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[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

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Tuesday, 24th March 2026

MOTIONS & BILL

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1. **Prayers**

The Assembly met at 10:30 a.m. in New Assembly Building, Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul]

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, Reads the Prayers].

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, in Chair].

The House was called to Order.

Clerk, let us proceed.

2. **Corrections and approval of the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday, 23rd March 2026**

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday, 23rd 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, Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I so move.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Jarra Central. Any seconder? Yes, Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members, we all have copies of the said Record of Votes and Proceedings and as usual, we will look through it page by page beginning with Page 1 to be followed by your comments.

Honourable Members, we move to Page 2. Yes, Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Under motion, second line, it is 'African Mineral Strategy'. It should be "African minerals Strategy"; that is the charter.

THE SPEAKER: The word 'mineral' should be in plural to be read as "African Minerals Strategy Group". Thank you, Honourable Member for Wuli East. Any more on Page 2? All right.

Honourable Members, we move to Page 3, Number 55, the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu should be moved because he has taken permission from me. Honourable Kemo Gassama should be moved to those absent with permission.

Honourable Members, we now move to Page 4. Yes, Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. On the motion without notice, I would prefer we rephrase the way it is framed. The third line "consider including the recommendations that were inadvertently missing in the original report in addition to any other recommendations from the Members as an appendix to the report", I think that would be the best way to capture that.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: What we have is 'including the recommendations on companies and other recommendations in the earlier report as an appendix'.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, that is what we have.

THE SPEAKER: That is what we have. So, you want that to be replaced?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Come back on your proposal.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I want that to be replaced to say, "consider including the recommendations that were inadvertently missing in the original report in addition to any other recommendation from the Members as an appendix to the report".

THE SPEAKER: All inclusive?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, because it was…

THE SPEAKER: So, can we capture it, please? Yea, you can read it for us. Including…

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: "The recommendations that were inadvertently missing in the original report in addition to any other recommendations from the Members as an appendix to the report".

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Wuli East. Any more, Honourable Members, on Page 4? Page 5. Yes, Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Motion without Notice, second line where you have "communication", the bill is "Communications Bill".

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: On the second line, the word 'communication' should take plural inflection 's'. Any more on Page 5? Okay, I now put the question.

[Question proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday, 23rd March 2026, be approved with Amendments.]

Honourable Members, may I on your behalf acknowledge the presence of the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice as well as the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy; you are most welcome.

3. Motions:

i. **Matter of the Day in accordance with Standing Order 51** *[By the Hon. Member for Foni Kansala]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, my office is in receipt of a request made by the Honourable Member for Foni Kansala seeking permission under Order 51[1 & 2] of our Standing Orders to make a statement to the Assembly on Cross-Border Conflict, Internal Displacement and Protection of Gambian Sovereignty in the Foni border communities.

Honourable Members, having considered the request of the Honourable Member under the provisions of Standing Order 51[3a, b, c & d] and 51[5] and noting that the request has satisfied the Standing Orders' provision, I now grant the Honourable Member leave to make his statement to the Assembly.

However, I wish to draw the attention of Honourable Members to Order 51[8] of the Standing Orders that the time allocated for the Matters of the Day shall not exceed 3 minutes for Honourable Members who may wish to make statements. And the time allowed for Matters of the Day is 30 minutes. Therefore, I also urge Honourable Members to observe Order 51[9] of our Standing Orders for guidance.

May I now call on the Honourable Member for Foni Kansala to make his statement to the Assembly. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The Matter of the Day on Cross Border Conflict, Internal Displacement and Protection of Gambian sovereignty in the Foni border communities.

Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Order 51[1 & 2] of our Standing Orders, I respectfully sought your permission to raise the matter of urgent public importance before this august Assembly on this day 24th March 2026.

Honourable Members, I rise today with a heavy heart to bring before this august Assembly a matter of great national concern on the directly affected peace, safety and dignity of Gambian citizens living along our Southern borders.

Recent confrontations between the Senegalese Armed Forces and Elements of the Movement of Democratic Force of Casamance have escalated dangerously and the consequences are now being felt within our territories. What begins on the 12th of March as an armed class has over the days intensified into a sustained conflict along the Casamance-Gambia borderline with serious implications for our people.

Honourable Speaker, the impact on the communities are devastating. Villages within the Foni Bintang Karanai, namely: Jakine, Kayengha, Kamosor, Batendeng Ajapineh and Giffanga, have been forced into

displacement. Families have fled their homes in fear seeking refuge in the neighbouring communities such as Sibanor, Tampoto, Kabaocorr while others have been hosted in Foni Kansala such as Dobong, Burock, Sangajorr, Kurundulai and Jomo Kunda.

These are not just statistics; these are our people. These are families who have abandoned their homes, their farms, their animals, and their daily lives in search of safety. Schools along the borders have been shut down, livelihoods have been disrupted, and most painfully, these communities were unable to observe the recent Eid-ul-Fitr prayers as a scarce moment of unity, gratitude because they were scared and afraid and displaced.

Honourable Members, this situation demands urgent and compassionate intervention. I, therefore, call on the Government of The Gambia, particularly through the National Disaster Management Agency, to immediately provide humanitarian assistance in the form of food, shelter and essential services to all the internally displaced persons currently taking refuge in various communities.

Honourable Speaker, this is not merely an issue of internal displacement, it is a matter of national protection and sovereignty. It is deeply concerning that a press release dated 21st March 2026 purportedly issued by the National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordination Centre [NCCRM] misrepresented that the affected villages are located in Casamance. This is false, misleading and unacceptable.

Jakine Alkalo's name is Ousman Boto Tamba; Kamansor Alkalo is Faye Jarju; Batendeng Alkalo is Modou Jammeh; Kayengha Alkalo is Mbemba

Sanyang and Jiffanga Alkalo is Modou Gibba. Jakine, Kayengha, Kamansor, Batendeng, Ajapineh and Jiffanga are all Gambian villages. The people of these communities are Gambian citizens who contribute to the nation and deserve to be recognized and protected as such.

