



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

[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS

**4TH SITTING OF THE 3RD ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE 6TH LEGISLATURE**

DEBATE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS
[CONTINUATION]

NUMBER: 3
VOLUME: 4

Proceedings of Tuesday [**Morning**] 20th September, 2022

2022 LEGISLATIVE YEAR

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Continuation and Conclusion of Debate on the State of the Nation Address, 2022
[By: His Excellency the Vice President]

1. PRAYERS

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, read the prayers.]

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

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

The Assembly was called to Order.

2. CORRECTION AND APPROVAL OF THE RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SITTING OF MONDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2022

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 19th September 2022 is before us for consideration and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move that the said Record of Votes and Proceedings be considered and adopted? Any Honourable Member?

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NAINIJA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I rise to move.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, any seconder?

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: I rise to second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, let us start from Page 1.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Page 1 Number 3 where you have Corrections and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sittings of Monday "12th" instead of the '19th'.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members that one was referring to the proceedings of the 12th. Any comment on Pages 1 and 2? It is a list of Honourable Members in attendance. We now move to Page 3.

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Let us go to where it says, "*The Members were absent*", should be the followings Members were absent without permission.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, have you noted that? Where you have the following Members were "*absent*" should read the following Members were absent without permission.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Regarding the issue of absent with permission or without permission, how did we determine that? I came across Honourable Lamin J. Sanneh's notification of his absence on the Page [WhatsApp], but his name appeared under those absent without permission.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I said it yesterday that regarding permission, it is only the Speaker that can grant Members permission not to come to the Assembly. I told the Table Office, and those issues will be corrected. I have also said that Members can come to the Assembly and go but we cannot absent ourselves continuously from work. On the records so far, the Speaker has not granted him permission which means he was

absent without permission. Those that were granted permission by the Speaker will be noted that they were not in attendance but were granted permission. Can we now have a follow up question from Minority Leader?

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Previously, there was a norm that notification of absenteeism is put on the Page prior to that ruling. I am trying to indicate that there was a case of a Member who put notification of his/her absence on the Page yet included in the list of names under absent without permission.

THE SPEAKER: If I understand the Minority Leader prior to yesterday's discussions, he said there is a norm that notification of absence is posted on the Page, am I right? So, you now want to find out how it happened. Let us get explanation but what I am saying is ... *[Interruption]*

[Point of Correction]

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Specifically, I am not trying to find out how that decision came. I am saying prior to that decision, there was a norm and somebody put that notification on the page. The person followed that due process, so if anything comes after, should not capture that person.

THE SPEAKER: You are saying that the norm before has not been followed by the Members who were absent, and that also brought about the change. I think that is your concern, am I right?

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: That is not the case. I am not saying that has brought about

the change. I am saying that the ruling came yesterday that it is going to be the norm.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have now got your point. I think it has been the norm that when you post in the page, it is accepted that you are granted permission not to attend while those who have not done it are regarded absent without permission. From the ruling, it will change but to be determined and concluded among us.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Good morning Honourable Speaker and thank you. On Page 4 where you have Honourable Alfusainey Ceesay Member for Sami, it says, "the Assembly 'consider' and approve the Record of Votes and Proceedings for the Sittings of Monday" should be in the past tense and read as "*considered and approved*" instead of "*consider and approve*". Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The first sentence on page 4.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Yes, please.

THE SPEAKER: She said Honourable Alfusainey Ceesay Member for Sami.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANEMINTERENG]: "That the Assembly consider." It has to be either "*That the Assembly do consider, or the Assembly considered.*" Honourable Speaker, if it should remain the same, then, "do" should be added, I guess.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you. I just want to say that it should not be in the past tense because it is a motion he is trying to raise. Basically, what we can have as she rightly

said, "do" but should not be in the past tense. It is okay as it is unless if you want to use the phrase "*do consider.*"

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I have an observation about the ruling that took place yesterday. It has prevented the Members to get access to the Speaker while sitting is on.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can we clear the one dealing with language issue? Let us now read it from Page 3 to Page 4. Honourable Alieu Baldeh, Member for Jarra West moved the first motion seconded by Honourable Sainey Jawara, Member for Lower Saloum. Honourable Kebba Jallow, Member for Jarra Central moved the second motion and was seconded by Honourable Alfusainey Ceesay Member for Sami that the Assembly consider and approve the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the Sittings.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. The only correction here on Page 3 is the capital "*and*" but on Page 4, it is okay.

THE SPEAKER: Any Honourable Member with a different opinion?

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I am just appealing if you can explain to the august Assembly how to channel that medium of communication to your office because sometimes emergency may occur and we would not be able to communicate with you when session is on. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The channel of communication will be shared and may amicably come through, whatever it takes. Something must be put on the Page for permission to be granted. Members have rights of not attending but if permission is to be granted, it should have a format and organised mechanism that would be suitable to all of us.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. The Honourable Nominated Member raised a valid point. You stated earlier that we should discuss among ourselves and come up with something that will guide us. I have been looking through the Standing Orders but as far as attendance or permission is concerned, I have not seen any provision on that. I think it will be fitting for the Standing Orders' Committee to look at this issue and make sure that it is reflected in our Standing Orders. That is my observation.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is only the Speaker who can grant permission of absence to Members. We will make sure that we have something in place that is convenient to all of us.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much. The Member wrote that your legal backing is Order 8[1] which says: *'In cases where matters are not expressly provided for by these Standing Orders, any question on procedure or order shall be decided by the Speaker'*. So, these are entirely at his discretion. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, in relation to permissions, whether stated or not, if you go to the relevant provisions in the Constitution, you will find it there.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Regarding your ruling, sending information to the WhatsApp page is not official but it has become a settled practice in the National Assembly and several official correspondents are sent to the Page. So, if one seeks for permission through the Page, it is not official. I do not understand that. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Do not confuse practice with what is right or legal. So, let us just abandon it. I am not denying that it may be a practice. Let us have the last intervention on this issue so that we can proceed.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. The issue of taking permission from the Honourable Speaker is contained in the National Assembly Service Act 2022. By going through it, we will see what Members are supposed to do when they want to be absent from Parliament. It is stated clearly even in the 1997 Constitution.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I made it very clear. It is our common or mutual interest that we have the best practice convenient for all of us. Can we continue from where we stopped on Page 5?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Where you have tribute as the caption, the third sentence says, '*delivered tribute statement*'. I think it should be, '*deliver statement in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*' because tribute or condolence is already in the caption.

Under the caption '*motion*', where you have the following Members debated, should be took part in the debate on the motion.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you have noted the observations made.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. I believe we have competent Clerks in this Assembly. So, we should leave these grammatical issues to be handled by the clerks so that we can proceed with other business of the day. Thank you

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the whole process is for Members to own the report. The secretariat tries as much as possible to capture what we have done. So, it now depends on us to review and validate before adopting it. We cannot leave it to the secretariat. No matter how good they may be, we still have to fine tune it to our own taste.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: I just want to find out whether it is in the Standing Orders or is a settled practice. You said practices are not very important here. So, whether the Correction and Approval of previous sitting is in the Standing Orders or is it just a settled practice?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is not only about the Assembly, wherever you have minutes or report, they are adopted by people for whom the minutes or report is prepared for.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Do not be surprised because it is only the Parliament of The Gambia that is doing it.

THE SPEAKER: You have no parliamentary experience; you do have other experiences but not parliamentary. If you talk to seasoned

parliamentarians who have been in parliament for twenty or more years, you will know. Honourable Members we can now move to Page 5?

HON EBRIMA JAITEH [SANDU]: On Page 3 where you have Tribute and Condolence to Her Majesty, under it you have Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly followed by the Majority. The "*Leader*" is omitted.

THE SPEAKER: Noted. Anything on Page 5?

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank You Honourable Speaker. For record purpose, Page 13 where you have Honourable Kebba Tumanding Sanneh, is it '*Tumanding or Tumani*'?

THE SPEAKER: Is the Honourable Member himself around? He stepped out. I think it is '*Tumanding*'. It is confirmed by NAMs that it is '*Tumanding not Tumani*'. Any other observation? No, that is the end.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Monday 19th September 2022 has been approved with amendments]

3. MOTION:

Continuation and Conclusion of the Debate on the State of the Nation Address, 2022 [By: His Excellency the Vice President]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I want to remind the Assembly that the debate on the State of the Nation Address [SoNA], 2022 Legislative

Year by His Excellency the President commenced yesterday. However, we could not finish it and the Assembly was adjourned to Tuesday 20th September 2022.

Therefore, we will continue the debate from where we stopped and complete it today.

May I request that any Honourable Member who wishes to take part in the debate should raise his or her constituency tag to be recorded?

