ensuring that the Committee's proceedings and deliberations were conducted in accordance with the Parliamentary Standards. A special gratitude to the Subject Matter Specialists of the Committee.

Introduction, Honourable Speaker, I rise to table before this august Assembly the Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs on the 'National Environment Management Bill' for the consideration and adoption of this National Assembly.

The 'National Environment Management Bill, 2025' was presented to the National Assembly for consideration as part of Government's legislative

agenda aimed at strengthening environmental governance, enhancing regulatory oversight and aligning national environmental managemental frameworks with emerging global, regional and domestic environmental challenges.

Honourable Speaker, upon its First Reading on the 16th of June 2025, the Bill was committed by the National Assembly to the said Select Committee on Environment for detailed scrutiny in accordance with the Standing Orders of the National Assembly and established Parliamentary practice governing the consideration of the Bill.

The Bill seeks to provide comprehensive legal framework for the implementation of environmental policies and action plans, the regulation of environmental management and protection, the promotion of public participation in environmental decision making, and the domestication and enforcement of bilateral and multilateral environmental agreements to which The Gambia is party to.

The Committee knows that the Bill presents a significant reform of the existing environmental legislative architecture, introducing strengthened institutional arrangements, expanding enforcement mechanisms, and enhancing environmental rights and specialised judiciary structure, including the establishment of an environmental tribunal.

In discharging its responsibility, Honourable Speaker, the Committee examined the Bill and paid particular attention to its policy objectives, institutional capability and coherence, enforceability, financial sustainability and its potential implications for the national development, local government, private sector activity and citizen rights.

Honourable Speaker, ***methodology*** used and also ***the proceedings***, we want to refer Members to go back to the report and read it by themselves so that they prepare themselves towards the Consideration Stage.

Therefore, I will refer Members to the final page; that is page 11. To conclude, the Committee, having scrutinised the NEMA Bill; that is the 'National Environment Management Bill, 2025' and consulted relevant stakeholders, finds that the Bill provides necessary and timely framework to strengthen the mandate and operational effectiveness of the National Environment Management Agency. The proposed legislation enhances regulatory clarity, strengthens enforcement mechanism and reinforces accountability in environmental governance.

In light of the growing environmental challenges and the need for sustainable development, the Committee is satisfied that the Bill will significantly improve national institutional coordination and environmental oversight.

The Committee, therefore, recommends that the National Assembly adopts the NEMA Bill; that is 'National Environment Management Bill, 2025' subject to amendments proposed in this report, and respectfully submit the same for consideration and approval.

Thank you.

So, now, we move to the next report, `***the National Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill***. So, Honourable Speaker, I will skip the acknowledgement and go straight to introduction as we do not have much time.

Introduction, The Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill 2025 was read a second time on the 19th of December 2025 and referred to the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs for consideration. The Bill seeks to establish coordinated and integrated framework for the management of The Gambia coastal marine, river line and wetland ecosystem.

Given the growing challenges of coastal cohesion*... [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, at this point, I would want the Assembly to elect the Majority Leader to come and step in briefly while I go down for some national duties briefly. Is that the consent of the Assembly? All right.

THE SPEAKER [*MAJORITY LEADER, HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA, IN CHAIR***]:** Yes. Member for Jimara, you can continue.

HON ESSA CONTEH [JIMARA]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, the coastal zone of The Gambia remains central… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. Hold on, please. Has your motion been seconded? Is it been seconded? How about the second one? So, any seconder, please? Yes, let us second them in sequence. Yes, Member for Lower Fulladu.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: I rise to second the first report to be adopted without amendment.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I think there was a communication from the Chair that the Clerk to deal with the reports unanimously, one by one. Now, the Chairman will read according to the communication from the Chair. From there, we can agree on it and then the seconder will come in and we continue with the debate.

THE SPEAKER: So, Honourable Members, we have agreed on a pattern. Now that he has already read the first report, which has been seconded now. The Clerk will now re-announce the second one. He will read it again and second, and then we will go for the third one in sequence. Then we will adjourn debate until at the tail end of the reporting. We will debate accordingly. Thank you. Please, continue.

Clerk, announcement, please. The Second report.

- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGOs Affairs on the Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill, 2025** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: Chairperson of the Committee, you have the floor.

