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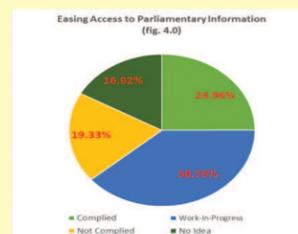
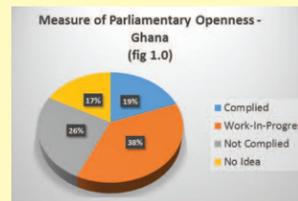


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Parliament House Of Ghana, Accra

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NGO Relations

Absence of NGO law in Ghana

- Country risk being blacklisted

BY: EMMANUELLA
DADUGBLOR

Ghana risks being blacklisted by the international community by September this year if a legal framework is not put in place to facilitate the activities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the country. This is according to a researcher and a Co-Chairperson for Ghana's advocacy group, Citizens Movement against Corruption (CMaC), Edem Senanu, who said the aftermath of that blacklisting can be very disadvantageous to the country in many instances.

Speaking exclusively with *Parliamentary News* as a follow-on to his research work titled "An In-Depth Assessment of the Legal Environment for Civil Society Including Philanthropic Organizations in Ghana," which was conducted under the auspices of the West Africa Civil Society Institute

(WACSI), Mr. Senanu intimated that the international community will not fail to sever all its dealings with Ghana if the NGOs Bill, which is to facilitate the effective work of CSOs and NGOs is not passed into law by the September 2020 deadline.

"We have a situation where the international community is saying that Ghana is non-compliant because we don't have an NGOs law in place, to make as it were, NGOs accountable to ensure that they don't become vehicles for money laundering etc. So that in itself, we have a deadline of September 2020 to be aligned with international conventions" he said.

Mr. Senanu also cautioned that the noncompliance of the country could cause her the confidence that the international community has in her systems as well as other sanctions which may not augur well for the developing Sub-Saharan Africa country. He however said the situation could be a win to Ghana if authorities expedite action to get a Bill passed before the

"We have a situation where the international community is saying that Ghana is non-compliant because we don't have an NGOs law in place, to make as it were, NGOs accountable to ensure that they don't become vehicles for money laundering etc."

they are essentially assisting government in its quest to provide better living conditions through taking over some parts of government's work that would have otherwise been left unattended or necessarily done by government itself.

He indicated that imposing taxes on the imports from donor countries or international organizations to these NGOs and CSOs will only cripple their activities since they may not be able to afford the exorbitant import duties.

"The lack of a legal framework which includes a recognition that civil society activities involve public goods and services, in other words we complement what the government is expected to do. And most, if not all that civil society does, really, are services and goods that government would have had to find resources to implement. And therefore, if civil society for example gets assistance from some group in the US in terms of bicycles to give to the poor, or in terms of sewing machines to give to the poor, one is not expecting that these items arriving at our ports are going to be taxed at checkout level. That it is impossible to clear them, especially when these are free gifts"

Mr. Senanu called for tax exemptions for CSOs especially regarding imports that are needed in their line of work. "And so it is really important that civil society is given that recognition to be complementing government and these items will come in free of charge and the only way that can be possible is through the legal framework. And I'm

dark days.

He intimated also, that despite such a law being to the advantage of NGOs, the repercussions of not passing it will come to the country as a whole and not necessarily the CSOs and NGOs, stating also that this may affect the transactions of these CSOs with their international partners. "The non-compliance could lead to us facing various sanctions including the lack of confidence and trust in our systems and so there is a lot to be lost and a lot to be gained if we are aligned and put a law in place and there is a lot to be potentially lost if we don't."

The researcher also bemoaned the seeming lack of support on the part of government for CSOs, especially when



Edem Senanu, Co-Chairperson for Citizens Movement against Corruption (CMaC)

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Health

Parliaments around the world are responding differently to the coronavirus pandemic which has already caused tens of thousands of deaths globally, and the Parliament of Ghana has been responding too. The pandemic has made some National Assemblies adopt innovative (mostly using technology) ways to continue parliamentary sittings, while others have had to break or limit the amount of business the parliament can handle.