Once again, may we remind ourselves especially Members taking the floor to respect the rules of the debate as stated in Standing Order 29[1] that *"every Member shall restrict his or her observations to the subject under discussion"* Similarly, Standing Order 30[1] also states that *"debate upon any motion or amendment to a motion or upon any bill, part of a bill or amendment to a bill shall be relevant thereto, except in the case of a motion for debate on the adjournment of the Assembly."*

Honourable Members, I therefore call on Honourable Members to respect and observe the rules in our deliberations today. I thank you.

As I said, we will begin from where we stopped yesterday, and the first to take the floor is the Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. Also, I would like to recognise the presence of the Vice President and the entire Cabinet for being with us since yesterday to witness the debate on the SoNA.

Honourable Speaker, I believe we need to adopt democratic principles to give our parliament a good face in terms of parliamentary practices. In

that, the President tasked us to serve our country and promote democratic values. The Assembly Members have been advocating that we have leaders in our midst to discuss issues and promote good relationship between us. We have no doubt in the ability of the Vice President and the Ministers that come to witness our sittings, but we want our President to sit in audience with the NAMS to discuss issues directly. We believe that in communication, sometimes messages are not related as they supposed to be. That is why we want the President to sit with us and feel our feelings. During Jarawa's days it never happened, Yaya Jammeh came for 22 years it never happened. So, it is going to be a good legacy if the current President sits in audience with Members to discuss issues of national interest. I hope everybody would be ready to promote that.

Honourable Speaker, the financial condition of the country is going along a downward trend due to lot of factors. Although, the President centred his speech on the Ukraine war and Covid-19, I believe we have some pressing internal problems as far as the revenue collection is concerned. So, it is our collective duty particularly for those given the task to make sure the financial leakages are sealed. Many a time, disturbing news is being circulated on social media which is not helping the country. The Gambia is not an island, and we depend entirely on donor support. So, if corruption is practised nakedly in our institutions, it may discourage donors to fund some of the projects. It is time we hold the bull by the horn to fight corruption. We should make sure that justice prevail in our institutions that are generating revenue for the country.

Regarding the National Development Plan, we all know that the debt we have both at national and international level is a big concern. What should we do as a country? We should make investment to make sure that the productive sector is well positioned to generate income for the country. We also talked about food security, it is the agriculture sector that should boost our economy and provide food security for us. We should not only depend on groundnut for our exportation, but we should also go beyond that. Unfortunately, large quantity of the vegetables grown in the country are being wasted because we do not invest much on commercial and value-added agriculture which could have made lot of foreign exchange earnings for the country. So, it is high time we tried to reduce the debt services and invest into the economy.

Honourable Speaker, concerning Public Private Partnership, it is important to note that every partnership should be mutually beneficial to both parties. So, partnering with relevant corporate societies or private sectors should strengthen our economy and support us instead of enriching themselves. We should fight against that in as much as we want to promote public-private partnership. We must take care and know our interest.

Honourable Speaker, the President mentioned some of the achievements registered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians abroad which is very significant but there is much to be desired. The foreign services need to be reconsidered in relation to the people we are sending to these foreign missions. What can they bring to our country? I think the President should tell us some of the projects, if there is any,

brought by these foreign services from 2016 to date. We are spending a lot on them, but they are not bringing anything into the country.

Honourable Speaker, it is not every Tom Dick and Harry that should be deployed to Foreign Service. We do not want people who will just be there to receive their salaries and allowances. They should promote the image of the country and have the concerns of Gambians outside. Honourable Speaker, our brothers and sisters are leaving outside but they are not given their democratic rights to vote in the country's election. We talked a lot about the people in Diaspora regarding the contributions and remittances they send into the country, they are not given franchise to vote. I think, henceforth, the Government should consider how to give chance to our people to participate in our elections.

Honourable Speaker, on Agriculture, the President mentioned 20 boreholes drilled for small ruminants across the country. We would like to know the location of these boreholes within the country. If any of the boreholes happened to be drilled within my Constituency [Central Baddibu], I can tell the President or this august Assembly as to how far they have gone in terms of implementation. So, Honourable Members here present can bear witness to some of the projects. Honourable Speaker, some of these projects will come to our areas but those that are not in the President's party will not be part of the discussions, the need assessment and even the project implementation. The President, however, advised that we come as one family and develop the country. If that is anything to go by, we should stop such discriminatory culture if we want to be serious in developing the country. Representatives of people must be respected in their

communities. They should be the focal persons in communities when partners want to implement a particular project. I should be consulted no matter what. Similarly, if the same project is to be launched by the President, I should also be consulted.

Honourable Speaker, how many young people do we have in the rural Gambia who are trying to participate effectively in crop production but do not have the necessary support? Youths are not often involved in project implementation instead we use them together with women to get funds. When we get the funds, we marginalize them. This culture should stop because we always say the youths are the cream of society. It is time we stop limiting project implementation to village heads and VDCs.

Honourable Speaker, we should be informed of ongoing projects so that we can monitor and assess them to establish what is wrong or right. Both the NEMA and the ROOTS projects have similar problems because vegetable growers working under these projects do not have market. There is always a missing link between production, marketing, and processing. So, our agricultural production must have a link if there is no link from production to processing and marketing, and then what kind of value are we adding to our Agriculture Sector? It is still the prototype system of agriculture that prevails in The Gambia since the days of our grandfathers, and we need to move. Somebody mentioned availability of tractors in the Second Republic, and he uses a very nice language, but with regards to the distribution, he raised other issues. Can you help me explain?

[Point of Observation]

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANI]: The tractors were taken from poor innocent Gambian farmers sold and distributed among themselves. Thank you.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: But that is not what I am looking for. He said the tractors were given to seasoned farmers. I would not call them seasoned farmers; I will call them political patronage. The tractors were given to the chiefs, the village heads, and Governors who were the ambassadors of politics in those days. We need to change the narrative now. It was a very serious thing to do if those tractors were confiscated and not given back to farmers. I was not happy with that arrangement.

[Point of correction]

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI BINTANG]: Thank you very much. The narrative is from me, and I think I should make explanation. What I said is very clear. I can attest that the beneficiaries of the tractors that were distributed in most of the areas were not chiefs. They were people who are seasoned farmers in my Constituency. So, it was never given to chiefs for political game.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you very much. I still maintain my stance that those people are not seasoned farmers. It will be wrong to tell us that they are seasoned farmers and I want you to go to your dictionary and find out what we mean by seasoned farmers. The tractors were given to political patronage in my Constituency such as chiefs and politicians. I still maintain my point. We can continue the debate after the Sitting.

Honourable Speaker, regarding environment, the former ministers of Environment and Petroleum all came to this Parliament and raised the issue of Tambi Land and the Sand Mining at Denton Bridge [Sarrow]. However, they were trying to defend it in the National Assembly. You do not have to be a geologist to know what is happening in Denton Bridge is not environmentally friendly. Honourable Speaker, it is time the President knows the damage that is being caused to our environment.

The Tambi land forest helped Banjul especially our aquatic animals to do well but their habitats have now been demolished in the name of expansion and building structures. We need to do proper environmental assessment which they claimed to have done. Even if they have done so, what we have seen is not favourable and the blame was apportioned on the former Government that allocated the land. We believe that governments come and go but the state remains. If you come as a government and found something that is troubling the environment, you need to act. How many pieces of timber were exported from The Gambia to outside? We know the level of damage that happened to our environment. We cannot just go and gather youths and women to plant trees. No, we must move from tree planting to tree growing and protection. We must make sure that when we engage in tree growing, those trees need support. We need to think about what will happen to them during the dry season. It is not a matter of going to Dobo Forest and plant trees, it involves more than that. There should be a sustainable scheme to make sure that those plants are protected because we invest in them. We have problems of sustainability as lot of tree planting projects that had been implemented in CRR, URR, are non-existent today.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to talk about the issue of mangroves that are being currently implemented. Most of us hailed from Rural Gambia and the mangroves that are planted in the upper land are not suitable there because there is no salt water or fresh water to help them grow.

If you look at all the mangroves planted 5 years ago, they remained stunted in growth because it is not the proper site for them. We need to do lot of studies about it.

Our environment is threatened, and we need to be mindful of the coastline and the sand mining which is causing more harm than good. The government must think of alternative means of construction rather than depending entirely on sand.

Honourable Speaker, regarding the issue of health, some MPs applauded the Ministry for providing the ambulances. It is fine and good, but my Constituency is not in need at the time. I made an assessment with the then Minister by walking from one health post to another. He would have been my living witness if he were around. We consulted the grassroots and they told us about their needs at various health facilities. I was tempted to convert my ambulance money to purchase drugs and rehabilitate the health structures in my Constituency. I prefer to do that because of the assessment I have conducted after which I found out that the cost of maintaining the ambulance as well as the issue of driver is giving us problems. These are some of the issues. So, we must be realistic in planning. We cannot just provide ambulance for Salikenni when there is an ambulance that can serve them. We must conduct needs assessment if we want to sustain our development.