HON ESSA CONTEH [JIMARA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. On behalf of the Committee, I rise to present before the Assembly a report on 'The Gambia Integrated Coastal Management Bill, 2025'. Honourable Speaker, as I said, I want to skip the ***acknowledgement*** because already we have done that. I will go straight to ***introduction*** then from there we move.

Honourable Speaker, 'The Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill, 2025' was read a second time on the 19th of November 2025 and

referred to the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs for consideration and then report. That is why we are here today to report.

Honourable Speaker, the Bill seeks to establish a coordinated and integrated framework for the management of The Gambia's coastal marine, river line, and wetland ecosystem. Given the growing challenges of coastal erosion, unregulated construction, sand and gravel mining, marine pollution, habitat degradation, and climate related vulnerabilities, the Committee recognises the strategic importance of the of a comprehensive legal regime dedicated specifically to coastal zone governance.

Honourable Speaker, the coastal zone of The Gambia remains central to national development, supporting tourism, fisheries, transportation, biodiversity, conservation and the livelihood of many communities across Banjul, KMC, Brikama, Kerewan and Mansakonko Administrative Areas. However, increasing anthropogenic pressures and environmental risks necessitated strengthening institutional coordination, effective enforcement mechanisms and participatory governance structure at national, regional and local levels.

In examining the Bill, Honourable Speaker, the Committee assessed its institutional architecture, regulatory provisions, enhanced enforcement mechanism and consistency with existing environmental laws, including the National Environment Management Act. Particular attention was paid to the establishment of Integrated Coastal Zone Management Directorate and the creation of national, regional and local integrated coastal zone management committees.

Honourable Speaker, the report, therefore, presents the Committee's observation analysis, proposed amendments and recommendations for the consideration of the National Assembly. The Committee examined the Bill in accordance with the Standing Orders and now reports to the National Assembly as follows.

Honourable Speaker, I want to skip our mandate and go to the introduction. I want to skip the Methodology and also our proceedings. Members will au fait themselves when they take the report with them to their various homes, so I will go straight to Page 9.

To conclude, the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs having carefully scrutinised 'The Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill' is satisfied that the Bill provides a comprehensive and timely legal framework for the sustainable management, protection and restoration of global framework of The Gambia coastal and marine resources in light of increasing coastal erosion, climate change impacts, biodiversity loss and unregulated development. The proposed legislation will establish the necessary institutional coordination mechanism and regulatory safeguards to ensure integrated and science based coastal governance.

Honourable Speaker, the Committee notes that the coastal zone remains vital to national development, supporting tourism, fisheries, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

Accordingly, Honourable Speaker, the Committee recommends that the National Assembly adopts the 'Integrated Coastal Zone Management Bill,

2025' subject to the amendments and observations contained in this report.

I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Clerk. yes, any seconder?

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Please, what is your point of order?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I rise on Order 29[3].

THE SPEAKER: Please, read.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. Order 29[3], essentially, my point of order is basically on the proceedings, and that there was a motion by the Member for Basse, and it was seconded that the entire bill should be read by the Chairperson. Then from there, the Committee of the Whole Assembly will consider it but not as one by one that was not the question from the Chair. The question was that the entire Bill be read by the chairperson. Then the decision will take place by the communication from you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank very much. Honourable Member. I think we are doing exactly that, but we are taking them in sequence. That is why I said once he finished reading second motion, the Clerk will now read the next report to read. He is taking everything. We are just deferring the debate. We would now have a general debate on the four reports and then adopt them as well.

Any seconder? Yes, Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded.

[Question Proposed]

Please, Clerk, let us proceed.

- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs on the Waste Management Bill, 2025** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: Chairperson, you have the floor. Please, summarise.

HON ESSA CONTEH [JIMARA]: Okay. Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Okay. I rise to present on behalf of the Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs the Report on 'The Gambia National Climate Change Bill, 2025'. For the sake of time, Honourable Speaker, I want to summarise and go straight to the introduction, which is just a few lines.

Honourable Speaker, 'The Gambian National Climate Change Bill' was read a second time on the 19th of November, 2025 and referred to the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO affairs for consideration and report back to the Plenary.

Honourable Speaker, the Committee examined the Bill in accordance with the Standing Orders and now reports to the National Assembly as follows.

As usual, we will skip the mandate, the methodology used and also the proceedings and allow Members to go through it at their own convenience.