I, therefore, call for an immediate public apology and correction from the NCCRM, and I urge all institutions to verify information before issuing statements that may mislead the public and undermine national integrity.

Honourable Speaker, as we speak, the situation remains that bullets from ongoing conflict are crossing into Gambian territory. In Sibanor, a family compound was struck and property were damaged. Women's garden in Sibanor was hit with bullets which installed fear though fortunately, no lives were lost.

In villages such as Kaimo, Suol, Kainga, Janack, Oupot, and Jiffanga gun fires continue to panic forcing families to flee to distance and unfamiliar places within the Foni's. This is unacceptable, Honourable Speaker. Our constitution is clear; Section 213[1] of the 1997 Constitution states: *"The State and all citizens of The Gambia shall endeavour to protect and enhance national sovereignty including social, political and economic independence and territorial integrity"*. Yet again, Honourable Speaker, our sovereignty has been tested and our people are living in fear due to conflict not of their making.

I, therefore, call on the President of The Gambia to urgently engage his Senegalese counterpart and saw an immediate cessation of any action that endangers Gambians' lives and territory.

I also urge the Honourable Minister of Defence and the Chief of Defence Staff to engage directly with the Senegalese counterpart to prevent further incursion and ensure that no bullet from a foreign conflict land on the Gambian soil again.

Honourable Speaker, this is a moment that calls for unity, urgent and decisive action. Our people are looking up to us for protection, leadership and assurance that their lives matter. We must not fail them.

I so move, Honourable Speaker. 'As-salamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh'.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Foni Kansala. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for those who wish to partake towards the statements.

I remind you of the relevant orders of the Standing Orders and that the time is altogether 30 minutes and each Member does not have more than 3 minutes. It is already midday, and I already have with me 11 names so far. We will stop immediately the 30 minutes is concluded.

I now invite the Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I gladly rise to second the motion and also partake in the Matter of the Day and also stand by it.

Honourable Speaker, it is sad that our people are going through the situation that they are going through. And since on the 12th of March, we

have constantly experienced constant bombardment within the Foni borderline, and this bombardment never stopped. Even during the very day of Koriteh, we experienced heavy bombardment with constant shells and many bullets landing in the Foni area.

Now, what is more surprising is that we have not seen the Minister of Defence come out and condemn it in public. We have not seen the President come out and talk about this as if this is normal and appreciated by them.

Honourable Speaker, we the people of Foni are solely under the protection of this Government, and we want our affairs to be considered, especially in the border areas. We have been crying since 2022, and we continue to cry until date. Constant shells landing in Foni is unacceptable and will never be accepted as well.

And also, most of the people will run away from responsibility, especially the Government and they will come up with accusations that Fonis are harbouring rebels. It is not our duty to stop the rebels from entering into Foni. It is the responsibility of The Gambia Armed Forces plus the Government with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence to protect us and protect arm robbers from coming and protect us from any kind of harm.

And people just want to lose their responsibility because they could not take up the responsibility and do not want to stand and defend their people. They are telling us that we are harbouring rebels. We have never for once harboured any rebels, and let them understand our situation. If

this situation is happening in Basse, we will talk about it; if it is happening in Jarra Soma, Janjanbureh and in any other part of the country, it is our primary responsibility to protect and defend our people as an obligation upon us, and we cannot negate that.

When the people leave their destiny and evacuate, what happen to the animals that are there? What happen to their cattle? What happen to the sheep and goats? They are leaving behind their livelihood and also their education because the Constitution is very clear that right to education is a fundamental human right. And once they leave their schools and all other places, where will they have that right to education?

So, I call on the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Defence, especially the Minister of Defence. I call him many times; he refused to pick my call. It is not acceptable and this is sad. They must be responsible.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai. Honourable Member for Kiang West, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. Representation is an honour and it does not matter how long you spend representing your people. What matters is what you do with the little time you have spent representing your people. It does not matter how well you have spoken but has it impacted the lives of the people represented. That is what matters.

Honourable Member, this is not just your representative responsibility but a mandate upon you to raise this matter to policy makers for them to discuss important matters as this.

Do we have control over matters and conflicts within Senegal? No. But our territorial integrity must be respected by our neighbouring countries. We do not have control over what happens within Senegal but shells landing within our country. And of course, conflicts around anywhere in the world, communities around the border suffers, but does the leadership sit down without watching it? No, you discussed about it; you engaged counterparts to ensure that you are able to control that. This is what we expect from a responsible and responsive leadership.

But so far, what we have seen as well as that press release is not sufficient. We expected a spot visit, physical visits to discuss with the community members to see what they feel and the situation around them. But if that is not happening, just to issue a press release is not sufficient.

So, therefore, as representatives, we must do away with politics, sentiments and subjectivity as far as this matter is concerned, and approach it in a bipartisanship manner. Otherwise, these people are victims today, but any community can be a victim as well. There are so many border communities around the country, not just only Foni. We must be sensitive about these matters.

And of course, Ministries of Defence and Interior are security heads, but who is the Chief Security Head? It is the Commander-in-Chief and that is the President of the country. He must wake up, talk about it and engage

counterparts to ensure that there is an immediate cessation of allowing bullets or shells to land on the soils of this country. This speaks about the integrity and the sovereignty of our country. And we must stand and speak about it.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I want to say thank you very much. Honourable Member for Foni Kansala, we are with you in this struggle and we want*... [Interrupted]*

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Member for Foni Kansala, for bringing this important topic of discussion.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, I want to go back to history. Casamance conflict started in the 1980s when MFDC was created, but it was born out of liberation or a kind of independence. So, Gambia is affected a lot during the war from 1980s to now, particularly during the former President's regime because he was accused of aiding and abetting the Casamance rebels. Whether it is true or not, that is something else.

Honourable Speaker, here we are; peace is a rare commodity and it is fundamental. The war is taking place in Senegal, Casamance, but Gambians are suffering. The refugees we received according to the Matter of the Day are causing a lot of burden to the Gambian people. The bullets

that are coming from Senegal, Casamance, into The Gambia, who is safe? Our children's education has been interrupted.