Honourable Speaker, the Health Insurance Scheme and Birth Registration Project is a giant and applaudable step taken by the Government to standardize our database system. Honourable Speaker, our data should be computed well if we are to move smoothly. When we have accurate data in place, we are secured as a country. People who are refusing to get registered should be registered because refusal will hunt them when the system is closed. It will be very difficult to get another birth registration. So, everybody must be registered in this national exercise for the country to have a correct data.

The Health Insurance Scheme is another thing people need to be informed about. Honourable Speaker, it is not a matter of registering in the scheme and gets the benefit immediately. No, the program has not officially started registration. It should be clear that it is not only Gambians that are entitled to the Health Insurance Scheme but also non-Gambians. Honourable Speaker, I believe that sensitization was not properly done before the commencement of the exercise because there were lot of misinformation about it.

Honourable Speaker, the health personnel need to be motivated very well in terms of improving their conditions particularly in rural Gambia. These people make lot of sacrifices in the execution of their duties. However, there is a gap in terms of training. They need more skills to enhance their operations. We need to see how best their allowances reach them on time because if nurses and doctors go on strike, that is a different thing unlike the teachers. We should make sure that they get their dues on time.

Honourable Speaker, regarding Higher Education, Research Science and Technology, I would like to thank them very well for their efforts in the 5th Legislature. I know some Honourable Members held the opinion that the 5th Legislature did nothing. Yes, we did not do anything but if anyone could do any better, we will appreciate it. The Higher Education Ministry took a giant step to address the problem at the University of The Gambia in relation to arrears, funding issues and scholarships. It was this Parliament that supported the Ministry to award more scholarships to our deserving students. I would like to say kudos to the Ministry of Higher Education for making sure that many young women and men are now going to university from bachelor's to master's degree.

On the contrary, I must express my disappointment about Ndemban Skills Centre. Honourable Speaker, we went to Ndemban Skills Centre to assess the progress of the project because lot of investments had been committed by the Government which should not be wasted. We thought by now students should be going to Ndemban to learn skills. I think the Vice President will be in a better position to inform the Assembly as to how far Ndemban Skills Centre has gone. This Skills Centre is very important because the youths from different regions such as North Bank and CRR can register. The centre can enrol thousand youths maximum or at least seven hundred students. So, Honourable Speaker, I believe the Vice President will shed more light on the skills centre.

Honourable Speaker, I think TVET education is also in the right direction, but we need to decentralize skills. If you walk through the North Bank Region, we have no technical schools and we need to have institutions not

only GTTI that will provide skills training opportunities outside the Greater Banjul Area. Sometimes, we the people from rural Gambia feel marginalized because we also want to see some of these skills centres in our communities to encourage people to stay so that the level of rural-urban migration can be mitigated. We leave the rural areas for the urban areas in search of skills, education, or job. If we have it in the rural Gambia, it will help a great deal.

Honourable Speaker, I am proud to tell you that we attended training in Midrand, South Africa where The Gambia was singled out in terms of its achievements in TVET education. It was reported that The Gambia has a woman who is a specialist in Auto Mechanics. So, I am proud to inform this Assembly that as far as TVET education is concerned, The Gambia is moving. But as I said, we need to do more expansion in this regard because not everybody is good in academics. We need to explore alternative forms of education.

Honourable Speaker, focusing on the examination results, I know some will say students have failed but for me, I will not call it a failure as an educationist. I want the Vice President to know that our curriculum needs to be reviewed. It should be tailored in a way that teaches us to serve, provide skills to communities, investors, and industries. It should not only be exam-oriented, otherwise we will fail as a country.

Honourable Speaker, concerning petroleum, the President mentioned FAR and PETRONAS to have successfully completed the drilling of Bambo One in December 2021 which is an offshore exploration. Well, what happened next? We need to be informed as to whether they have successfully been

exploring Bambo One in 2021 December up to now. Do we need to know? I think there is missing information regarding the drilling that the Assembly need to be well informed about. We know little about what is happening. I know the committees are engaging them but as far as the general Assembly is concerned, we need more information on the drilling that is taking place to diffuse some of the information that are circulating.

Honourable Speaker, the OMVG is another significant project that is worth commending. I believe there is progress registered in it. However, Honourable Speaker, considering rural Gambia, there are communities that are still suffering and do not have access to electricity which is their fundamental right. Before I mention Kachang, I will mention Kerr Pateh in Central Baddibu then to Kachang. These are communities that have "Lumos" such as weekly local markets. Once there is electricity in these communities, the economy can grow, and trade could easily be facilitated. These areas need serious electricity because they see themselves marginalized in our national development efforts.

Honourable Speaker, from Njawara travelling from the Northern part of Central Baddibu to Minteh Kunda, that belt has never enjoyed electricity despite being tax compliant. They are the supporters of the government, and they do a lot but since time immemorial, they do not enjoy electricity. They enjoy cold water from Senegal. So, the government needs to really consider this issue.

Honourable Speaker, I am seriously disappointed with the Tourism Ministry. This National Assembly approved funds for ecologies to be constructed within the country. It was discovered that those ecologies

were constructed, but there are no live species existing there. What is the Ministry doing about it? We all know that Covid-19 hit that Ministry very hard, but we believe there could be something that we can do rather than having this phobia of Covid-19 in our minds.

I also heard information from the Ministry that an old British woman came here for sex tourism which is too derogatory for our tourism. That communication was very poor, and I do not expect a responsible institution to make such pronouncement. Those women have the right to marry anybody because it is their fundamental right. We always talk about human rights, and marriage is one of them. It is a matter of choice because you dare not tell me the wife I should marry. If you just focus on a particular country and label it in a negative manner, it would amount to killing the tourism industry of that nation.

[Point of Order]

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Standing Order 30[1] stated it very clearly and I think the Member is deviating from the point that we are discussing. Discussions should be on the SoNA. So, we need to concentrate on that.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I have reconsidered it and I think this has been the same point of Order yesterday and today. He was talking about tourism and sex tourism and people's rights to marry. I think those are captured in the whole statement of His Excellency, the President. My advice to Honourable Members especially those who defer in opinion in relation to

what was said is to take the floor and come out with an opinion. Can we continue please?

HON SULYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I am never distracted. I said I am not happy with the statement because we are here to promote tourism. I am saying that one should not utter certain remarks whether you are a Minister or an Honourable Member. We should be responsible in our remarks. This is my point. Honourable Speaker, going further, we all know that our Artefacts and history should be well kept in our museum. I believe the President should inform us. It is the responsibility of the Government in position to take care of our museum, particularly the one in Banjul. We should expand it and digitalize our records. We should also have museum in rural Gambia because there are lots of Artefacts that are being lost. It is unfortunate that our museums have left much to be desired. As a country and Member of the African Union whose 2063 Agenda is to work towards making sure that our heritage and culture are promoted.

Honourable Speaker, the Ministry of Gender, Women and Children is the brainchild of the Disability Bill which the President mentioned in his speech during the SoNA. The passing into law of this Bill is a success story. We want to thank the Ministry for their collaboration with the Assembly. Chinua Achebe once said, *"When an Agama lizard fell down from the top of an Iroko tree, if it is not praised, it will praise itself."* So, this Assembly needs to celebrate and praise themselves because this Bill had passed through it. However, we had disappointment about the Women Enterprise Fund Bill because the principle of that fund is to support Gambian women. I believe

the President will be happy when women group who are not even in his party benefit from the fund. We have seen evidence where cheques are used and issued on political platforms. Yes, we had evidence from the then Select Committee which led us to call the Minister. I believe as nation builders; we should separate politics from our development because we are being tasked by the President to cooperate fully to develop the country. I will not corporate neither compromise if I am marginalised. I believe what is earmarked for women in terms of funds should be given to women 'kafoos' whose criteria is very clear in terms of who should benefit from such funds.

Honourable Speaker, I saw a photo in this report which is very interesting as it portrays a woman holding two cattle that symbolises how women are also supported in the Small Ruminant Agriculture Project. I believe, it is beyond this, and the Ministry must make sure that women are not used but should take the lead. I said it here that the world we live in has a Gender gap in its development paradigm. So, let us make sure that whatever opportunity women enjoy, should also be accorded to men. So, let us all work together to make sure that these projects are supported and protected.

Honourable Speaker, Youth and Sports, the Ministry needs to be separated because when we talk about sports, many people have the feeling that youths are only meant for sport, but I think youth development is beyond sports, though sport is an integral part of it. Honourable Speaker, our youths are not given the necessary support they deserve. We commonly say, that "*Youths are lazy, they do not want to work.*" No, it is the system

that does not cater for them especially those youths at the beach. It is time, this Assembly consider them. Do not look at their appearances; they are decent human beings that need life that is worth living. They are contributing something to the society. Let us not marginalize them, they are our brothers - whether you like it or not they come from families. Let us meet them in their "ghettos" and communicate to them. Let us consider the institution of "Bumbsterism" and see how to make sure that it is recognized. "The Bumbsters" are people that the Government needs to recognize and consider because they can be very useful in some of our industries. They are critical group of people living within the society and I think it is good for every Minister or a Member of Parliament to take a walk along the Senegambia beach in the evening and see for yourself.