Honourable Speaker, let me refer the Members to Page 19; that is conclusion. The Committee finds that the 'National Climate Change Bill, 2025' establishes a comprehensive legal framework for climate governance. Subject to the amendments recommended herein. The Committee recommends that the Bill be read a third time and passed.

I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Chairman. Any seconder? Yes, Member for Wuli West.

HON NFAMARA SABALLY [WULI WEST]: I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed]

Clerk may proceed.

- **Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO affairs on the Gambian National Climate Change Bill, 2025** *[By the Chairperson of the Committee]*

THE SPEAKER: I now invite the Chairperson of the Committee to table the reports.

HON ESSA CONTEH [JIMARA]: Thank you once again, Honourable Speaker. National Assembly of The Gambia, pursuant to the constitutional

mandate to enact laws for the peace, order and good governance of the Republic of The Gambia, committed the 'Waste Management Bill, 2024' to the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs for scrutiny and reports to the Plenary.

Honourable Speaker, the Bill seeks to provide a comprehensive legal framework for the management, regulation and control of waste in The Gambia, including provision of license, supervision, enforcement, hazardous waste control and the responsibilities of public authorities and private actors.

Honourable Speaker, the Committee carefully examined the provision of this Bill clause by clause with due regard to existing environmental legislations, institutional mandates and the practical realities of waste generation, collection, treatment and disposal within the country.

In the course of its scrutiny, Honourable Speaker, the Committee assessed the administrative structure proposed under this Bill, the role of local councils, the regulation of private waste operators and the enforcement mechanism intended to safeguard our public health and the environment.

Honourable Speaker, following its deliberation, the Committee agreed to the majority of the clauses without amendment. Being satisfied that they provide a sound framework for effective waste management. However, the Committee proposes specific amendments to strengthen clarity, enhance enforcement and ensure consistency with ongoing legislative reforms, particularly in relation to the administration of the act, the composition of the Waste Management advisories, committees, penalties

under licensing and false statement provision, and the renumbering of clauses under the miscellaneous part of the Bill.

The report, therefore, sets out the Committees observations and recommendations on waste management bill for the consideration of Plenary.

Honourable Speaker, I will skip the proceedings. As usual, Members will go through them. So, I refer you to a Page 12; that is the conclusion.

Honourable Speaker, the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs, therefore, viewed that the 'Waste Management Bill, 2024' is timely and necessary to address the growing challenges of waste management in The Gambia. The Bill strengthens institutional coordination, clarifies the responsibility of public authorities, public and private operators, and enhances enforcement mechanism to protect public health and the environment at large.

Honourable Speaker, the proposed amendments are intended to improve clarity, enforcement penalties to ensure compliance and align the Bill with ongoing legislative reform. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the National Assembly of The Gambia adopts the 'Waste Management Bill, 2024' with the proposed amendments.

Honourable Speaker, since this is the last report, I want to acknowledge the Members that participated in the scrutiny and also the stakeholders, the institutions and the Ministries that took part in enriching these reports. The list of the Members are as follow:

1. Hon. Yaya Gassama - Chairperson of the Committee
2. Hon. Essa Conteh - Vice Chair

3. Hon. Kebba K. Barrow - Member
4. Hon. Amadou Camara - Member
5. Hon. Madi K. Ceesay - Member
6. Hon. Saikou Bah - Member
7. Hon. Kebba Lang Fofana - Member
8. Hon. Gibbi Mballow - Member
9. Hon. Nfamara Sabally - Member
10. Hon. Lamin Ceesay - Member
11. Hon. Haruna Barry - Member
12. Hon. Bakary Kora - Member

We want to acknowledge and send our sincere appreciation and thanks to the support staff from Committee Secretariat through their Director.

1. Mr. Marabi Hydara - Director of Committee
2. Aminata Ngum - Subject Matter specialist
3. Isatou Sonko - Committee Clerk
4. Mamadou A.M. Bah - Senior Committee Clerk
5. Musukuta Faal - Senior Parliamentary Reporter
6. Binta Sonko - Intern, Committee Secretariat

You deserve a standing ovation, thank you so much.