Honourable Speaker, our agriculture has also been interrupted. Animals were killed or displaced. Honourable Speaker, the war or conflict in Casamance leads to a lot of insecurity in the subregion. This is a long running war that has been taking place in Casamance region. It leads to drug trafficking and armed struggle. We need to come as a nation or as a subregion…

What is ECOWAS and AU doing about the Casamance conflict? This is beyond Gambia. We have to look at the continental or subregional level. We want this war to come to an end. There were lot of efforts, as we know there was a ceasefire in 1991 and a peace agreement in 2024, so people now thought this war is no more or the conflict is over while it is not. It is coming up. So, what do we do as a country? The Government of The Gambia must take the lead to discuss with Senegal, their counterpart.

Honourable Member, I wish you are in the Security Committee and raise this matter at your security level. You brought taxation here for the security sector, and now you are adding taxes for the security sector to get money. This problem must be solved. Tell them that we need the money now so that the problem can be solved. Let them also involve the stakeholders we discussed.

Thank you.

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

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much.

I am in solidarity with the people of Foni. We all know what is happening there right now. It is very unfortunate and sad as Honourable Member for Foni Kansala just highlighted. This fight has just been going for many years. Since I was a toddler or not yet born, it has been going on. I think as a government we also have our responsibility as conflict cannot solve any issue.

So, I think it is better for both sides to restrain and stop fighting because the most important thing is for both sides to discuss this issue so that we can bring an end to this war in Casamance. The people are affected whether you like it or not. This is not about politics but about facts and realities. We are all affected whether you know it or not. No one in this Chamber can say that he/she does not have a family in Foni. We are all related.

Honourable Speaker, I have one issue concerning the National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordinating Centre. If you go through their 21st March press release, you will realize that they have mentioned that people living in the affected communities had to flee from their communities to come and settle in The Gambia. Those communities are in The Gambia, not in Casamance.

So, I think this is something very important because communities like Jakine, Kabasor, Battendeng, Ajapineh, Kayanga and Jiffanga are all within The Gambia. So obviously our Gambian communities are affected.

So, I think it is very important for Government to engage their Senegalese counterparts so that the fighting can come to an end because there is no winner in fighting. The information we got is that there are certain areas that do not perform the Koriteh Prayer, which is very sad. I think we have to address this issue maturely and diplomatically because anger or sentiment cannot resolve it.

So, I urge all of us to put our hands on deck so that we can ask the Government to come out and engage their counterparts to end this war in Casamance. The people of Foni, we are very sorry for what is happening.

Honourable Speaker, I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West. I now invite the Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol.

HON KEBBA T. SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me opportunity to add my voice to the Matter of the Day.

I need not say anything since the previous speakers have already stated what I wanted to say. However, Honourable Speaker, we cannot be here when the people we represent are displaced and running away from bullets not originating from our country, but from a foreign land.

I know there is an agreement between The Gambia and Senegal, which is called Hot Pursuit, but no agreement will supersede our Constitution. What is happening at the borders is unacceptable. This war started when I was a child. We have our farmlands at the border villages. Before it caused no threat to anyone who seek refuge in The Gambia; you are safe immediately you cross the border. But this time, things have come to be different.

We have never experienced this in both Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara's and President Jammeh's governments. There was a refugee camp located in my constituency, Foni Jarrol, at Arang Koli Kunda. When they used to accuse the former President of harbouring rebels in that refugee camp, that led to the transfer or the closure of that refugee camp and then relocated in North Bank.

But still things continue, and our borders were well protected. No bullets land in The Gambia, and any refugee who crossed to The Gambia are safe. This is no longer happening, we cannot be here when you speak, and people see it as Foni issue. What is even sad about it, in the Middle East, where war is going on; the government came out to make a statement while in Foni where our people are running away from bullets, the government is still silenced about it. What is going on? That is my question?

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol. I now invite the Honourable Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, after listening to the statement from my Honourable colleague, Honourable Member from Kansala, the statement is disheartening. Disheartening in the sense that, this is not the first time such things are happening in the Foni region.

Honourable Speaker, Foni is part of the Gambia, whether we accept it or not. Foni is 100% part of the Gambia and the Fonikers are taxpayers. So, when they have issues affecting them, it is the responsibility of the government of the Day to make sure these people are safe. The government have been mute when it comes to issues like Foni.

Honourable Members, we cannot be sitting in our comfort zones comfortably when we have our fellow citizens being traumatized. As genuine Members of Parliament, we should not be quiet about it. It is our responsibility, whether ruling party supporters or opposition supporters, we are all one family as Gambians.

So as Honourable Members, let us come together and speak with one voice and call the Government of the Day to take its turn when it comes to the issue of Foni. So, I am calling on the Government of the Day to act now than later.

Honourable Speaker, I thank you for giving me the floor.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Bakau. I now invite the Honourable Member for Kombo East.

HON ABDOU SOWE [KOMBO EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I must commend my colleague Honourable Member for Foni Kansala for bring up this important Matter of the Day.

Honourable Speaker, I must remind my Honourable colleague representing Foni region, it is disheartening to see people displaced while the culprits are within that community and I think it is about time for the same Members of Parliament to get into their communities and filter them, to speak to people and try to identify those people causing this havoc within the communities.

This is a border point where people are interrelated, we all understand as a country, for us to defend our sovereignty is not about government alone; it has to be the people collectively. We have to stop this double standard attitude.

We have to be very sincere and frank to be apolitical and bring these things sincerely. If I truly love my country, I will defend my country as a person and I must defend my community.

As a representative of Kombo East, I am affected. Previously, our Alkalos and Village Elders ensure that before they accommodate any member from the southern conflict part, must be screened, give reasons, and must be warned to desist from involving in conflict, in other part of the country. Gambia and Senegal are boarded and these border lines, are still on the demarcation strategy, which is yet to be cleared.

If we allow our own people, we ignore them crossing the borders and then going for these illicit transactions, coming back to the same country and occupying and deliberately attempting to live on the borderline to create havoc at the border. I think it is about time for Honourable Members to get together and, frankly, get into this.