Honourable Speaker, considering youth and employment, we all know that it is very difficult for all of us to put on tie and go to offices. It is not possible but if youths are supported with the necessary tools, they will be self-employed. Employment does not only mean working in an institution or company where you will be paid **D3000** or **D5000**. No, you can employ yourself. It is not only putting on the suit that can solve problems, but youths need to be empowered and recognized. When it comes to the issue of sports, it is regrettable that the traditional "Nyo boringho" [wrestling] is dying in the country. So, we have to look at other sports that are so much culturally oriented not the usual Barcelona, Manchester or Real Madrid sport. No, it is beyond that. Honourable Speaker, I believe if the youths are genuinely supported, they can change the narrative. It is time for youths to take responsibility of their destiny and those within the age bracket of 45 or 50 years should take the back seat and serve as advisers. It is realised

that when youth projects come to the village, so-called youths who are at the top often abuse the implementation of such projects by diverting the funds into their pockets. This is the fight I am doing in Central Baddibu, and I believe all of us can do it in our constituencies. Let us get involved in youth activities and coach them. Let us encourage them to have their constitution by making sure that the leadership is taken up by the right youths. So, the Political Parties where old people with grey hairs, calling themselves "Youths" the like of Samba Jallow and others must leave the youth domain. The example must start from us.

Honourable Speaker, shifting attention to the Office of the Vice President, I think we need a well-coordinated national framework for disaster which will comprise all the institutions that are disaster related. When Covid-19 came, I stood here and said that African countries were not prepared as a continent. We cannot wait until disaster occurs and we start looking for funds. We cannot call the provision of T-shirts and mattresses as response to disaster.

Honourable Speaker, this institution should not only focus on floods or houses that have fallen. It is beyond that. I believe it has to be a well-coordinated and organised institution with a good budgetary allocation for disasters so that when they occur, we can respond immediately. If not, it is the NAMS who will suffer because we do not have budget for disasters. The councils must be responsible since they are collecting taxes. We need to know whether they have budget for disaster or not because when people are in need, the institutions responsible must act.

Honourable Speaker, regarding Works, Infrastructure and Communications, lot of work have been done in the last five years as far as road constructions are concerned. Critics might call it a political move, but I think the Niimi Hakalang road, Upper Saloum, Njaw Road, Sabach Sanjal, Nianija, and Bambally, had been a well-conceived project and a step in the right direction. However, we need to know the level of progress in the ongoing works.

We need to be informed because these are projects that passed through this Assembly. We do not know the level of their work and the attendant challenges. Once we are informed, we can make a better decision during budget allocation. Given that our roads are in a horrible condition. However, the information we got as far as those projects are concerned, they are not enough for the Assembly to make a better decision.

Honourable Speaker, in my Constituency, the Bani-Salikenni Road Project was tendered and awarded. We believe, the work should start by now, but it is pending. I know the Kiangkas also have their own story to tell regarding the Kiang Road. The Assembly also need to be informed about the progress of those roads. The Farato-Jambur Road is also another project which the Assembly does not know the sources of its funds. We do not know anything about that road as the former Chair of the Committee [Select Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of Government Projects]. We do not know the sponsor of that road which is in a terrible condition. We should be serious with our road construction because you cannot fix a road today and in one month time, it becomes unmotorable. If anyone wants to know the condition of the Farato-Jambur road, just try

using it and see what is happening. *"Nii ko nyi noo yeh tenkung, netetuwoo fanang behseroo tala laleh"*. So, in a nutshell, if you want us to work well, there must be a coordinated mechanism. We cannot allocate funds for a purpose and in the next minute, we see something different. We could all remember when that oil fund came from BP, the Ministers paraded here to lobby allocation for their ministries. So, once we allocate, we should make sure that it serves its purpose.

Honourable Speaker, with reference to Defence and Security, most of the Members spoke about it and during the last Assembly, the Clerk can bear me witness that I raised the issue of foreign troops in our land particularly, the ECOMIG forces. It is time for them to leave our country for good because it is costly. Honourable Speaker, our men in uniform should now be in charge. What is happening to the security sector reform? We believe by now, once the reform is done, we should be masters of our own destiny. We know Gambia is not an island, we are part of ECOWAS, and we knew why they came. We were having a political impasse at the time. Now that they have been here for five years, we conducted election and a new Government sworn-in; we should now be realistic in what we are doing. We must effect a change in our security because it cannot be controlled by foreigners. We have to learn from history. In 1994, what happened in this country? There were Nigerian troops here. So, it is a transition. We must ... Do you want to observe me?

[Point of Observation]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Speaker, I just want to move a motion to limit the time of each Honourable Member

to 10 or 15 minutes after Honourable Sulayman Saho's submission because I see some Members sleeping already.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I think you have made some observations. So, it is noted. Let us move, Honourable Speaker. I want to emphasize that we allow our men in uniform to be in charge of the country. We have no hatred for the Senegalese, Ghanaian or Nigerian troops in The Gambia, but we are a sovereign country, we have our laws and our military that should provide our security. I believe you will convey it to the President that time has come for us to be in charge. Honourable Speaker, justice delayed is justice denied.

The President also mentioned about the TRRC which is something that has been constituted by this august Assembly through an act of Parliament. We believe that it was a process, therefore, the whitepaper must be implemented, and we need the support of everybody. We are not here to engage in a blame game, but we all have responsibilities which we must perform judiciously. You cannot ask me to forget about the past when justice is not given. The processes need to be completed so that those found guilty will acknowledge their guilt after which we can talk of forgiveness and reconciliation. If the process is not completed, Honourable Speaker, unity in this country will be threatened and development will elude us. So, we must make sure we treat this process to completion and the Assembly has a role to play as far as the TRRC White Paper implementation is concerned. Let us stand firm to see that the perpetrators are prosecuted because Justice needs to be done and seen to be done.

Honourable Speaker, in 2016, during the early days of the Government, we talked of sanitizing and indigenizing our judiciary and we have seen the Government taking the right steps to make sure that our own Gambian lawyers take the lead in our judiciary system instead of the mercenary judges from outside the country. We have to commend the Government for that, but we need to do more as far as our courts are concerned. The cases in our courts are sometimes delayed. It is very difficult to make sense out of it. So, the security threats are around because people are not safe in their matchbox houses. We cannot live the apartheid era [Soweto lifestyle] in the country where the people are scared to move out. It is a matter of concern that we hear news of people being killed or stabbed somewhere on a daily basis. So, we need to establish what is happening to make sure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. Honourable Speaker, these are some of the things that need to be done as quickly as possible. Also, the President talked about the new constitution which is very good, and we welcomed it dearly. We want it to be speedy as the 1997 Constitution is not a progressive constitution with regard to the time and age that we live in now compared to the other countries within the sub-region. So, holistically, we need to review it. Although, the draft Constitution could not be passed in this Chamber due to so many factors at the time such as political struggle. We should all have a common desire that The Gambia needs a new constitution, and we want the President to facilitate it as soon as possible. He knows the modus operandi that they are going to use. We want The Gambia to usher in a Third Republic which will serve as a good legacy for both our President, and the NAMs. We are all interested in leaving a legacy.

Honourable Speaker, concerning Fisheries and Water Resources, we were informed in one of the SoNAs that very soon the issue of boreholes will no longer be a problem in the country. However, up to now, in the communities of Sarre Adama Kusaland or Sarre Mounde in Lower Fulladu, it is a different story entirely. Also, in Central Baddibu, herds of cattle belonging to the community of Weyaworr have no water to drink. They are forced to migrate to the river sides to get water which often leads to clashes with rice growers. So, if we do not find solutions to these problems, we will be living in a state of conflict. The Ministry of Fisheries needs to be very serious with the problem of water in rural Gambia because water is a right. We are not happy with the water system in rural Gambia except those in Banjul or elsewhere. The number of boreholes inaugurated by the Upper Saloum NAM and I are from individuals who contributed to build these boreholes. If government commits itself to make water available to all of us, it should be clear to us that it cannot do it all. That is obvious, *"ning moo beh iko maa la, ifanang ka jii ring faye jeh leh"* in a nut shell we need to be proactive by taking initiatives when we are being assisted.