The Economist in its Q2 global forecast reports that coronavirus sinks global growth prospects for the first half of 2020, and with this potential negative impact to the global economy, other sources have predicted that African economies will be the worst hit during this period.

Ghana's Parliament has been busily scrutinizing some policies and programme proposals put forward by the government led by the Finance Minister, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta. So what exactly has the Parliament of Ghana been doing throughout the period of COVID-19.

JANUARY 2020

On 29 January 2020 the first call to action was made by the Hon. Member for Nabdam, Dr. Mark Kurt Nawaane when he made a statement on the outbreak of a new coronavirus in the Wuhan City, Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China, which had then killed over one hundred people in that country and fast spreading to other parts of the world. He therefore called on the authorities to put in place measures to prevent the outbreak of the disease in the country.

FEBRUARY 2020

The Minister responsible for Health, Mr. Kwaku Agyemang-Manu, on 4th February made a statement in which he apprised legislators of measures being taken by Government to prevent the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country, at which time the virus had killed over four hundred people in Wuhan City in the People's Republic of China, which was the epicenter of the disease, and in other parts of the world.

The Deputy Minister for Foreign

Ghana's Parliament and COVID-19 Response

By Sammy Obeng & Ben Aryeh



Affairs and Regional Integration, Alhaji Habibu Tijani Mohammad, on behalf of the Minister also made a statement on the same day apprising the Parliament of measures being undertaken by Government to protect and provide reliefs to Ghanaian citizens particularly students who are resident in Wuhan City in the People's Republic of China.

The Committee on Health met on Thursday 13th February 2020 and held some discussions with Officials of the Ghana Health Service on issues relating to the coronavirus epidemic.

MARCH 2020

The Hon. Minister responsible for Health, Mr. Kwaku Agyemang-Manu again on March 4, made a statement in which he apprised the House on the country's preparedness and response to any potential outbreak of the novel coronavirus which the World Health Organisation on the 30th January, 2020 declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

On 17 March, the Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta made a statement in

which he apprised the House on the Fiscal implications of COVID-19 on the economy of the country, and measures being implemented by Government to pay depositors who had their funds with defunct Microfinance Institutions and Savings and Loans Companies.

The Parliament of Ghana passed the Imposition of Restriction Act on 20 March to give more power to the President of the Republic to impose restrictions on persons in the event of imminent disaster, emergency or a similar circumstance to ensure public safety, public health and protection amidst the coronavirus pandemic. The passage of the Act attracted many criticisms from civil society and ordinary citizens including the Minority caucus in Parliament who opined that the law did not have any bearing on COVID-19 and that it was a way to vest more powers in the President.

On 25th March, the Rt. Hon. Speaker informed Members of Parliament (MPs) that pursuant to the directive of H. E. the President declaring Wednesday, 25th March, 2020 as a National Day of fasting and prayers, occasioned

by the global spread of the COVID-19, the House would observe the day as such. His directive was followed by a statement by the President of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, Mr. Emmanuel Kwasi Bedzrah, in furtherance of the directive following which the Principal Assistant Clerk and Head of the Table Office, Mr. Ebenezer Ahumah Djietror, offered a short word of exhortation. The Hon. Majority and Minority Leaders, some MPs and the Acting Clerk, Mr. Cyril K. O. Nsiah also took turns to say Christian and Muslim prayers for the Lord's intervention in the wake of the deadly coronavirus disease which is ravaging the world.

The Minister for Finance on 30th March, again made a statement on the floor of Parliament in which he apprised the House on the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ghana and measures being undertaken by Government to mitigate the impact. In his statement, he mentioned that Government will establish the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) with an amount of GH¢1 Billion after approval from Parliament.