I concur with my colleague, the Honourable Member of Central Baddibu. As he said, we are Elected Members and we are here to serve the interests of the Gambian people. We are not here to use this gallery to bring our popularity aside, we have to be sincere. We are in various Committees of the National Assembly here, wherein we have to conduct our oversight and our functions.

As we are, we have to refer ourselves back to engage committees, and frankly, serve this National Assembly's interest as people that has taken an oath to serve people. I urge my colleague Members to get to the table and frankly get back to our people and do this work diligently, not taking it by sides or by sentiment. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Kombo East. I now invite the Honourable Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, thank you much for giving me the floor.

Honourable Speaker, Gambia is not complete without Foni, which I believe. We all agree in that principle that Foni is part of Gambia. I stand with the Member for Foni Kansala, to extend our heartfelt sympathy to those who

are displaced and who could not perform the holy month of Ramadan, Eid festive period. We want to send our prayers for Allah to continue see them through.

Honourable Speaker, the prayers advanced in the Matter of the Day need to be looked at because the Member quoted Section 213, National Sovereignty and Independence. This is not in any way trying to undermine the sovereignty of this country or in any way taking away the independence of our country.

I will refer the Member to the relevant Section he has quoted; that is the Fundamental Human Rights, Section 17[2]. *'Every person in the Gambia, whether his or her race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, National social origin, property, birth or status shall be entitled to fundamental human rights, freedoms and individual protection as far as this country is concerned'*.

The government of the Gambia is fully aware of what is happening in Foni. Like Member for Central Baddibu said, this has been a long dragging war within Senegal. There must be a spill over effect; whenever there is a border conflict, the next neighbour suffers. But that does not suffice the Gambian government is keeping silent or is even aiding or abetting this conflict.

The Gambia government has no interest in this conflict and it remain resolute in the protection of lives and property of every citizen, regardless of your race, language or where you hail from. The government is willing

to make sure that every citizen in this country deserve the right to every right that have been guaranteed under this Constitution.

So, Honourable Speaker, in as much as we sympathise with Foni, we also urge communities to take up responsibility. When you say government, who are government? We are the government and we have a very important responsibility as community leaders, opinion shapers, stakeholders to talk to our people and sensitize them, not to involve in any illicit or any illegal activities within the border.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Kansala, when you put up your motion, nobody commented. Please! Thank you, Honourable Member for Kantora. I now invite the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for coming up with this very important national concern.

Honourable Speaker, is not an easy matter. A conflict is raging in a neighbouring country and affecting our country. So, it is not an easy matter. But it is also not very difficult to be able to tackle it, because we are friendly nation to Senegal where this thing is happening. So, I think a lot of collaboration should take place to be able to nip this in the board.

Honourable Speaker, I think what we need to do is what we call multi-layered approach. The multi-layer approach will combine military security, it will also combine community engagement like the Majority Leader said.

It will also take into consideration regional cooperation to ensure that we tackle these matters headlong.

Honourable Speaker, apart from conflict in the other side of the border, we also know that there are other things like transboundary crimes, which is something like terrorism, instability etc., and drug trafficking and all this increases crime across the border.

Honourable Speaker, we have the institutions in place. We have the joint patrols; we have already dealt with it here. We need to ensure that we create structures at the border so that the state will always be present at the border, so that when something happens, they will be able to tackle it. The money we are putting together here, 1.5 to joint patrols, should not be used for anything but to ensure that it is used for what it is intended and we believe that it is not a small money. 1.5 of all the imported goods that are taxable into the country will not be small money, and we believe that if it is used properly and used in the areas where it is badly needed, the problem should be solved.

Honourable Speaker, between these two countries, I believe we should be able to address the situation, because we have the Police, the Army, the Immigration and we have the State Intelligent Service [SIS] men. When they all combined on a continuous basis with early warning system intact and appropriately used, we should be able to solve the problem. At least, be able to mitigate the problems of our own people to ensure that the affection that they have will be reduced.

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

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Wuli East. I now invite the Honourable Member for Sami.

Honourable Members, we have almost come to the end of the 30 minutes. What I had planned, I have lots of names up to about 16, 17 and I have not even reached 10 yet. I wanted to do 10 or 11 but what I decided was the first 11 people, when the list was written, 11 names came out. Those first 11, I wanted to capture all of them. It was later that some other names came about and those ones I will not touch.

So Honourable Members, from Sami, I will stop at the next one that will be the 11th person from Sami.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I want to thank Honourable Member for Foni Kansala for coming up with this important issue to the House.

Honourable Speaker, as stated in his report, that Section 213 of our Constitution made it clear, that 'the state and all citizens of the Gambia shall endeavour to protect and enhance national sovereignty and territorial integrity'.

Honourable Speaker, it is a concern for all Gambians, because the people of Foni, are our own brothers and sisters and their families. I have relatives in Foni. So is a concern for all Gambians.

Honourable Speaker, the government and the Defence Minister should try by all means and engage our neighbour, the Senegalese authority so that the issue can be stopped.

Honourable Speaker, as stated in Matter of the Day, there are communities, especially those at the borders who are leaving their villages, going to other areas for settlement, and they have properties but leave those properties behind. It is the duty of the government to protect those people. Nobody should run away from their responsibility especially the government because if anything happened in a country the blame goes to the leaders.

So, it is the responsibility of the government to see that those communities are protected. How can they protect them Honourable Speaker? As the Honourable Member for Wuli East stated, there should be continuous patrol because the bullets are now coming into their communities and that is Gambia.

So, there should be always continuous patrol, and those communities should see those securities around them so that they will have steady mind. Not just to go there and spend one hour then go but to stay there permanent.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Sami. I now call on the last speaker, the Honourable Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Kansala for bringing this

important matter of the day, which is very important for us to have a discussion in this House.

Honourable Speaker, if you look at paragraph seven, where he made mention of the National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordination Centre, they reported about the villages within the border to them that particular part of the community belongs to the Casamance region.