Honourable Speaker, we have these fishing centres in The Gambia, which are very common, and I believe they can supply us with fish. There are projects during the PPP Government inherited by the APRC administration which is still not giving support to those fisheries landing sites such as: Salikenni, Tankular, Tendaba, Kemoto and Albreda. These projects inaugurated by the Italians can help us because the structures are there. We only need the gears so that the youths can go for fishing. They also need training on how to use them. I could remember the former APRC

Government had provided boats for the youths which were stationed at Barra for so long, but they do not have the required gears to use them for fishing. So, I would like to know the commitment of this Government in relation to fishing since it came to power. The President did not talk about the existing fishing agreements, but I believe we need to revisit them especially the Agreement with Senegal, the European Union and China. Honourable Speaker, this is the task of the Vice President at the level of Cabinet to reconsider the agreements because it was done in a rush manner.

Honourable Speaker, focusing on Lands, Local Government and Religious Affairs, we all know that religion is a problem of many, especially fanaticism which is on the increase and intolerance becomes the order of the day. It is important to note that everybody has a right to believe in whatever he/she wants, but that should not bring about hatred. Nobody has the right to force anyone to accept a belief. So, we must fight against fanaticism because it can give birth to terrorism. Let us accept each other as Gambians. If you are a preacher, preach in your mosque or in your church and learn to be tolerant of each other. We must have people who are serious religious advisers because the TRRC exposed that some people used Islam as a blanket to commit serious problems in the country. So, we must find solutions to these problems. The Constitution made it very clear that all of us have rights to worship. So, if anyone worships a tree, it is his/her belief. So, we should adopt the African culture which is to tolerate each other.

Another issue is land, which has become a problem, and we all know that we cannot do development without the availability of land. It is time that government reconsider the issue of land. Though some lands are owned by families due to land tenure system, but the problems associated with land are too much. We need to address them. Land ownership is a problem. Government should decentralize the land policies to cover the rural areas. To get a plot of land for farming in the villages is a big challenge to farmers because of the land tenure system. Honourable Speaker, there must be a system in place to govern the acquisition of land.

Honourable Speaker, before wrapping up, I would like to read this excerpt from the speech of the President, "*My government offers the nation a new socio-political order not tied to social preferences, partisan politics, or any form of extremism ...*"

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you refer to the page so that Members can follow?

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADIBU]: It is on Page 62 of the President's SoNA Speech which says, "*My government offers the nation a new socio-political order, not tied to social preferences, partisan politics, or any form of extremism. This is a national order purely for patriotic service and development. I plead that, we embrace as a construct that calls for uprightness, sincerity, and diligence.*"

I think these are touching quotations. It should and must be reflected in our actions. I thank everybody for their kind attention. I believe we are all committed. So, let us work very hard to make sure that we leave a legacy. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Central Baddibu. You have taken a better part of our time, but that is the purpose of the debate. Honourable Members, we tried to allocate time to the debate at the ABC Meeting, but it was agreed that we leave it open for people to participate the way they want. I would now call on the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I sincerely want to recognize the presence of the Vice President of The Gambia and his entire Cabinet for taking up their time to be with us in the Assembly during these important engagements.

To start with, Honourable Speaker, I just want to reflect on the Foreign Affairs, International Corporations and Gambians Abroad, the speech of the President did not reflect the issue of deportation of Gambians from outside the country, which is a great concern for our young people. It would be very much important for this Ministry to review the issue of deportation and come up with policies that can help address the menace.

We cannot really deny our young people abroad to come back to The Gambia, if they are deported. I think we should also find ways and means of integrating them into our society. Some of these young people desperately come back home from overseas and the money given to them can hardly address their problems. It is important to note that some of them have been arrested and jailed prior to their deportation. They came home with virtually nothing to start up something in the country. So, I

really want to challenge the Foreign Office Ministry to consider their situations.

The President also recognised the contributions of our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora through remittances. However, I do not think they are given the rights and privileges that they deserve, especially the right to exercise their franchise as alluded to by some National Assembly Members. It is important for them to be reflected in our policy documents to realize the benefits of some of the contributions they are making to the country.

The President also indicated that The Gambia is holding a position in the ECOWAS Commission; we need to congratulate the Ministry and the country. The Gambia is also part of the United Nations Human Right Council and I think this should also help us to reflect on the issues of Human Rights in this country because recently, we have seen the IGP's Office restricting Gambians to go out on the streets to exercise their rights especially with issues that affect them on daily basis.

The President also touched on agriculture and commended the Ministry of Agriculture for its giant strides in transforming the Agricultural Sector, but I think these words seemed to be politically motivated because it is a misleading statement. We have not seen any reliable data to inform the National Assembly Members of any success realized in the agricultural sector. He has talked about growth in the poultry industry and cereal production. The President's statement has tempted me to ask why ordinary Gambians still struggling to buy a bag of rice for **D1600** or a little above that when our farmlands have been there for over 3 or 4 years lying fallow. The Ministry of Agriculture gives very flimsy excuses because last week we

embarked on a tour as a Select Committee on Agriculture but what we saw on the ground was disheartening. For example, we visited a community in the Upper River Region where the community members have to walk quite a distance approximately 3 or 4 kilometres to reach their farms. The feeder roads are bad, and I want to challenge the Ministry of Agriculture to reconsider these areas and make improvement because the excuses have been that those areas were supposed to benefit from the interventions of the NEMA project which has phased out. I think it was 4 to 5 years project for The Gambia which sought to address the agricultural needs of our young people and women. However, the project failed to realise its set objectives and was blamed on the demise of the director heading the project.

I often wonder why the success of any project is dependent on one person. I expect a deputy director to step in and continue the good work that the former director was executing rather than telling us director X or Y died and as a result, the project could not be successful.

The President also talked about the ***D294.13 million*** ongoing Roots Project meant to harness the potentials of the River Gambia for irrigation so that farmers can cultivate at all times on their farmlands. However, this is still not realized. We have the whole of River Gambia that is yet to be exploited and I think the Ministry of Agriculture needs to double up in addressing the issue of farming in the country.

His speech also highlighted the increase in the small ruminant sector. I think during the last Tobaski, ordinary Gambians were struggling to buy rams which were not available in the country and traders could not go to

Mali and Senegal because of the border closure which caused the prices of rams to be very expensive. The Ministry of Agriculture should really work with the farmers and invest in agriculture. We have farmers who are in possession of 20 or 30 ruminants in various regions of the country. These are the type of farmers who should be supported but unfortunately this is not happening.

Focusing on the environment, I think a lot has been said on the environment by the President. We should congratulate the Government through the Ministry of Environment on embracing the Paris Agreement which commits member countries to the International Support to reduce emission and protect the environment. However, I saw young people from Kartong on social media protesting that they do not want a mining company in their community, but it seems their demands were not heeded. The mining activities are really destroying our environment and I do not think we should allow such activities to continue.

Moreover, the issue of fish meals in this country is also causing more damage than good on our coastal lines, and the Ministry of Environment really needs to review its operations and come up with policies that will be environmentally friendly.

Another issue is salt intrusion in our rural communities, especially in Nianija down to Kuntaur. Salt has intruded these areas and even though I am not an environmentalist, I think one of the reasons is the cutting down of our mangroves by our local communities. We cannot really continue to engage in that blame game, what we should do is to resort to solutions wherein we can help to educate some of those community members to understand the

importance of those mangroves in our waters. I have not seen or heard from this Ministry as to how far has its restoration project gone in safeguarding our environment. Therefore, I want to challenge the Ministry of Environment to double up and ensure mitigation measures are being put in place to help prevent environmental degradations.

Even though, there is an embargo on the issue of timber, I think it is still ongoing and we have people in our respective communities with their chainsaws intruding our forest to cut down trees to sell and make money. The cutting down of trees is not only affecting our forests but also our communities because trucks that are being used to collect the timbers can also damage our environment. So, I want to challenge the Ministry of Environment to double up and see how best they can mitigate some of those things.

The Forestry Department also under the Ministry of Environment used to work with communities to restore the forest parks during the interventions of the Germans in our forest parks. Seedlings were often given to communities to engage in tree planting but when the Germans left The Gambia that was the end of everything.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Can we hear the Point of Order.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, I am rising on Order 30[1] of the Standing Order. We really appreciate the Member's concern, but I think we should be devoted

to the content of the speech only because it is not an adjournment debate where such details or narrative could be highlighted. Thank you.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much Majority Leader. With due respect, I think you walked out and just came in. It seems you are not au fait with the discussions. Honourable Speaker, I think I am on track and what I was trying to explain is that the Department of Forestry should not only be engaged in issuing license for people to chop down our forest parks but should also be working with communities and respective structures to restore our environment for prosperity.

Honourable Speaker, concerning the Ministry of Health, we all know that it is the backbone of the country because without healthy people, we cannot really have a healthy nation. The President's statement highlighted the National Health Insurance Scheme which is a good step in the right direction, and I just want to seize this opportunity to thank the Ministry for the initiative. As alluded to by a colleague that it would also be crucial for us to sensitise the grassroots because the narrative on social media seems to discourage or have a negative effect on the process.