The CAP will focus on areas that will provide maximum results in alleviating the impact of the coronavirus pandemic with a target at protecting against job losses, protecting livelihoods, supporting small businesses, and ensuring the programme is efficiently and sustainably implemented.

APRIL 2020

The COVID-19 National Trust Fund Bill was presented to Parliament by the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Justice, Ms. Gloria Afua Akuffo. The bill was read the first time and referred by the Speaker of Parliament to the Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee on 1st April for the Committee to determine its urgency.

The object of the Bill is "to establish the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) National Trust Fund to complement the efforts of Government in the fight against COVID-19 and to assist in the welfare of needy and vulnerable persons who have been afflicted

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Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

CSOs Score Parliament above Average on Openness

By Clement Akoloh

Society Organizations in Ghana have scored Ghana's Parliament over 50 percent for its compliance to the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness.

A survey conducted by the civil society parliamentary monitoring organization based in Ghana, Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica), revealed that though there is more room for improvement for full compliance by the Parliament of Ghana, it is on a good level towards achieving the targets in the four scope areas of the Declaration, faring better than many of its peers in Africa and even on the global scene.

The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness is a globally recognized benchmark for determining the extent of openness of a nation's Parliament. It draws on a variety of background documents endorsed by the international community of parliamentary monitoring

organisations (PMOs). The Declaration makes a call on national Parliaments, sub-national and transnational legislative bodies, by Civil Society PMOs for an increased commitment to openness and to citizen engagement in Parliamentary work.

It has four thematic areas with 44 principles which are related to transparency and social inclusion. The four thematic areas include: Promoting a Culture of Openness in Parliament; Making Parliamentary Information Transparent; Easing Access to Parliamentary Information; and Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information.

With support from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), PNAfrica gathered empirical information on the perspective of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including the media on how transparent and socially inclusive the Parliament of Ghana is in order to shape the CSOs future engagements with Parliament.

"We sampled 47 independent Civil Society Organizations, rep-

resentatives of NGOs networks and coalitions in the area of Governance, Anti-Corruption, Youth, and Gender among others," said the Executive Director of PNAfrica, Sammy Obeng, at the CSOs Roundtable Dialogue with the Open Parliament Task Team of the Parliament of Ghana held at Miklin Hotel in Accra last month.

According to him, by way of quantitative research, his outfit "sampled views among Civil Society Organizations on what the perception is about the level of openness presently in Ghana's Parliament, so that it can serve for all of us as the basis for which we can all improve on the areas that we identify as gaps or the areas that we identify as doing very well so that we can continue to strengthen those areas."

In percentage terms, the overall perception of Civil Society Organizations collated about Ghana's level of compliance in achieving the targets of the four thematic areas of the Declaration summed up to 57 percent after an analysis of the survey. According to the survey, 19 percent of the respondents indicated that the Parliament of Ghana has complied with the Declaration, while 38 percent of them indicated that it was work in progress.

Only 17 percent of the respondents indicated that they had no idea whether the Parliament was putting up any measures to achieve the Declaration, while the rest of the 26 percent was of the view that the Parliament has not complied at all.

Celebrating the Positives

In their assessments, PNAfrica noted some of the things the Parliament of Ghana has done or is doing which has been

deemed as progressive. These were shared in a presentation made by Mr. Sammy Obeng, and included the Parliament's support for students parliament; engagements on TV and Radio programs to explain and educate the people about issues concerning Parliament, including producing Parliament's own programme on TV named "Parliament in Its Own Words" among others.

The improved website of the Parliament was commended highly for its credibility for accuracy with the availability of journals such as the Parliamentary Hansard, Votes and Proceedings, Order Paper as well as improved MP profiles with audio and video presentations of individual MPs.

Live streaming of sittings of Parliament and Parliamentary events on Facebook with simultaneous sign language interpretation; and using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to provide update to citizens were also mentioned for praise.