Honourable Speaker, this has reminded the time I came to this Parliament in 2017, I have been singing this song of border demarcation, and it affects a greater part of this country. An institution such as National Early Warning, they are unable to determine whether these communities belong to Gambia or Senegal, it is very unfortunate. These are people who have been displaced. There is no farming taking place either gardening and so forth, and schools has been abandoned.

These are very serious issues and we have to look at it. The demarcation process should start. People are talking about border patrol; we are talking about the joint patrol here. I went with two of the security denomination, both the Interior and that of the Army, to go to these borders and start working on the demarcation.

From 2017 to date, we are unable to see it, and it is a problem. I made mentioned that there are communities in my constituency that are yet to be determined whether they belong to Gambia or Senegal. How can one leg be in Senegal and the other leg in Gambia? It is very unfortunate. So, this should be a priority. I think it should be a priority for us to demarcate.

If you talk about sovereignty, we are talking about protecting our territorial integrity. But we do not have them. We agreed with the people in Dasilami to have a joint patrol, but the level of compliance from the other counterpart was a problem. Dasilameh Community, Dimbaya and up to Bagira, these are issues that we are seriously affected. We have to fast track to work on the demarcation process so that we can know actually where we stand, whether these communities are part of Gambia or in Senegal. That should be a trend in which…

On that note, I want to empathize with the displaced people and wish them a speedy recovery, because it is very pathetic for people to be displaced up to a certain level.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I beg to take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Brikama South. Honourable Members, let me thank the mover, the Honourable Member for Foni Kansala and all those who partook in the debate. I will just encourage Honourable Members to try as much as possible to engage relevant institutions of government to find solutions to some of these pressing problems.

Honourable Members, we are supposed to be dealing with the Intellectual Property Bill at Consideration Stage, but it is so bulky that I want to invoke Order 14[3] to vary the Order Paper for us to consider the motion to ratify the Gambia's Membership to the African Mineral Strategy Group. That should last not more than one hour, and then we will go into the Consideration

Clark, may we proceed?

ii. **Consideration and Ratification of The Gambia's Membership to the Africa Minerals Strategy Group** *[By the Hon. Minister of Petroleum & Energy]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, may I now invite the Honourable Minister for Petroleum and Energy to table his motion. Honourable Minister.

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Good morning, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move the motion for this August Assembly to consider and ratify The Gambia's membership to the Africa Minerals Strategy Group, [AMSG].

Honourable Speaker, the Africa Minerals Strategy Group was formed and inaugurated in January 2024, during the third Feature Minerals Forum held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This group seeks to foster collaborative governance of mineral resources across African nations, develop strategies that ensure the continent benefits from the natural resources, and coordinate efforts to meet the rising global demand for critical minerals.

The rationale why The Gambia should join this strategic group, is to participate in the collective advocacy for the sustainable use of mineral resources, gain access to shared knowledge, technology and resources within the group and to enhance its position in global market for critical minerals.

Honourable Speaker, I think this is essential for the fact that although The Gambia, we have not yet developed our mining sector as expected, but being a member of this important group will help us in many ways to benefit from the resources that we are endowed with, our ongoing efforts in prospecting to be able to find our mineral resources, I think our membership in this group will enhance that significantly.

We will be able to share resources or facilities that some of these member countries are endowed with, and also create opportunities for investment in The Gambia for our critical minerals and it will help us in mapping some of our critical minerals that are yet to be discovered, which is a major, challenge for this country. Our geological department is under capacities, and therefore they do not have the technical and capacity to be able to do some of these critical surveys that this country needs.

But with our membership in this group, we will be able to share resources and also get support from member countries and also from the association to be able to promote and also help us to map out our critical minerals that we badly need to help us grow our economy.

It will also help us in capacity building, facilitate and support building the capacity of our staff, enable us to expand technology, maximize the sharing of best practices, join policy development and initiatives that will drive our economic development. It will foster the socio-economic development of Africa through the close collaboration and coordination with strategic partners like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to explore

investment opportunities to contribute to future economic development in the mining sectors.

With that, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, any seconder? Honourable Majority Leader and member for Kantora.

HON BILLY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor.

Honourable Speaker, I rise to second the motion for this august Assembly to consider and ratify The Gambia's membership into Africa Mineral Strategy Group.

Honourable Speaker, I think this is a right move in the right direction, as an oil prospecting nation, our prospects are very high in terms of exploration over the years, and I think it is apt for us to join this particular Organization.

Honourable Speaker, if you look at its Collaboration, it speaks for itself, it collaborates and address challenges and opportunities also, crucial mineral including not limited to sourcing products and local beneficiary value addition, supply chain and secure technology.

So, as an oil prospecting country or nation, once we join this thing, it opens a window of opportunity for us to also tap into other resources that are not within our reach and more importantly, the value addition component there. It is very important and as a country that is really at a

tutorage level, it is important that you learn from bigger nations who are minerally endowed and are through that, you can strengthen your capacity, production level, technology and innovation as well.

Also, it's also opened up a window of opportunity in terms of investment. Honourable Speaker, there are a lot of investment opportunities once we are membership to this and the membership also enjoys certain benefits in terms of capacity building, like I said in my earlier submission.

However, I want to ask the Honourable Minister to clear my doubt, I understand that, of course, the funding aspect is by a membership contribution through the national budget and whether this thing has been discussed with the Minister of Finance and I would not be too much sum and also the other issue on the race is the governance issue. In every organization there is a dispute resolution mechanism, for instance, if there is any dispute, how do you address those things? We have seen secretariats and we have seen the advisory committee, of course, the technical committee as well as the funding and also amendment to the establishment of this particular treaty.

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, I urge my colleagues it is not really controversial, but of course, just to clear the doubts in the funding issue and as well as the dispute resolution mechanism, is there any way when a member also have any grievances, how do you address it? And of course, does it also warrant that any time you can really work out if he so wishes to leave the organization as well?

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, I call on my colleagues to speedily give their blessing to this particular motion, and I beg to take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Kantora and Majority Leader. Honourable Members, I now put the question.