The list of witnesses that we were able to engaged includes:

1. Dr. Saikou E. Sanyang
2. Bakary Saho
3. Lamin S. Jammeh
4. Omar Sey
5. Amadou Suwareh
6. Dr. Sarah Hope Deborah
7. Kesima Bittaye, Minister of Justice and the team

8. Mariama Ngum, Hope MC Osagie
9. Musa Sarjo
10. Mamadou Inkeh Bah
11. Mohamed Hydara, Gambia Environment Alliance
12. Sylvia Hobert
13. Isatou Ceesay
14. Mustafa Jarju
15. Lamin B.J. Sanneh
16. Mam Badou Sowe

We also want to appreciate the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Petroleum Energy and all other stakeholders that took part in the production of this report.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Chair, for ably tabling the reports. Any seconder? Yes, Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. I so second the motion and wish to partake in the debate, if possible. Honourable Speaker, we thank the Committee for a job well done.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. We are not debating now. I just asked for seconder. Then I will put the entire full reports to a vote then probably we can call for general debate.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: So, we are seconding this one only?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. Honourable Members, it has been moved and seconded that the report of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs on 'The Gambia Integrated Coastal Zone Management bill'.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members, the debate is now open for Members to partake on the four reports presented. So, any Member who wishes to contribute may raise his or her constituency tag, and it shall be captured by the Committee Secretariat.

I now recognise the Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

[Motion!]

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: Honourable Speaker, I am moving a motion under Order 53 'Motions Which May be Made Without Notice' [c] "a motion for the adjournment of a debate". So, we are moving to adjourn the debate until the Consideration Stage.

THE SPEAKER: I have heard your motion is not yet granted because 53[c] a motion without notice is at the leave of the Speaker to decide whether yes or no. So, just give me one minute to consult, and I will get back to you.

Honourable Member for Basse, I have been advised that there was an earlier motion for us to debate at the end of the presentation of the reports, so therefore, we cannot bring a counter motion again to suspend that motion. Had it been a motion at the beginning that when the reports are laid, there would not be a debate?

Then, we can consider it now, but there was an earlier motion, and the Assembly has agreed that we will debate after the conclusion of the three reports. Yes, the entire reports. That is why I am now putting the entire reports to the floor of the Assembly for anybody who wants to take part in the debate can raise his or her constituency tag and be given the floor.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, the earlier motion was by the Member himself for us to let the Committee put the entire reports together… Wait, allow me to make my submission. … to the Committee to the floor then later we can debate on but it is not. He has all rights also to move a motion to suspend the debate because it is a procedure.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. I was told that there was a motion to allow all the reports to be presented or laid, which you have voted and seconded. So, the Member for Basse is now moving a motion to suspend the debate on the aforesaid report.

Okay. Any seconder? Yes, Member for Banjul Central, please.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: I so second.

THE SPEAKER: The motion has been moved and seconded, so I now put the question.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[That the debate be suspended on the four reports presented until at Consideration Stage.]

Honourable Members, now that we have succeeded in suspending debate, I now put the four reports before the august Assembly for adoption.

I, therefore, submit the four reports of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs for the Plenary to consider and adopt.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[That the four reports of the Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs be considered and adopted by the Plenary.]

Please, Clerk, can you proceed?

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Chair, I have a concern to raise here before we go further. Sorry to alarm you on that. Honourable Chair, there is an issue we need to highlight here. The Committee will accept our report. It is already been passed.

There is an old man sitting over there since in the morning who is not from the Ministry; he is not from anywhere but he is there because of his interest on environment. At least we acknowledge his presence here because he has been sitting here since morning. So, I am appealing to you, as the Speaker, to acknowledge his presence here and say a good thank you to him.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Member for Jeshwang. On behalf of both sides of the National Assembly, let me sincerely appreciate and acknowledge our compatriot. I do not know his name, but I think Doctor Bubu Jallow for your patience and interest to nation building. Indeed, the Plenary wants to appreciate you for since morning you have been here

listening keenly to our proceedings. We want to thank you so much for coming.

On that note, Clerk, you may proceed.

5. Motion:

i. **Consideration and Reaffirmation of the National Assembly's Commitment to the One-China Policy** *[By Hon. Sainey Jawara, Member for Lower Saloum]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Clerk. Be it resolved that this Assembly do consider and reaffirm its commitment to the One-China Policy by Honourable Sainey Jawara, Member for Lower Saloum. Honourable Member, you now have the floor to present your motion.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, motion to affirm the National Assembly's commitment to the One-China Policy.