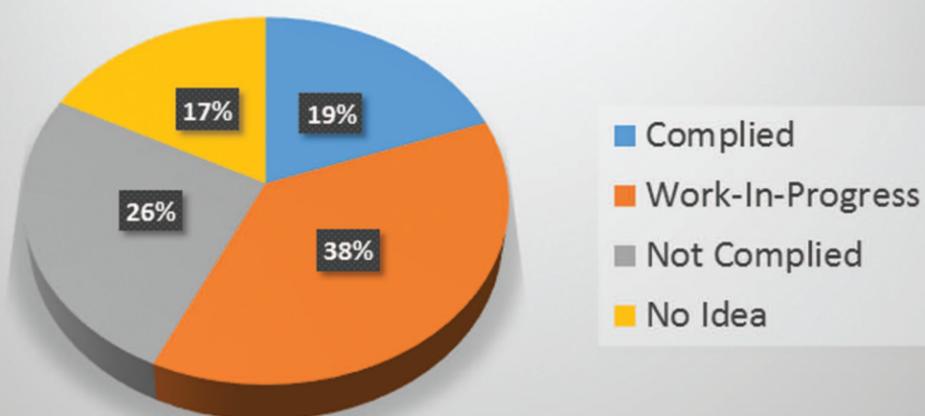
Notices to citizens and civil society to present memoranda on draft legislations presented to the House; provision of basic committee information; MPs biodata, historical background and contacts among others was considered as some of the areas that work have commenced on but had more room for improvement.

Baseline Study of Parliamentary Openness

However, the breakdown of the statistics of the survey at the level of each thematic area also tells its own interesting story. The questionnaire which were administered to participating

Measure of Parliamentary Openness -

Ghana
(fig 1.0)



Continued On Page 6

Parliamentary Affairs

SPEAKER OQUAYE AND PARLIAMENT OF GHANA DONATES TO NATIONAL COVID-19 FUND

Credit: Kate Addo (Director of Public Affairs, Parliament of Ghana)

The Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Rt. Hon. Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye, has donated half of his monthly salary for three months to the COVID-19 National Trust Fund. The Speaker also announced that Parliament is donating an amount of two hundred thousand Ghana Cedis to set the Fund rolling.

Making the donation, the Speaker urged all Members of Parliament and other workers to contribute to the fund to help the fight against the corona virus pandemic.

Speaker Oquaye has been at the forefront of the fight to prevent the possible introduction and spread of the Corona virus in Parliament.

He has also used various platforms to urge all Ghanaians to follow the protocols for preventing the spread

of the disease. He has supervised the acquisition and wearing of facial masks in Parliament and has also facilitated the provision of sanitizers to Members of Parliament for further distribution to citizens.

The Parliament last week passed the COVID-19 National Trust Fund Act, 2020, as the House sat late into the night, with Speaker Oquaye presiding over proceedings to ensure that this all important Bill is passed under a certificate of urgency.

The Bill was laid before Parliament on the night of Wednesday April 01, 2020 by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Gloria Afua Akuffo.

It seeks to give legal backing to the establishment of the COVID-19 National Trust Fund which is intended to complement the efforts of government in the fight against



Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Rt. Hon. Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye, donated half of his monthly salary for three months to the COVID-19 National Trust Fund

the disease. The Fund will receive donations for disbursement to individuals who have been negatively

impacted by the disease. It also makes provisions for how the Fund should be managed.

Absence of NGO law in Ghana - Country risk being blacklisted

Continued from Page 2

saying that those kinds of recognition and tax rebate are necessary to keep the confidence between civil society and its partners outside to get these goods and services that serve the interest of Ghana."

"The legal framework should look at the fact that civil society is directly assisting government agenda because civil society by and large is not a profit making organization so it becomes very challenging

where somebody in a country has exported things to be given free of charge and that organization is expected to find money and pay tax when it does not have any extra earnings from any other income source. So, there are challenges that ought to be made easier for those that want to complement government in its efforts to promote development" he added.