I have also heard from other parliamentarians that the community ambulances that were distributed are alternative mobility that might be okay with other constituencies, but I do not think they can solve our problems. I just want to give an example, that is, the crossing points that connect the northern part of The Gambia and the southern part. If I just want to look at the Central River Region, we know for Janjanbureh crossing point the ferry service works on schedule and about 8pm or 9pm, they close work and patients on board ambulance from the north especially

Kuataur, Niani, Sami and the like, on referral to Bansang hospital face a big challenge because an ambulance cannot cross with a boat. Therefore, I want to challenge the Ministry of Health to provide Janjanbureh Health Centre with a functional ambulance that could be used as an alternative in case the ferry service at Janjanbureh crossing point closed.

The President also stated some of the progress registered in the youth sector but if we consider the National Youth Service Scheme which trains 150 young people annually on career development, the percentage that achieves their objectives in relation to employment is always a cause for concern. The career development needs to be realigned so that our young people can attain their dreams.

It is also important to recognize the efforts of some of the International Organizations that are working within the youth fraternity to support them to realise their goals. I think the approach in terms of the coordination and implementation needs to be slightly changed.

Some of these projects be it GIZ, IMVF, and the Youth Empowerment Project should be adjusted by the government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports in relation to its coordination and implementation. The Ministry could also help in directing us on how those investments should be done rather than allowing international organizations to come and direct how the project funds or investments should be utilised.

I cannot conclude without registering my disappointment with the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports regarding the payment of per diem allowance that was allocated to his wife, even though, he acknowledged that it was a mistake.

[Point of Order]

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I keep rising this issue time without number that we restrict our interventions to the speech given to us for our perusal. The issue of the Minister's travel to UK or to the Commonwealth game has never reflected in the speech of the President. This issue could be raised during the adjournment debate.

THE SPEAKER: You see Honourable Member when somebody is making a point of order, please sit down and give the person the opportunity to say it and there will be a ruling on it.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: My point of order is that what he is saying is new in the context of the speech. So, it could be reserved till the adjournment debate. Thank you

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have a concern that he is expressing his regrets to the Honourable Member while he is seated. I think that is out of order to be honest. You have the right to speak about issues as it pertains to fraud or whatever you may call it, but in this specific issue, I think it is out of order.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Speaker, let me rise again in response to your ruling and what the Honourable Member just said. I think the issue of ...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot comment on the ruling. Please, continue your debate or you ...

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: I cannot continue my debate without reflecting on the speech of the President clearly stating the successes registered on the commonwealth games. Why are you denying me from speaking about it?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, in my opening remarks, I said we guide ourselves as much as possible with our own laws. A ruling is made, so please continue or you sit down, and we give the floor to somebody else.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Speaker, I still want to continue to speak about the allowance that was allocated to the Minister's wife.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, this is my last word to you on this matter. So, please continue your submission or you stop.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Speaker, no problem I will rest my case specifically on the issue of the Minister. I will continue to say corruption is at its peak in The Gambia and the practices are being conducted by the Executive. We have been seeing it sir, it is an open secret and here is the platform that we have to share our views and that of the electorates. So, if we should be condemned to speak about those trending issues that are affecting our daily lives, then I would still want to question the relevance of this august Parliament. Thank you, I will continue.

On Tourism and Culture Honourable Speaker, it was reported that the Ministry of Tourism is exploring other avenues to diversify the tourism

sector. But again, how serious are we in our diversification? If we talk about tourism diversification, it involves product development. So, which new products or services have the Ministry of Tourism and Culture developed over the past years? If you have an answer for me, kindly help because I have lot of interest around that industry.

I want to share with this august Assembly that we need to be realistic in our submissions for the simple reason that the Ministry cannot tell us that they want to diversify the Tourism Industry when nothing is being done. All that we sell for destination Gambia is the 3s, the Sun, Sand and Sea. So, if you are telling us that you want to diversify, we should see what the Ministry has so far done in sustainable and responsible tourism in the country. We should also see what has been done in relation to community-based tourism in the country. If such developments are done in the sector, then I can agree with the Ministry that diversification is happening.

I think a petition is before this august Assembly through the Petition Committee against the Tourism Ministry on the five ecologies that are supposed to be built in each region across the country.

The last time I visited Barra, I was not happy to see the site where the eco-lodge is being built. It is really disheartening in Juffureh or James Island, when you visit the Getty and the heritage artefacts. If we want to diversify tourism, we really need to encourage our communities to take tourism upon themselves and let government support but not Government taking tourism upon themselves and expect communities to contribute. It would not work. It cannot be a top-bottom approach. It has to be a bottom-top approach in order to reach there.

Some of my colleagues have talked about the Securiport yesterday. I would not go that far but I think at some point as a member of the Tourism Select Committee, I would work with my colleagues to see as to how we can help in addressing that issue because it is not realistic for one to be paying a token when entering or leaving one's country. Are we charge when we are entering our homes or houses? Why did The Gambia levy such a tax on its citizens? Apart from that, there is also the issue of landing fees and we have seen how Senegal is growing, just last year they inaugurated their new international airport which is attracting lot of airlines or tour operators to land in Senegal instead of The Gambia. The reason for this is the landing cost in Senegalese airport is more favourable and cost-effective than The Gambia. We cannot just be hunting for money. We need to look at what will boost the economy of the country. What is more realistic than to develop Tourism and Culture?

[Point of Observation]

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Member, can I observe you?

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Yes please.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. I just want to make few clarifications. Considering the issue of Securiport, it is paid in so many countries in the sub region but the way it is collected varies from one country to another. The matter came before the Public Enterprise Committee that it is physical cash collection which can encourage fraud and corruption as well. So, in other countries, it is embedded in your air ticket. It is happening in so many countries. We

need to change the arrangement because it can encourage fraud and corruption. This is our observation with respect to Securiport.

HONOMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I understand that very well but the way it is paid in other countries is not the same and that should not serve as a threat to our customers knowing how much Gambia rely on tourism to boost our GDP. Therefore, I think that particular levy needs to be reconsidered. I am not saying we disband it but there should be a way to collect that tax without customers feeling the pain. It is like daylight robbery.

Moving forward Honourable Speaker, I really want to draw our attention to Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology. The President did report on the infrastructural development in the county or the transformation phases that are happening around our Higher Education Sector. We are progressing at some point but on the other hand, we are not because we have not seen some of these achievements as all-inclusive since the rural communities are seemingly left out. I think the only progressive institution we see around the rural communities is The Gambia College Basse Annex. So, the Ministry really needs to make adjustment in creating institutions that can offer life skills and career developments to our young people. We should mainstream it in our educational system.

Honourable Speaker, shifting our attention to petroleum and energy, I think the cost per litre of petroleum in the country is really threatening and I think last week, the ordinary citizens were really suffering from transport constraints simply because the Transport Union were on a protest which could have been avoided. The Petroleum and Energy Ministry should

consider the pumping prices and see where reduction can be done to make fuel as affordable as possible.

If other countries are selling fuel for **D45** or **D65 per litre** and we are selling it for seventy-five Dalasi, then the commercial drivers will not sympathize with commuters. People like us from the rural communities will suffer when we want to travel to the Greater Banjul Area.

Honourable Speaker, before taking my seat, I would also want us to look at Gender, Children and Social Welfare. The President spoke about the Disability Act that he says is in force. I want the enforcement process to be expedited. Sometimes, we have some of these acts in The Gambia, but it takes time before they are enforced. We are good in formulating policies and acts but never reflect on them. I would like the said Ministry to consider the issues of our children in the country because it seems on weekly basis, you will hear news about a missing child. So, I think there should be a data system that would help to register the names of these children in our systems to ensure that they are being safeguarded.

Another issue I would like to talk about is the TRRC. I know a lot was invested on the TRRC which was approved by this Honourable Assembly, but it seems that the issue continues to drag for example with the white paper. I would like to challenge the Ministry of Justice to expedite the process because we have victims out there who are waiting to see what their compensations shall be which until now, they cannot establish their fate. Therefore, I would like to challenge the Honourable Minister to expedite some of these processes. Also, in our justice system, I think it will be important to find possibilities to decentralize the justice system, having

court houses in every region. But even whereas courts are made available in the communities, judges often stay in such courts periodically. We only see them if they have cases they supposed to preside over. Therefore, we think every region should have an established and functional courthouse that will look at issues being brought to the High Court, the Magistrate, or the Children's Court. I think we should graduate from just having everything centred in the Greater Banjul Area. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Janjanbureh. Honourable Members as I said earlier, we will stay to complete today's business. We are going very slow and by making lot of repetitions. I want to urge all those who have spoken to stay and listen to those who are yet to speak. Honourable Member for Busumbala, you may take the floor.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor. I wish to acknowledge the presence of the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia and his ministers here present. I also extend my gratitude and thanks to the people of Busumbala Constituency in whose mandate I stand before this august Assembly to take part in the debate of the SoNA.