Honourable Speaker, I rise to move a motion for the august Assembly to adopt and establish a parliamentary diplomacy that fully embraces the One-China Policy, because there is only one China in the world. Under this principle, the government of the People's Republic of China is recognised as the sole legitimate government representing all of China, and Taiwan is acknowledgeable as undeniable part of China's Territory.

Honourable Speaker, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of The Gambia established formal diplomatic ties in 1974, just 9 years after The Gambia regained its independence. Since then, our two nations have shared a strong commitment to South-South cooperation found in a

mutual respect, solidarity and the shared desire for a more equitable global order.

The position is firmly grounded in international law relevant to the United Nations' General Assembly Resolutions, including Resolution Number 2758. The National Assembly of The Gambia opposes Taiwan's independence in any form and firmly support all efforts of the Chinese government to unify the country.

Honourable Speaker, the One-China Policy is a cornerstone of international diplomacy. It recognises the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, serving international relations, promoting regional stability and safeguarding global economic interests. Adoption of this principle ensures The Gambia's alignment with the majority of nations globally, including major powers, and underscores our commitment to a rule based international order.

Honourable Speaker, over the past 5 decades, collaboration between China and The Gambia has grown across multiple sectors including political, economic, cultural, educational and infrastructural development. China's unbearable support for The Gambia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity has been protected by our steadfast commitment to One-China Principle.

Many Gambians would recall China's contribution during the 1980s under the leadership of our first President, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. During that period, China provided technical assistance to rural development, introduced innovative rice production techniques at Jahally-Pacharr Rice

Field and deployed health specialists to Bansang Hospital and Kaur health Care to a critical referral facility in rural Gambia.

Honourable Speaker, our political relations with the People's Republic of China were formally established on the 14th of December 1974. These relations were suspended by the Former President, Yahya Jammeh, when The Gambia resumed diplomatic ties with Taiwan from July 1995 to November 2013.

However, The Gambia cut its relation with Taiwan on the 17th of March 2016. China and The Gambia sent a joint communiqué to resume diplomatic ties by September 2024. The two countries had advanced to a strategic partnership.

In September 2024, His Excellency President Adama Barrow attended the Beijing Summit of the forum on China-Africa cooperation, further solidifying our bilateral relations. Research indicates that since the reinstatement of diplomatic relations, between 2016 and 2024, over 400 Gambian students have received scholarships to study in China, which positively impact our education system and supporting national reform across multiple sectors, including building bridges and roads in URR.

Honourable Speaker, it is also important to highlight China's tangible support to this National Assembly during the Fifth Legislature in 2018, when the People's Republic of China generously provided critical parliamentary resources, including laptops, photocopiers, and printers.

This support significantly enhanced the operational efficiency of the National Assembly, facilitating better legislative research, documentations and constituency service delivery. Such contributions demonstrate a

continued commitment to strengthen The Gambia's democratic institutions and National Assembly capacity.

Honourable Speaker, we continue this partnership and relationship between China and The Gambia to present a win-win opportunity for both nations. We aim at strengthening the spirit of friendship, mutual learning and shared prosperity. we can write the next chapter of our long-standing partnership together. The Gambia and China promoting a community of prosperity.

Honourable Speaker, before I submit the Government of The Gambia and the People's Republic of China on the 6th of January 2016 signed a grant assistance agreement amounting to ***100 million Chinese Yuan*** to reaffirm the strong bond of friendship and cooperation between the two countries, where it was signed by the Foreign Affairs Minister.

Honourable Speaker, to submit, I move that this august Assembly formally adopt and uphold the One-China Principle as a guide from work to our parliamentary diplomacy.

I submit, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Lower Saloum, for that brilliant motion presented to the National Assembly and who doubles as the deputy, the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Gambians abroad.

Any seconder? Yes, Honourable Member for Old Yundum and Deputy Majority Leader.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I so second the motion and of course, equally want to express my appreciation for this motion for the simple reason that China, as a country, has a long-standing relationship with The Gambia. And we all know that China has been a very supportive partner to The Gambia, the country that we all reside in.

And when it comes to benefit, I think The Gambia stands to benefit from China more than what China would benefit from The Gambia. So, for The Gambia and National Assembly Members of The Gambia to acknowledge and accept that there is only one China in the world, I think that is a great move that this National Assembly should take.