Mr. Senanu also called for a review and upgrade of the National Policy on Strategic Partnership with NGOs which was developed by the National Consultative Group in the year 2000, which was revised in

2004. He explained that getting the policy reviewed and endorsed by cabinet while still working to ensure the passing of the NGOs bill into law will see to it that Ghana is not blacklisted if she does not meet the September 2020 deadline.

Meanwhile, according to the Executive Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance, (IDEG), Dr. Emmanuel O. Akwetey, stakeholder consultation is currently ongoing, spearheaded by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to assimilate the inputs of NGOs and CSOs into the draft

bill before it is presented to Parliament. Speaking in a stakeholder meeting recently, Dr. Akwetey said the team is working around the clock to ensure that the bill is passed into law before the September 2020 deadline.

An 11-member committee was constituted in December 2019 by the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Gloria Akuffo, to draft the nonprofit organizations bill that will provide new regulations governing NGOs. The bill is expected to bring sanity to the activities of NGOs as well as promote transparency and accountability.

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

CSOs Score Parliament above Average on Openness

Continued From Page 4

CSOs had over 100 questions that sought to measure whether or not the institution of parliament was in compliance to the various requirements under the 44 principles of the Declaration.

that it was still in progress and 12.39% indicated that it had no idea about efforts being implemented by parliament to meet the benchmarks under this scope area.

Under 'Making Parliamentary Information Transparent', more than half the respondents

Furthermore, under 'Easing Access to Parliamentary Information', which saw very significant positive feedback with almost two-third of all respondents giving thumbs-up to the parliament for a good work done in complying or working to comply as per figure 4.0, there were still a significant

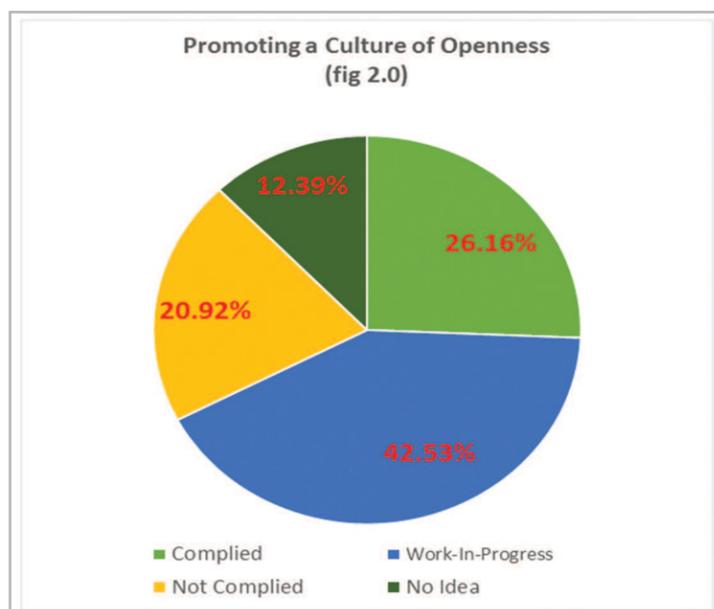
mentary information.

The fact that some groups were not aware of what parliament has done or was doing in line with these principles of openness was a key takeaway for the parliamentary communicators to better their efforts in information dissemination.

In the final scope areas which deals with 'Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information', only 10.58% of the respondents indicated that it had been complied with, while 25.74% indicated that it had not been complied with. Some 34.59% of the respondents indicated that it was work in progress and as much as 29.09% of the respondent said it had no idea what had been done by parliament in the area of leveraging ICT for parliamentary openness.

This baseline study will serve as a basis for the continuous engagement between Civil Society Organizations and the Parliament of Ghana in the common interest of building a more democratic society.