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members, any Honourable Member who wishes to take part may do so by raising his/her constituency tag. I think Clerk has taken note of some submissions. The time is one hour, as we said, and the Members will limit their contributions to give chance to other too.

I invite the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, we have been clamouring for this throughout the Fifth and Sixth Assembly. And even at the Pan-African Parliament we continue to advocate for something like this. It is long overdue, but we are very happy that this is established in 2024 and is before us in 2026. So, Gambia is very quick in bringing it to us, so we are happy about that and we thank the Minister for being proactive in bringing this charter.

Honourable Speaker, the benefits to this are inestimable. We cannot estimate the benefits. Africa has long been cheated with their resources, you produce crops, you sell the raw material you do not get anything from it, no value Addition. You extract your minerals, no value addition they

cheat you again. So, a charter like this that will create one, a bargaining position for us creates a representative body that will give us a bargaining power so that we will be able to fight for what should come to us.

Honourable Speaker its spoke about beneficiation, if you enter such a thing, you should be able to benefit from it, locally. It should not just be people coming or investors come and just take it and then the local people do not benefit anything from it No, it should not be like that, and this is going to give that opportunity so that Gambia benefits from its resources locally.

If we look at it also you will see that there is also value addition, like I have said those opportunities are there, which means that also you look at , if you have such a charter for an industry like this, you will be able to predict your policy, legislation that should, that should be established to be able to deal with some of these things.

Also, the charter deals with capacity building, which is also very important if you are part of these organizations, you have these opportunities to build your capacity to be able to deal with your, resources on your own and it is also talking about strategic partnerships, countries that have the capacity, when you…

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member, for Wuli East and thank you for your understanding. I now invite the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister, for coming up with this Pan-African motion. When I say Pan-African motion, because the motion is geared towards strengthening our economy and our energy sector and to ensure that there is value addition.

Honourable Speaker, the objectives are very clear; to promote collaboration, resource sharing, investment opportunities, local processing, improving our mineral pricing, coordinate mineral policies, reduce exploitation by foreign companies. But my fundamental question to you, as Honourable Minister, is how are you prepared as a sector or as a country to ensure that Gambia gets these benefits because the objectives are very clear, but you need to tell us the minerals we have in The Gambia or the expected minerals that you think other partners can explore?

Our relationship should not be parasitic, but it has to be symbiosis, it has to be mutualistic, we all benefit. So, what are the expected opportunities that you think by ratifying this motion other people can get from Gambia and also Gambia also can take it to the other market. We, really want to be informed on that.

Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister, should be able to tell us, how prepared he is technologically as far as this innovation is concerned because we are in the age of AI, you understand, and your sector that's the energy sector will need the introduction of AI. How prepared are you as a country? Because we should not only be a member to be paying a

subscription, at the end of the day we get no benefit or we still be behind and when leadership comes like rotation of chairmanship.

If we are not very strong, we will not get any benefit, we have seen it already that Gambia being part of other organization, we only support other countries to get those kinds of leadership position. So, we need to be prepared.

I thank you for bringing this timely, as I said, it is Pan-African in nature because Africa must rise up to have such initiative to be who they are and the Africa we want.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Central Baddibu. I now invite the Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol.

HON KEBBA T. SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for once again giving me the floor. I think this is something Africa has been yearning for that is working together so that we effectively and efficiently manage our resources and then by looking at the statement, the purpose, the collaboration, resource sharing, investment opportunities, these will create job opportunities for The Gambia.

My concern is, it is not bad Africa coming together to work together and then we all benefit from our minerals but the problem is when it comes to sharing, sometimes that is where the bullying will come. The bigger ones or the powerful ones will always want to get more than and when you look at the document, it is not stating how much each nation should be get, but it is about collaborating and working together.

And you look at again capacity building, a strategic partnership, members of Nations, membership is open to any African country. The objective is just to work together and I think I will ask my fellow National Assembly Members to endorse this membership because it is something that Africa is yearning and Africa is looking for day and night. It is through unity that Africa can progress, no man is an island, no country is an island, it is only through collective and collaboration that we can progress as a continent.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Jarrol, I now invite the Honourable Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I equally want to thank the Honourable Minister for coming up with this particular charter for consideration and adoption. I think it is important for us to be part of this charter since we, as a country, are expecting to be also exploring and producing a lot of oil in this country. Geological report shows that The Gambia has a significant potential with both offshore and onshore oil block currently under exploration.

While five explorations have taken place, three offshore and two onshore but the five that has been explored are still dry, there is no trace of oil, but still, we will have to go gradually, I know one day we will get there, where we are going to produce a lot of oil. But one thing I want to emphasize is the issue of knowledge transfer and the membership that we are looking as a country to be a member of this particular association.

I definitely want to ask the minister whether we have to be very strategic not to be a partial member, where we only rectify this thing, at the end of the day, when we come to a counterpart contribution, we are stagnated to an extent that we will not be in position to benefit what this particular charter contains. I think we have to be very careful.

There are a lot of treaties that we signed when you come to a contribution, that becomes a problem, and we have to make sure that we comply with these things because we do not know very soon, we can get it, we can start producing and if we come to the value addition component, it is extremely important.

As far as this country is concerned, I think it is very strategic and very timely to bring this thing. It is a non-controversial one, but I will urge my members for us to unanimously agree with this since we are at the tail end, probably the current exploration taking place we might not know probably before the end of this year.

We may produce oil probably in my area where there is information that we have some deposit in that belt, the Kartong belt towards the Dasilami area and that is why it has been seriously contentious and they are provoking for a demarcation.

So, thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Brikama South I now invite the Honourable Member for Foni Kansala.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Minister of Energy, we thank you very much for bringing this and Honourable Speaker, it says Africa Mineral Strategic Group. I think this is one of the greatest things, and again, also when you look at the observer status, where issues were done? I am very, optimistic that at least it will do the needful.