Of course, we have seen the Ambassador and the government of China coming to The Gambia and then supporting our Government and the people of this country. The Gambia, as a nation, should not be part of what is going to divide China. Our role is to ensure that China, as a country, is one, and there is no other country that will be divided from China.

I think the motion is apt, and I am in support of this very important motion, that is just to say that we appreciate what they are doing for this country, and then we will continue to strengthen the relationship that we had with them.

Thank you so very much.

THE SPEAKER [MAJORITY LEADER In CHAIR]: Thank you very much, the Right Honourable Member for Old Yundum and Deputy Majority Leader for seconding the motion. Now, let me put the question.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members who wish to take the floor may raise their constituency tags for recognition. I have the intervention list. I now recognise the Member for Niamina Dankunku.

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, let me join my colleague to support the reaffirmation of the One-China Policy.

Honourable Speaker, the motion we have in front of us is not creating a new China policy, but aligning the National Assembly with the decision of the Executive.

The motion here informs us that the President of the Republic, His Excellency Adama Barrow, in one of his trips in China, actually supports the One-China Policy which we all once witnessed. Then what we are doing here, Honourable Speaker, is actually in line with what the Executive is doing.

Honourable Speaker, I think this motion came at the right time. Knowing the geopolitical situation within the world today, I think countries aligning with China is to their own interests, both in development and in security.

Honourable Speaker, when countries are allowing other citizens to pay ***$15,000*** for a bond just for you to enter their country, China is saying no, we will take you to our country, train you and bring you back. I think aligning or recognising a diplomatic relationship with this country is very apt.

Honourable Speaker, today, if you look at what is happening in the world, all countries are aligning with China for their safety and security. We see what is happening in Iran today. Why is Iran, during an intense war, recognising only Chinese ships to pass through that channel where all the ships carrying petroleum and others? They have stopped all other nation except China. Why? It is for their security. And we are living in a world today, if I am more powerful or I have more military might than you, I would not worry to attack you if you have a lot of mineral or natural resources.

So, today, this is a very important motion. China is one of the superpowers of the world, but China did not make anybody cry. China did not show anybody that it has the population or the military might, you are this and I will do that.

So, in essence, for us today as National Assembly and people's representatives, if we join our voice to align with what our Executive, His Excellency and his Government, did, I think this is the right position that this National Assembly should take, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, on that note, I will not belabour on the motion, but the motion has also mentioned the economic aspect. Anybody who knows China knows its economic support, especially we the people from the rural Gambia as he has mentioned benefits relating to Kaur Health Care, Bansang Hospital and Jahally-Pachar. All these projects were once developed with China. So, reaffirming our diplomatic relationship, Honourable Speaker, is very apt.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Niamina Dankunku. Now, I would invite the Member for Tumana.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor to join my Honourable Colleagues to register our appreciations to Honourable Member for Lower Saloum for bringing up with this motion; that is to reaffirm the National Assembly's commitment to One-China Policy.

I also think this is something that comes at the right time, which definitely every one of us, especially we from the rural Gambia. We know what China has been doing for us, especially in the area of agriculture. So, I think that is something very, very important.

Honourable Speaker, taking you to a paragraph that states: *"Honourable Speaker, over the past 5 decades, collaboration between China and The Gambia has grown across multiple sectors, this includes political, economic, cultural, education and infrastructural development."*

So, this alone is very, very important, and we can all attest to the fact that China has been standing by us to make sure we are developed culturally, politically, economically and even agriculturally. So, during the time we were young, we were having rice abundantly because of the help of China or thanks to the Chinese projects. So therefore, Honourable Speaker, I think this is very, very important.

Honourable Speaker, we all know that Gambian students go to China to study, and the motion shows 400 students. I think this is something very important, so we should all come together to support.

In fact, all the arms of the Government… like what the National Assembly is doing right now to align ourselves with the Executive so that we can all reaffirm our commitment with the diplomacy that is happening between The Gambia and China.

Honourable Speaker, we are National Assembly Members for 4 years now, and we all understand some Parliament cannot go without certain critical resources. So, if China happens to come to the aid of the National Assembly of the Republic of the Gambia, I think that is very important.