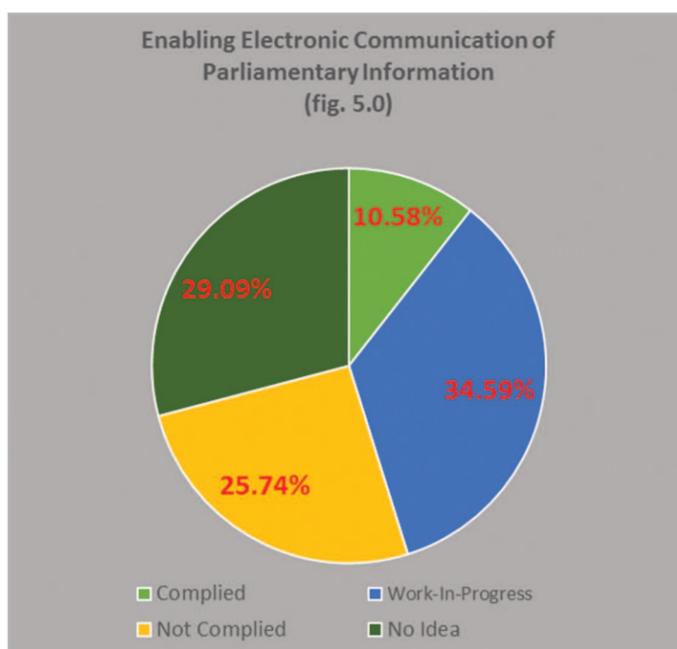
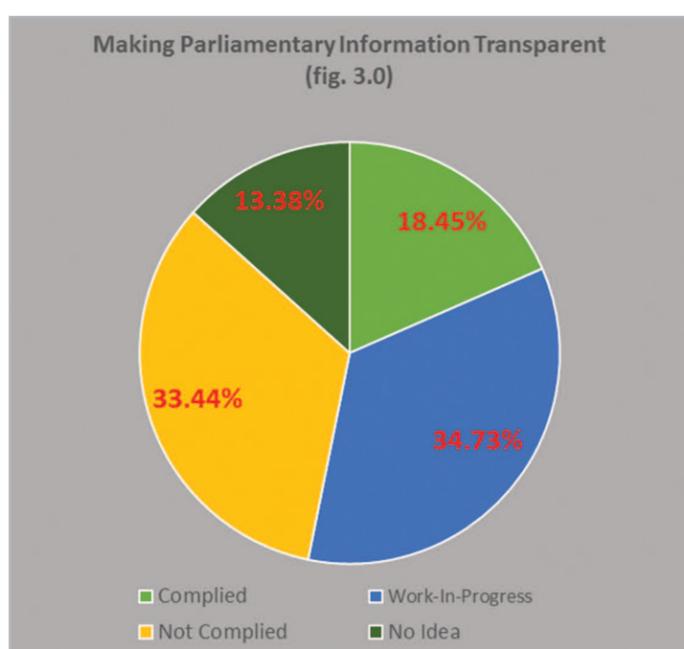
The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness was officially launched at the world e-Parliament Conference in 2012 in Rome, Italy, on the International Day of Democracy. The Declaration is not only intended for an increased commitment to openness and to citizen engagement in Parliamentary work, but also as a basis for dialogue between Parliaments and Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations to advance government and parliamentary openness, and to ensure that these openness leads to greater citizen engagement, more responsive representative institutions and, ultimately, a more democratic society.



According to the survey, under the scope of 'Promoting a Culture of Openness', 26.16% of the CSOs indicated that Parliament had complied, while 20.92% indicated that it had not complied. 42.53% indicated

(53.18%) indicated that it has either complied or had work in progress towards compliance, while about a third of all respondents (33.44%) provided negative feedback.

one-third of respondents who were either dissatisfied with work done so far, or simply are not aware of measures put in place by the Parliament to ease citizens access to parlia-



Parliamentary Affairs

COVID-19 in the Saga of the Indefinite Suspensions of Parliament

By Clement Akoloh

"I respect your age; I respect you as a Speaker. It is your birthday but we will not accept this Constitutional Parliamentary Dictatorship in Ghana today, tomorrow and forever."