Where you look at organizations in Africa are included in this though I only saw United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, No United Nation will also be another name tied to it, but the rest are all origin organizations in Africa and I think this is befitting and also thumbs up, and again, also when you go to 3.1 about the member nations is also open to any African country irrespective of whatever but the issue is you have to follow the, charters and also express the commitment.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Minister as what the Honourable Member for Brikama South said, it is important organizations or issues are ratified, but commitment in terms of payment dues is a challenge and could you also help us to understand is it going to be every mineral irrespective of oil, gas, you name them natural resources where it will also be enhanced and decision making it has also made it shall be made consensus between members. Whether if I produce more oil, would I not take the lead of making decisions more than the other? These are all issues that are also need to look at.

Sometimes organizations come with beautiful names plants and procedures that are set but at the end of today the issue at hand is if I get more minerals, I will also have more decisions to make but with standing, I think it is genuine and we are also in line to make sure this is but the name implies Africa minerals strategic let it not change. If it involves outsiders, they may end of term, our hope and aspiration let's be Africans and we remain Africans and we concur with you and also put a trial test to you as a minister that if it is ratified, the due that ought to be paid, you have to make sure it is done in time and also for you to be a full-fledged member, but not an observer.

I, therefore, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Foni Kansala. I now invite the Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to also take part. Honourable Speaker, I would equally join my Honourable Members of the Assembly to thank the Honourable Minister of Energy to bring this charter for ratification in this Assembly.

Honourable Speaker, I just have a few questions in relation to this charter, which among them would be. What safeguards are in place to ensure transparency in mineral deals under this framework, Honourable Minister? What environmental protections are embedded in this charter because I have gone through it, but I have not seen any clause or anything that deals with environment? So, Honourable Speaker, I would like to know

from the Honourable Minister as to what environmental protections are embedded in this charter.

Last but not least, Honourable Speaker, would be, is there an exit clause if the charter does not serve well for national interests?

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. I think it is high time Africa stopped a lot of pretends in making a lot of treaties when the member states are not honouring them.

Honourable Speaker, some time ago in 2024, Members of this parliament went to Senegal to discuss about the Interstate Road Transit Trade, and these were treaties that were discussed by member states, they agreed and they signed these treaties but application is a problem and these are economic benefits to ensure economic development and sustainability in our economy and to ensure mutual benefits in these in trade facilitations but in application, it is a different case.

So, I think those that have the opportunity to make these signatories, signatures on behalf of the countries, to tell each other the truth and telling the truth about these matters cannot be a taboo. We cannot always try to intellectualize, to be, diplomats as we are ambassadors, we are negotiating at the no, but we cannot sign these things and at the end of

the day, when it comes to that other treaty, goods want to transit living Gambia to other countries so that it can have an economic benefit on the Gambia, it is a challenge and those are treaties where member states agreed to, and this is another one.

And I think we need to look at this thing to ensure that when we are making treaties, our countries have economic benefits and mutual respect is accorded to us.

What I want to question, how does this affect the existing exploration that is happening? If there is any existing exploration right now? How does it affect that one? And the other thing is about the environmental damage, is there any compensation? Does the charter have any compensation as far as the environmental damage or the impact on either the aquatic lives or the lives on the environment are concerned? If there is any damage, as far as the exploration is concerned, these things are very much important.

But Honourable Minister, I have a big and genuine concern in terms of respect from other nations as far as the protocols are concerned. We went to Senegal; we asked them a question they could not even substantiate if their country has ratified a protocol where their country is a signatory to. They could not even tell us that so they cannot tell us whether they are going to continue to Honor the Interstate Road Transport Trade or not. Here we are coming with other ratification…

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Kiang West. I now invite the Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the opportunity, I am grateful as well. To continue Honourable Speaker, our minerals are sensitive and our minerals are about us and about our progress, and then wherein we talk about cooperation.

If Africa are able to cooperate and come together under one umbrella therein, they can protect their mineral resources and also, other countries have the capacity, and other countries do not actually have the capacity to extract these mineral resources to process them and actually make best use of them. But through cooperation, we can attain so many things, but in that cooperation as Honourable Member for Kiang rightly said, the mutual respect is important there and also in that mutual respect, it is where in all the countries can benefit.

But if other countries are looking at their superiority and so on and so forth, they are in, we cannot attain what we want internally. But also in so doing, they should not allow any monopoly of any Western nation to monopolize with their cooperation and they are dealing with the mineral resources in their cooperation also, they can extract so many things in the interest of Africa, and they are dealing with the mineral resources, in their cooperation also they can extract so many things in the interest of Africa so as to benefit Africa to start the production sector and produce so many things.

Europe was able to progress and develop through cooperation and Africa needs cooperation but most of the time, interference become the endless

things that happens to us and through interference, these corporations and agreements are not respected in the long run, which we could also look into as long as the cooperation exists.

So, Honourable Minister, how will you make sure all the countries respect this cooperation and this agreement that you are bringing on board? And also, not only are we passing this thing just because we want to pass it, but we do not want to pass things that will not be practiced, things that will not be looked unto, and things that will not be respected in terms of cooperation because as we always say, without mutual respect, then nothing is attained in terms of cooperation and whatever we are looking for.

So, on that note, Honourable Speaker, thank you so very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for Foni Bintang Karanai. Honourable Members, we have come to the end. May I now call upon the mover to respond to the issues raised and to wind up the debate? Honourable Minister.

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

I will respond to the Honourable Member for Kantora regarding the issue of funding, we will all be contributing annually, $10,000 to the group and that's for all countries.

Of course, will be getting some other funding sources other than the annual contribution from members, and some of these sources are coming from our partnership with the Saudi Government and currently, all the countries annually have been invited to the first mineral forum that Saudi Arabia organizes and we attended the fourth one just this year and we have a very good relationship with the organizers of that event, and some of the benefits we have already started realizing them, even though our own group is very young, and we have been inspired by the organizers of that event in Saudi.

That's why we also came up with this group to ensure that our resources start benefiting our people and We are working also with partners. The last time when we had meetings, we had the world Bank Group was part of the meeting with the African ministers in Saudi and we also had meetings with philanthropic organizations that have also interest in supporting Africans to be able to protect our mineral resources to benefit our people.

