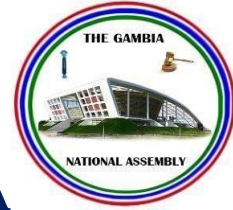




REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

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



PRESS RELEASE

THE POSITION OF FPAC OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE JUDICIAL SECRETARY'S PRESS RELEASE OF FRIDAY 19 APRIL 2024

The attention of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly (FPAC) has been drawn to a Press Release dated 19th April 2024, signed by the Judicial Secretary of the Judicial Service Commission, misrepresenting the facts concerning his and the Judicature's failure to appear before the FPAC for lawful parliamentary scrutiny as mandated by law.

The FPAC wishes to clarify that the Judicature, like any other public institution, was summoned through a letter dated 8th April 2024, with Ref. No. **ME 28/91/02/X (150)**, and addressed to the Judicial Secretary, along with the Meeting Schedule of the FPAC for April and May 2024. Through this letter, the Judicature was scheduled to appear on Thursday, 18th April 2024 to submit and present its annual Activity Reports and audited Financial Statements, and not on 24th April 2024 as alleged by the Judicial Secretary in his press release.

The letter reminded all recipients, including the Judicial Secretary, that *“Engagements with Committees of the National Assembly take precedence over all other matters”* and that *“Institutions that have not already submitted their Activity Reports, Financial Statements/Management Letters, Strategic Plan and Budgets are requested to do so before the scheduled date of their meetings”*.

All recipients complied or provided reasonable excuses for rescheduling. However, to the dismay of the FPAC, neither the Judicature nor the Judicial Secretary reported as scheduled, nor did they notify the FPAC about their inability to attend the meeting. Consequently, the Presentation and Consideration of the annual Activity Reports and audited Financial Statements of The Judiciary could not proceed due to their absence.

The Judicial Secretary must be reminded that the Judicature, like the National Assembly, is an independent institution mandated to be self-accounting. Moneys allocated to the Judicature by the Consolidated Fund or appropriated by an Act of the National Assembly shall be managed by the accounting officer, who in this case is the Judicial Secretary.

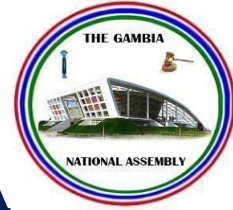
Tel: (220) 9969279; Fax: (220) 4225123

E-mail: clerk@assembly.gm; nationalassembly32@gmail.com; Website: www.assembly.gm



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FPAC hereby reminds the Judicial Secretary, the accounting officer and administrative head of one of the most important organs of the State, of his constitutional and statutory responsibilities. These responsibilities include preparing annual accounts of the Judiciary (contrary to five-year accounts as he erroneously claimed) for submission to the Auditor General for audit, as well as submitting those annual audited accounts to the FPAC for scrutiny, as is the case with all other independent institutions of the State, including the National Assembly Service.

The audit period referred to in the Judicial Secretary's press release, submitted to the National Assembly through a letter Ref: **ZB 133/168/02/P.5 (65)**, dated 27th March 2024, were records of transaction audit as part of the consolidated audit of the Government of The Gambia where a sample of transactions is normally collected and tested. This does not represent an audited Financial Statements, as confirmed by the Auditor General in his separate press release of 21st April 2024. Thus, they did not fulfil the requirement of [audited] Financial Statements of the Judiciary to be submitted to the National Assembly and the Auditor General.

The public, including the Judicial Secretary, is reminded that FPAC will continue to carry out its legitimate parliamentary oversight mandate in accordance with the Constitution and other laws of The Gambia, which is to ensure that all public institutions, including the Judicature, are accountable and subject to lawful parliamentary scrutiny of public funds entrusted to them.

Finally, the FPAC wishes to reiterate its commitment to upholding the principles of accountability and transparency in governance, as enshrined in the Constitution and other laws of The Gambia. While the National Assembly and its oversight Committees hold the Judiciary in the highest regard as a beacon of hope in our democratic dispensation, it is imperative that the Judicial Secretary, as the custodian of financial accountability within the Judicature, adheres to the same standards of scrutiny applied to all public institutions. This mutual respect ensures the effective functioning of our democratic institutions and strengthens public trust in the governance process.

END OF TEXT

MONDAY 22ND APRIL 2024

Tel: (220) 9969279; Fax: (220) 4225123

E-mail: clerk@assembly.gm; nationalassembly32@gmail.com; Website: www.assembly.gm