These were the closing statements of the Minority Leader, Haruna Iddrisu, in his response to the indefinite suspension of Ghana's Parliament on the Floor of the House as directed by the Right Honourable Speaker, Professor Aaron Michael Oquaye.

On the night of Saturday, April 4, 2020 where the Parliament of Ghana was expected to adjourn (*sini die*) indefinitely to mark the end of the first meeting of the Fourth Session of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, something extraordinary happened which was occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic which is determined to force change wherever it shows up.

The Parliament House is one of such places where the reverberations of the deadly disease will be felt and would

"Honourable Members, we are not rising today, but we are suspending sitting indefinitely. If we should rise, and there is any emergency where our intervention may be required, we may need two weeks notice according to the Constitution and the Standing Orders. Once sitting is suspended, we can ask the House to proceed to work with a day or two days notice or within hours as the circumstances may demand."

dare to leave its indelible marks on the institution by attempting to sow a seed of discord between the Majority and the Minority sides of the House; and also seek to create confusion in the application of the rules of the House or better still, expose the flaws in the Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana.

This extraordinary happening interrupted the normal flow of events on such days as the last sitting day prior to a recess of Parliament where historically there are very few controversies recorded because of the obvious reasons of the envisaged vacation and rest time it affords MPs and also the joy that comes with the 'pay day'.

Announcement

Instead of an indefinite adjournment of the House as usual and as scheduled in the agenda of Parliament, the presiding Speaker announced what could be considered as a controversial indefinite suspension of sittings of the House.

"Honourable Members, we are not rising today, but we are suspending sitting indefinitely. If we should rise, and there is any emergency where our intervention may be required, we may need two weeks notice according to the Constitution and the Standing Orders. Once sitting is suspended, we can ask the House to proceed to work with a day or two days notice or within hours as the circumstances may demand," the Speaker explained.

The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament, Professor Aaron

Michael Oquaye, made this announcement based on the fact that Parliament would have to be on the standby to assist the Executive in approving decisions and funds to support the fight against the deadly disease in the country.

"The whole Ghana state is in the state of unprecedented national emergency. I am praying all Members of Parliament and supporting staff to rise up to the occasion as patrons of the Republic. I have faithfully read the IPU bulletin of April 20 which I want to share with you..." the Speaker indicated.

Excerpts of the IPU bulletin indicated that even though Parliaments are subject to the same social distancing measures and the COVID-19 safety protocols, yet in this time of crisis the role of Parliament has become more important. Therefore Parliaments have to find new ways to work to help their nations go through this phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Confusion Associated with the COVID-19 Phenomenon

Undoubtedly, the Novel Coronavirus disease, christened (COVID-19) by the World Health Organization (WHO) would go down history as one of the most destructive elements of modern day civilization as we have come to know it.

This singular phenomenon has conspired with nature to test the pulse and resilience of humanity, punch holes in the wisdom of the so called superpowers of this world and also expose the frailties of mankind in every sphere of human endeavour.

While human systems, hitherto



Right Honourable Speaker,
Professor Aaron Michael Oquaye

The Unprecedented

Continued On Pages 11 & 12

Special Report

Overview of the Cashew Processing Sector in Ghana

The importance of local processing in Africa cannot be over-emphasized. The addition of value to raw cashew nuts in Africa means higher revenue for the various countries through better value for the kernels as well as income for staff of processing units. The income received by each staff or worker has huge social and economic impact on families, communities and the country as a whole.

However, efforts by African governments to improve and expand the processing sector of the cashew value chain is minimal and, in many cases, non-existing.

It is an established fact that local cashew processors are unable to obtain adequate supplies of raw materials for processing due to intensive competition with purchases by exporters of raw cashew nuts at the farm gate.

In Ghana, government's approach to this issue has mainly been to increase the production of the raw cashew nuts with the view that there would be enough for everyone (both the processors and the exporters) to buy.