So, there are a lot of other funding sources, and the Secretariat has been tasked to work with all member countries and also spearhead the mobilization of resources to be able to finance this other, this group.

The issue of dispute resolution, as you have seen, all our decisions are going to be based on consensus and therefore issues of dispute are not things that we anticipate but of course, if they happen, of course we will be governed by the dispute resolution mechanisms that are going to be set up by the group.

Thank you very much, Honourable member from Wuli East, you are absolutely right. This is long overdue; Africa is definitely endowed with mineral resources. All countries for that matter, it's just a matter of time whether you have discovered it or not but the reality is, is there, that's the hard fact. It depends on how soon you are able to discover but we have the resources.

But these resources need to benefit us and for the longest time, we have been the source for the rest of the world, and we have seen, they have developed from the resources that have been extracted from our continent and we are not saying we are not going to collaborate and work with others, but we have to have a strong bargaining position to make sure that our resources benefit our people.

And the issue of beneficiation is also very critical, that is adding value to our resources, not just extracting and exporting them raw as we used to and that's the practice that we want to come together as Africans to be able to work together because we know some of us have not started much yet, but others have gone too far, and the reality is they are neglecting some of the mistakes they have already made in the past, and we are going to learn from that and make sure that we don't make such mistakes.

Honourable member from Central Baddibu, Minerals that are available in The Gambia. Currently our main source of mineral that we are currently extracting in terms of heavy metals is Zircon, Ilmenite and Rutile. These are the ones that we are currently exporting and we are exporting raw; that's the hard fact.

However, we also have potential, as I indicated earlier but these are minerals that are yet to be discovered, but we are working very hard with our Directorate of Geology. We are engaging with prospectors companies that have interest to come and work with us to be able to map out because studies have been done in this country in 1995, and we have those documents that needed to be updated to help us be able to identify some of the traces that the studies have shown, the availability of some minerals across the country, and we are working with companies that have expressed interest to see how we can start prospecting immediately to be able to mop up some of those resources.

Whether we are prepared Honourable Member from Baddibu Central, the issue is not about whether we are prepared, the reality is we need to come together to be able to support one another so that we can all be up on the game?

So, the use of AI is something that we all have to live with is the reality, that's the thing of the of today that nobody can do without AI and that technology is here for all of us. It doesn't matter whether they are a small country or a big country. Ai is here for humanity, and we will live with that technology and make sure that we also embrace it and no doubt we will embrace AI.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister,

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Yes, sir.

THE SPEAKER: You Please summarize.

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Okay. So, AI will embrace. Honourable Member from Jarrol if I am right. I hope the bigger countries will not take advantage. No, we are really equals in this group, so we don't expect them to take advantage of us.

The Honourable Member from Kombo South, our annual contributions the rest assure we will make sure we meet our obligations under the treaty, and the rest assure we will also benefit, no doubt about it. We have also seen signals that the group want to support the Gambia, and they have been engaging us so be assured that we will be supported.

Honourable Member for Foni Kansala, yes this, really includes all critical minerals and that includes also our oil resources. So, be rest assured, as you have also said, the contributions will be paid and we will do everything possible that we honour our obligations under the agreement and whether we are equals? Yes, we are.

The Honourable Member from Jarra Central. Well, the issue of transparency is not for the group as such. This is for individual countries to ensure that their processes are all transparent and I think it is whether we are a member of this group or not we must be transparent in whatever we do in terms of contracts that we sign, transparency is a must, and also, the question of environmental issues.

Look, let us just be clear, this group is not a prospecting or an exploration company so, what we are going to do together is to ensure whatever

contracts we sign with whoever, environmental issues are really taken care of but it's not for the group as such because they are not for exploration or exploitation as such.

The Honourable Member from Kiang West, thank you, Honourable Member. The issue of whether our membership is going to affect the current exploration activities. No, it is not going to affect that because we are a sovereign country. So, whatever we do in our country is not going to be dictated directly by the group, but instead we will work together with the group to support us, to strengthen what we do in country, but not necessarily affecting our activities.

Foni Bintang, how do you ensure that all members respect. Well, it is not, the onus is not on The Gambia, but it's on all of us to ensure that we respect what we agreed.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for not only ably and eloquently tabling your motion, but responding to members' questions and observations. Thank you very much.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Assembly do ratify The Gambia's Membership to the Africa Minerals Strategy Group AMSG]

Once again, Honourable Minister, we can release you and thank you for everything. Honourable Members, I think we can now proceed.

Clerk, may we proceed?

4. Bill – Consideration Stage in accordance with Order 73:

i. **Consideration of the Intellectual Property Bill 2025** *[By the Hon. Attorney General & Minister of Justice]*

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Members, you will recall that after the second reading stage, the bill automatically stood refer to the ABC.

Therefore, the Bill is appointed today for the Consideration Stage in accordance with order 73. During the Consideration Stage, Members shall have the opportunity to give detailed consideration and scrutiny to every clause and schedule in the Bill.

This stage also provides the first opportunity for amendments to the Bill to be debated and voted on. I will now, therefore, resolve the Assembly into the Committee of the whole Assembly to give consideration to the Bill entitled Intellectual Property Bill, 2025. The Assembly is now, resolved into the Committee of the whole Assembly.

Committee of the Whole Assembly

The Assembly Resumed.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Assembly now resumes. Honourable Members, as you are aware, we could not finish the

Intellectual Property Bill 2025. We have to stop there, and the ABC will reschedule it for another consideration.

Let me once again thank the Honourable Minister and his technical backup for the efficient way they led us through this process. We wish you safe journey and to come back to The Gambia safely also.

5. **Adjournment**

Honourable Members, let me thank all of you once again as we prepare for the State Opening of Assembly, State of the Nation Address. I want to thank all of you for your participation. Honourable Members, I will now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this august Assembly to stand adjourned until Thursday, 26th March 2026, at 10:00 a.m.]

[The Speaker slammed the Gavel against the sound block signalling the end of the day's proceedings.]

THE END