So, with those few points I mentioned right now, I think I will also join my colleague to appeal to my colleagues to support and adopt the motion.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. I now invite the Member for Jeshwang to take the floor.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Chair. I thank the new Chinese Embassy representing China and Honourable Jawara for coming up with the motion in the National Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, just as he mentioned in his motion, The Gambia benefited a lot and still continuing to benefit from China. My only appeal to him is to go back and tell Chinese that we still need help to attain food self-sufficiency by bringing back Jahally Pacharr as it used to be in the olden days.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Now, the Member for Kantora and Majority Leader, you have the floor.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I do not think I will do justice to the Foreign Affairs Committee as the Chairman for not contributing to this very important and timely motion for us to reaffirm or affirm our commitment to the One-China Policy.

Honourable Speaker, it may interest you to know the rationale behind One-China Policy. It is an indication that China is one and cannot be divided; that China would not be subjected to secession. There would not be a breakaway and that the government of China is the sole legal government representing the entire China. It also reaffirmed that separating Taiwan and China are unnegotiable. Taiwan is part of China and that is why it is explicitly provided that the inalienable part of China territory is Taiwan.

So, therefore, we thank the National Assembly Member, who happened to be the Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, for ably drafting this motion for our Assembly to reaffirm our commitment in line with the position of Government. The Gambia has always been known to supporting and promoting the One-China Policy agenda. Foreign relations or bilateral relations should be in a platform of win-win situation, and if you study China's foreign policy very well, you would realise that it is against power of hegemony.

China does not prognose in the affairs of sovereign states; it is against the Chinese policy to interfere or meddle in the affairs of a sovereign national states. China does not dictate which regime should come or go. They believe in promotion of their culture and diversities. They believe that our diversity should be our strength, not our cause.

And China has leveraged that since the time of Mao Zedong, Chairman Mao. If I should take you history memory lane back, he is the bedrock or the foundation of China's advancement. Today, China is developing. China used its human resources to translate them into assets, into national force to advance the rapid growth of what they are experiencing today.

So, therefore, this should be a clarion call for every nation state to invest in human capital. So, as a Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, I cannot do otherwise than to support and align myself with this motion; that we stand resolute.

The National Assembly of The Gambia will stand resolute unequivocal terms with our Executive on the leadership of His Excellency President Adama Barrow to promote, amplify and advocate the One-China Policy everywhere we found ourselves. We are recipients of several interventions and assistances, particularly in the region where I hail from.

I was part and parcel of people of the National Assembly in the past Legislature, the 5th Legislature, who stood in this hallowed Chamber to add our voices into a grand support of ***75 million USD*** to build roads and bridges in the URR by the ***Long John Company*****.** This has really not only created the enabling environment for people in Europe to strive but also opened a window of opportunity to uplift the lives and livelihoods of

people in that particular region where I hail from, which I am a beneficiary to two bridges. The first bridge was named after my own village Suduwol Bridge, and the other bridge was built in my constituency called Fatoto Bridge.

So, we remain highly indebted and appreciative of the benevolent gesture China has contributed to the advancement of our country. If I am the name, I will keep speaking here till tomorrow, the list goes on.

The recent intervention of ***50 million USD*** has been given to the Government of The Gambia to put a state-of-the-art infrastructure, a conference centre for the people of The Gambia. They built this magnificent edifice where The Gambia now can also boast of hosting international conferences that has given birth or yield results for The Gambia under the leadership of His Excellency, President Adama Barrow as Chairman of OIC to host the OIC conference in this country. This could not have been possible without the intervention of China.

Honourable Speaker, not only that, the Chinese government has also intervened in the areas of agriculture, capacity building of our National Assembly Members not once, not twice but in both the past legislature and the current legislature in terms of equipping them with the requisite knowledge to make sure that they can conduct their affairs smoothly. And I call on them to come to our aid once more in terms of addressing the challenges in infrastructure of office space for most of the National Assembly.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs will definitely take up the challenge and also try to make sure that we engage our Assembly partners through

Assembly diplomacy to make sure that other governments or other partners come to our aid to create the office space challenge that we are confronted with.

Honourable Speaker, let me conclude by thanking the Member for Lower Saloum for bringing up this motion. I am not surprised, for he hailed from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad as my own deputy. So, therefore, he counts on our support. We will stand resolute behind you to reaffirm our commitment to One-China Policy.