Honourable Speaker, I want to start my intervention with the legal sector, before doing that Honourable Speaker, I want us to consider the introductory remarks of the President's State of the Nation Address. He did inform us that Gambia is a transformed nation. I want us to look at this term very critically. Is The Gambia really transformed Honourable Speaker? It is important to understand that for a nation to be termed as a transformed nation, there are criteria to determine that. By my definition, a

transformed nation is one that its government gives the citizens voice and hope.

Honourable Speaker, I cannot tell for certain whether the government of The Gambia is giving the citizens that voice and hope. Another criterion of a transformed nation is one that establishes a vision for the future and the roadmap of journey towards the direction of better improvement and development.

Honourable Speaker, can we now say that Gambia is a transformed nation when we have problems with our National Development Plan. As far as I know, I have gone through this speech; I have not come across any statement where the President mentioned the National Development Plan.

Honourable Speaker, we cannot regard a nation transformed when there are remand prisoners at the central prison who are not tried in court. We have come across terrible human rights issues during our committee rollout at Mile 2 Prison. You cannot call a nation transformed if the victims who have been suffering for more than twenty years are still wallowing in their pains without remedies. If a country has these problems, it cannot be called a transformed nation, Honourable Speaker. The same applies to a country which levies airport fee without being tabled before deputies at the National Assembly. If you refer to Section 149 of the Constitution, it clearly states that any taxation to be imposed by the government of this country should be taken to the National Assembly for approval. Let us ask ourselves whether the airport Securipoint fee has been tabled before this Assembly. I have not seen it in any record.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you refer to the section of the Constitution?

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Section 149 of the Constitution.

[Point of Order]

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: Order 30[1] is very clear; the Member is deviating from the address. What he is talking about is not even within the speech of the President.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I appreciate that.

Honourable Members, let us be serious. This issue we are talking about is not personal, but for the betterment of our country. We cannot have a tax imposed on our people that the Government is not benefitting. This Securiport levy from the airport could be used to fund other projects such as road construction and for educational purposes. So, I do not know whether the government is being deprived of that money or whether it is going to the pockets of few individuals.

Honourable Speaker, I think we should try and transform our nation. We are yet to attain that status. So, let us work together and make sure it becomes a dream come true.

[Point of Observation]

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you Honourable Member, the point of observation is a very sensitive matter regarding the issue of prisoners. It is unbearable that some of the

prisoners are in detention centres for many years, and this is a matter that the National Assembly Members should critically investigate because that alone is a serious human rights violation. I do not know what type of democracy we preach.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, if a member gives you a point of observation, it means you are observing something, and it is not meant for you to make a statement, let us note that please. Honourable Member you can continue.

[Point of Observation]

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Sorry Honourable Member, may I please observe you? Thank you, Honourable Member for Busumbala. I just want to make observation and clarification regarding the issue of the Securiport. You did mention that it is taxation and as such you cited Section [149] of the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia. There is a difference between taxation, levy, and a fee. The Securiport levy is not a tax, but a fee. Thus, taxation is based on income generated from the sales of properties or merchandise, or an income generated after the delivery of a service. Thank you.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I think any service that you deliver to make money and pay part of that money to the government is taxation. I stand to be corrected.

[Point of Observation]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: To add onto what he has said, I think the government itself calls it airport tax, I do not know why that nomenclature if it is not a tax. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I think what the Nominated Member said is with reference to the provision of the Constitution which indicates how taxation is defined. So, I do not know whether we are clear about the issue.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Honourable Speaker, I read that section and the sub-section therein and I know what they are collecting from our brothers and sisters to and from overseas is airport tax which is going to government coffers.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we must exercise tolerance, listen to each other, and go by our own regulations as much as possible. Let us be responsible please because this is an important institution that we are serving. We must protect its integrity and try not to put it into disrepute by our own behaviours. Some of you reiterated that the President advised us to put aside our political differences and come together and people thought it differently. We must respect each other's opinion and that is the beauty of democracy. Honourable Member, you know this technical issue and you even quoted the Constitution. You have right to disagree over issues. It is also important that any provision of the Constitution that you want to quote should be made clear. Please, you can continue.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. My intervention will focus on the legal sector in tandem with the address of the President. Honourable Speaker, sometimes

I am concerned about the human right records which the draft Constitution could have addressed. We still have several provisions in our law books that curtail our freedom. That is why I want to challenge the Ministry of Justice to make sure that they bring back the draft Constitution before the National Assembly. We have to be careful about the statement of the President regarding the draft Constitution otherwise we will risk losing most of the fundamental provisions in that Constitution such as the issue of Nominated Members which is very clear. I am saying this because I still do not believe that we have democracy where nominated Members are being appointed as Speakers or Deputy Speakers of the Assembly whilst the elected Members are left out. We are representatives of the people; we went to our communities and canvass for votes which the nominated Members did not do. I believe such arrangement should not be accepted.

Honourable Speaker, the draft Constitution guarantees our full powers to subject these ministers to proper scrutiny before they access our ministerial positions. We all know that there are lot of alleged corruptions at the ministries but when we have those powers to scrutinize ministers before the National Assembly and expose their capability to handle such positions. It also makes provision for the assets of would be ministers to be quantified before acquiring such positions. So, all of these are opportunities that can be found in that draft Constitution.

So, if the President is telling us that he is working with the Ministry of Justice to make sure that document is brought before the National Assembly Members. We should not only welcome it but to tell the Minister

concerned that we want this thing to be here before us as soon as possible.

Also, we have so many unfriendly human rights provisions in our status books that restrict movement of our citizens such as the Public Order Act which we should reconsider very critically because it requires citizens to obtain permit from the Inspector General of Police before they could stage any demonstration. But now look at what led to the April 10 and 11 students' demonstration. They did apply for a permit from the Inspector General's Office which he turned down and the students went out and protested. As a result, many students lost their lives during the process. Some are maimed to the point that they cannot walk from one place to another without using wheelchair. Such incidents are caused by these unfriendly human rights provisions in our status books. So, we should try and make sure that we removed those laws from it. The Inspector General of Police is still using this section to deny people who want to demonstrate the illegal killing of Solo Sandeng. Please let us make sure that we change our laws to give citizens better provisions that will safeguard and protect their fundamental rights and freedoms.

We also register some success in the Access to Information Bill which was tabled before the Fifth Legislature. I must acknowledge and thank Members and stakeholders for taking the bold step to pass that law which enables the journalist now to access information. We still have some provisions that curtail the freedom of accessing information because we have in our Criminal Procedure Code [CPCs] such as giving false information to public officers, economic crime. These are draconian laws

that have been used to make sure that they prosecute people in the country. So, we should make sure that we engage or challenge the Ministry of Justice to make sure that we have provisions that are human rights friendly in our law books to avoid being subject of suppression when it comes to exercising our rights.

Honourable Speaker, it is very shocking to find people who have served more than 5 months in prison without appearing before the courts. The practice is that if you are charge for an offence which attracts capital punishment at the magistrate court, the case is transferred to the High Court and the accused person is remanded at the Mile 2 Central Prison and the case file will be sent to AG Chambers for advice which will stay in that office for 2 to 6 months. I have witnessed it and know people who suffered on that account. The Ministry of Justice should act and do better to make sure that people have quick justice. Honourable Speaker, now to security which I believe should be the concern of everybody in the country. When the Human Rights Committee rolled out to security stations across the country which took us to Barra Station, the Officer Commanding told us that they were informed by the former committee [Standing Committee on Defence and Security] in the Fifth Legislature that there was an increment on the budget of the prison's ration so that inmates could be adequately catered for but when we asked the commanding officer, he said his office has not received any such increment to feed the detainees. He went further to say that it is inhumane to confine someone, curtail his freedom of movement without providing food for him/her. It is so bad. So, we are asking the Minister of Interior to engage the IGP and the commissioners so

that if these food rations are supplied, they are immediately accessed to the prisoners through officers in charge.

Honourable Speaker, it will also interest you to know that mobility is another constraint that beset the police officers. As you all know that the drivers' association went on strike and there was no transport plying which caused a huge mobility problem for almost all the sectors and departments.

It is unfortunate that we do not have a pickup in Barra, neither Farafenni to transport detainees from Farafenni to Janjanbureh and these are some of the reasons why the police should be equipped with the facilities needed to perform duties effectively. We cannot act to please the Executive when our house is not in order.

Honourable Speaker, the police officers told our Committee that National Assembly Members in the past have been meeting them for over ten years asking the same questions, yet they have not been supplied with ...

[Point of Observation]

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I know you went on a tour with your committee; I want to make a special appeal to some of the things you have seen. Since your report is not ready, can you just summarize some of the key points until your report is completed?

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you so much, Honourable Member. I think these are important issues that are affecting

the police and there is no better place to address it rather than here because the President mentioned it.