I submit.

THE SPEAKER: I do not know, but from Kantora to Lower Saloum is a long distance. Thank you very much. But from Lower Saloum to Kantora, of course you will go through Janjanbureh. Thank you.

Honourable Members, may I now call upon the mover of the motion to respond to each… Nominated Member Maimuna Ceesay-Darboe, I see your tag. Do you want to take part in the debate? Please, go ahead.

HON MAINUNA CEESAY [NOMINATED]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would also like to join my colleagues to thank the mover of the motion. This motion cannot come at a better time than now.

History has already spoken for The Gambia what we benefited from China. In the 80s, I was at a very young age, but I think I can emphasise on something which I have a privilege on. One of my family members was involved in a serious accident when the Chinese doctors were in charge of the RVTH. At that time, we called the hospital as Royal Victoria

Teaching Hospital. That scenario shows that the 1995 withdrawal of The Gambia from China's bilateral cooperation was a setback for the country. Had it been The Gambia was with China up to date, probably our health sector would have improved better.

In those days, that was 1986, my brother was involved in a serious accident, and we said that he would not make it. My father was insisting that he had to be repatriated to Senegal, but I can vividly remember there was a Chinese doctor who faced my dad telling him that he could do the job. He said, "if saving your child is paramount to you, I would like you to allow me to save your son's life for you." But at that time, my father did not say anything because he believed that The Gambia did not have the capacity and there cannot be a better…

The only option he had was a hospital in Senegal called Fann Hospital. Still now I did have that in my mind, but this particular gentleman stood up insisting he would take the security and the life of my brother to his level to save him. He was in coma for almost 14 days, but eventually, thanks to the expertise from China in those days, this is 1986. If we can survive that health collaboration with China in those days, I believe 1995 was a real setback for our health sector.

Honourable Speaker, concerning infrastructural development in The Gambia, let us start it from 2016 after the change of government China has greatly contributed in URR. At least my Serahule sons never have a tar road, but thanks to China government for contributing 75 million to make sure that the URR people also enjoy tar road. Thanks to the China government and the China policy.

Honourable Speaker, we believe that the Taiwan-China issue should not even be a word of discussion right now because we all know the reality is just a kind of lobbying for some people to be on the track or foreside. But the China policy has already overshadowed and dominated. The reality is a minority cannot rule majority, and they cannot have themselves because they have been part of China. Taiwan cannot go out of China. The debate might not even have to be prolonged on this. I do not see that.

Honourable Speaker, before I take my seat, parliamentary diplomacy also needs to be at least strengthened. The National Assembly has benefited. I was not part of the 5th Legislature, but we heard that they benefited so much. And this 6th Legislature, I was also once giving the privilege to attend capacity building in China, and that gave us so much exposure, and we know how parliamentarians operate internationally.

The bilateral relationship was also built up. It builds our capacity and when we go to international forums, we represent The Gambia fully because that was the first benchmark I have ever benefited from the National Assembly, apart from other parliamentary procedures.

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues for us all to embrace this motion. We will make sure that the China policy exists, and The Gambia will always be a beneficiary of it. We do not think we will lose anything.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Nominated Member Maimuna Ceesay. You see, that is why we always want to give opportunity to our women, for

they bring the other part of humanity and humanitarianism. May I now call upon the mover of the motion to respond to issues.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, just to extend my gratitude to the Office of the Clerk, the Speaker and the Government of the day because this motion has gone through a robust scrutiny by even the Government; that shows their commitment on this.

We do not just jump and raise the motion. It has gone through procedures up to the Foreign Affairs Office. We must thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs that worked together to see that this motion and our alignment to international best practices are in place by the Members of the National Assembly.

On that note, I thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Lower Saloum. I will now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this august Assembly do consider and reaffirm its commitment to the One-China Policy.]

Clerk, we may proceed.

6. **Adjournment**

THE SPEAKER: Oh, that is all. Honourable members, I want to thank you all. It has been a very long day even though we are all fasting. But I

pray that Allah 'Subhanahu Wa Ta' ala' accept our fast and reward us the blessing of the fast.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Assembly stand adjourned until Monday, 9th March 2026, at 10:00 a.m. prompt]

[The Speaker slammed the Gavel against the sound block to signal the end of the proceedings.]

THE END