THE SPEAKER: I think the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu may be right. It is a committee report and do not pre-empt it until it is tabled and presented to plenary.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I can relate my personal experience without referring to the tour. These are some of the things I witnessed, and I also lived under such conditions.

Honourable Speaker, the Immigration Department is established to make sure that they perform certain functions for the citizens of the country. In the President's speech, I have seen that the interventions of immigration here is basically the money they collect to add up to our revenue. We thank Immigration Department for this contribution, and we hope that they will do better in securing our national documents. Of recent, so many public outcries have been in the Media that foreigners are having access to our national documents, so we wish to challenge the head of Immigration Department to be courteous about some of these activities.

Honourable Speaker, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA] is one area that we should register excellence because the Director of that institution has been there for more than 6 years or more than that. We have seen in the country where drugs will be seized in certain areas such as our seaport and we want to challenge the Interior Minister to tell us about Banta Keita who has been the talk of the town. We want to know

who this Banta Keita is because over one year now people cannot know who Banta Keita is.

[Point of Order]

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBOE [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: I want to observe my colleague on the matter of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency regarding Banta Keita which is before the court of law, and any matter before the court of law should not be part of the Parliamentary deliberation.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Minority Leader, sustained.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Honourable Minority Leader, I still believe that this Banta Keita should be ...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please when there is a ruling you cannot go over it. Learn to abide by the laws of the land please.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Honourable Speaker, with due respect, I will but it is my opinion.

THE SPEAKER: You cannot express an opinion here when there is a ruling. Honourable Member, please sit down.

Honourable Members, I have said it over and over, we are guided by laws and some of these laws were prepared by ourselves. You do not have opinions on them. There was a point that you were made to understand which is sustained. You cannot comment on it, and you cannot go ahead with your debate please. So, please go ahead and continue with your debate.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. In the area of Agriculture, the President mentioned huge amount of fund that is being directed to the advancement of agricultural productivity in the country. We challenged the Minister responsible for Agriculture to make sure those projects reflect the development aspirations of farmers in our rural Gambia.

Honourable Speaker, in CRR and URR, you will realize that Gambia did not lack the fields where we can make mass production of rice and other related agricultural productivity, but what we lack is the expertise. In fact, we do not even lack the expertise because we have so many doctorate degree holders in the field of Agriculture but what we lack is transparency and accountability in the field of Agriculture. We want to appeal to the Minister responsible for Agriculture to make sure that he deploys people of higher calibre and integrity to be monitors and project coordinators so that the country can benefit from the agricultural projects.

Honourable Speaker, we all realized that Gambia is hit by a devastating flood which has left so many homes destroyed. We have seen the inhumane steps being taken by the Government against the Jabang disaster victims. I will say it is very inhuman and unfortunate to intervene in that manner by destroying homes and houses of individuals who are residents of that estate.

Besides, we should understand that those victims did not make themselves victims of such circumstances. They acquire the land through a process and procedure that are legal. Those victims were allocated that land

through a Social Security Scheme and as far as I know, Social Security is a department within The Gambia Government.

So, if somebody should be blamed for blocking the water ways in that area, it should be Physical Planning. The Social Security allocated the land and the Physical Planning gave approval for that area to be a residential place.

Honourable Speaker, Disaster Management Agency under the Office of the Vice President should be very much proactive in averting disaster occurrence and helping disaster victims by giving timely remedies in such circumstances. They should also restrain from being political in executing their mandate. The reason being, we all witnessed when Covid-19 hit the country heavily. We have seen the biasness in the distributions of food items to vulnerable communities where some benefitted and others did not because they were perceived to be opposition. Such discriminatory move will not help a nation which is trying to transform. Our actions as public officials should reflect the core values of transparency, integrity, and honesty.

Honourable Speaker, regarding Youths and Sports, we must commend the sector for registering success during the last five years. They have performed tremendously well in sporting and other youth engagement activities. We have seen so many international projects that are geared towards empowering youths and which also created some positive effects on the Youths of the country.

Honourable Speaker, having said that, we should also look at the conduct of the Ministry and we will advise our Honourable Minister to make sure that the incident that happened is not repeated.

Honourable Minister, the issue of Gender, Children and Social Welfare are areas that I want to advocate to make sure that ...

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sabach Sanjal, can we hear the point of order?

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. All speeches in the Assembly should be addressed to the Speaker and not to Ministers.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is in order. Please, address me.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Honourable Speaker, I think I am addressing you. The issue of Gender, Children and Social Welfare deserves critical intervention so that we can see our women as partners in development.

Considering the current position of our Cabinet, it does not look fair to women. We only have two or three representatives at the level of Cabinet. I would like to urge the President to make sure that next time he includes more women in cabinet positions to strike a balance.

Honourable Speaker, the same plea also goes to the security chiefs to make sure that they promote more women at the helm of affairs of our security especially in command positions. They are au fait with the issues

that affect women, so taking them into such positions will boost their understanding as to how they will treat women.

Honourable Speaker, I believe that special attention should be given to children with special needs. We wish to challenge the Ministry concerned to make sure that they engage Government to make sure that segment of these population with disability are employed to reduce begging on the streets.

Regarding Tourism and Culture, like other Speakers rightly said certain statements are derogative and should not be directed to people from a specific country that was one time our colonial master. Women have right to choose and decide who to go to bed with, they should have right to come to any country to find a husband of their choice. It should not be national, ministerial or even departmental discussions. We should not allow open derogative remarks in the Tourism Sector. If we do such, we may undermine our tourism potentials.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to talk about our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora who are contributing positively towards the growth and development of the country. Without them, there would have been lot of pain and suffering. So, for the President to acknowledge their contribution toward National Development is a step in the right direction.

Focusing on Petroleum and Energy, I think I can talk about it because the matter is out of the court. The Gampetroleum case and the accused persons were acquitted and discharged. This is a case that alleged certain officers to have siphoned lot of funds for their personal pockets.

We want the Government to investigate this case very critically to establish the facts since the accused persons were discharged at the court; we want thorough investigations into this matter. So, the Inspector General of Police and Interior Minister should take note.

Honourable Speaker, now to education, we cannot only talk about the academic aspect of education, but we should also make sure that we consider the skills training centres for decentralization to various regions and constituencies so that people who are not fortunate enough to pass their academic exams to have enrolment in universities and tertiary institutions can have admission into these skills training centres to enhance development and productivity in the country.

My last intervention will be on Health. Over the past five years, we have seen several NGOs that have been set up to make sure that they partake in the Health Management System in the country. One amongst them is the Gambia Women Life Matters. I think this NGO is doing a great job for the country. We are all witness to that, so I would urge the Minister of Health to make sure that he works with this NGO to make sure that we empower them so that their contributions can be realized and felt by women who are in these situations because we have seen on several occasions when the women are in labour, they lack blood. This NGO would always make fast communication through social media and within a short period of time, they would have response and people would go and donate blood to the woman in pain. So, we will urge the Minister of Health to have a close working relationship with this NGO and see them as partners in development but not in the other way round.

Honourable Speaker, several speakers have lamented about the amount of funds that have been allocated to the Ministry of Health during and after Covid-19. We need to see results because our health sector is a point of concern. The health facilities in the country need to be upgraded to major hospitals. The facility situated at Banjulining need to be upgraded because of the catchment areas that it is serving. The health facility at Yundum also needs to be upgraded to a major hospital because of its location. The biggest village within my Constituency is without a health facility. They always go to Yundum. Honourable Speaker, with these interventions, I beg to take my seat and thank you for giving me the floor.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Busumbala. Honourable Members, it is now after 2pm and from morning to now, only three Members contributed, and we still have about thirty other Members to contribute, and today is the last day for the debate. We must stay to finish business. So, Honourable Members must note that those who have spoken and were listened to by Honourable Members must also stay to listen to others when they speak. On that note, I would suspend the Sittings for an hour for us to go for lunch and prayers.

[Point of Observation]

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I just have an observation before you adjourn. Under Standing Order 61, Debate of Motions and Amendments, I am suggesting the Assembly Business Committee to sit over this matter whilst we are on break because Order 61 subsection 2 says *"the Assembly may, on a motion made by the Assembly Business Committee in accordance with this*

Standing Order imposed a limit in respect of debate on any particular motion or bill by allotting a limited period of time for such debate or by limiting the time during which Members may speak ...”So, I am suggesting that they should at least suggest a particular time for the debate so that we can conclude.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal. I have said it at the ABC meeting. I did raise the issue of trying to put a time limit and Members then said no, let us leave it open. Now, we are here others have contributed openly. It will be difficult to restrict others. We must all bear the brunt to stay and finish the business. All what we need to do is to avoid repetition. So, Honourable Members, it is already 2:30 pm. I would suspend the session. The Assembly stands suspended until 15:30 when we should all come back to resume business.

The Assembly is suspended for an hour.