Consequently, government has embarked on several initiatives to improve the production of the RCN in the country. This includes the Planting for Export and Rural Development Programme, under which the government had supported the development and distribution of improved planting seedlings to farmers.

Another major government policy for the cashew sector is the Cashew Development Plan (2017-2027). The vision of the Cashew Development Plan is to aggressively expand, modernise and transform Ghana's cashew sector into a significant foreign exchange earner, creating jobs and substantial wealth for

Ghanaians while enhancing the environment to reduce global warming.

The cashew development plan involves the supply of seedlings, mass spraying of cashew farms, industry-focused research, introduction of appropriate production and processing technologies and the development of marketing strategies along the value chain.

Unfortunately, the Cashew Development Plan suffered still birth. The plan never took off due to numerous controversies and mistrust among key stakeholders.

Perhaps, the strongest support from government to the cashew value chain is the passage of the Tree Crop Development Authority Act in December 2019, which is to establish the Tree Crops Development Authority to regulate and manage the production, processing and trading of tree crops in the country. The law provides guidelines for the development of the subsector and identifies activities and areas to which technical and financial resources should be directed.

So far there has not been any major direct support from government to the processing sector. According to Ed-Malvin Nii Smith, President of the Association of Cashew Processors Ghana (ACPG), government's approach of over focusing on production of the RCN is not the best. He pointed out that "In 2019, Cote D'Ivoire produced about 800,000 metric tonnes of RCN but that did not impact their processing sector. So, increasing production doesn't mean that your local

processors will automatically get the RCN to process, but you can be assured that the exporters will buy more."

The closest direct attempt by government to help the processing sector in Ghana was the administrative directives issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry on the export window in 2016, which tremendously levelled the playing field for the local processors to buy at competitive price. However, this directive was short-lived as it came under severe political pressure.

According to a Ghana Fact Sheet prepared by ComCashew, "Ghana currently has 14 processing units (8 active and 6 closed for lack of sustainable supply of raw cashew nuts)". The country also has four apple processing units. Out of the eight active primary processors, two are foreign owned (MIM Cashew and USIBRAS), with the rest being indigenous companies.

The ComCashew Fact Sheet placed the national installed capacity of Ghana in 2018 at 45,750 metric tonnes, and the national utilized capacity at 23,300 metric tonnes. The two foreign processors contribute about 95percent of this figure, with all the indigenous processors contributing the rest.

Nii Smith noted that the inability of the local processors to contribute favorably to the country's utilized capacity is as a result of lack of access to funding opportunities; unlike their foreign own counterparts, who enjoy very good interest rates and terms from their



Special Report

respective countries to do business in Ghana.

“Unlike our foreign counterpart, the indigenous processors have to grapple with huge bank loans. Most of the funding for the indigenous processors are coming from commercial banks at an interest rate between 28-30percent in addition to providing a collateral.

He noted that, “the margins on the cashew kernel are very small and therefore any funding that is expensive wipes away any profit that one stands to gain. The interest rate is so high that even when you borrow your output is not enough to make any profit at all.”

He proposed that the banks should be looking at other forms of collateral such as the RCN purchase by the processors.

Another challenge faced by the indigenous processors is the use of obsolete machines that hinders their productivity. In November 2018, the Brazilian owned cashew processing company, USIBRAS, donated 18 high-capacity shelling machines to the association. The equipment, each worth \$7,000, was distributed to the six active indigenous primary processing factories. The equipment has the capacity to process 200kilos of nuts per hour compared to the manual processing methods used by the local cashew processors.

The handing over of the equipment by USIBRAS Ghana Limited follows a series of trainings and technical support facilitated by the African Cashew Alliance, the GIZ Competitive Cashew Initiative (GIZ/ComCashew) with financial support from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) under its Ghana Private



Sector Competitiveness Programme to build capacity, as well as provide market linkage to strengthen the sector.

Lack of human resource capacity is another challenge faced by local processors. The sector lacks the requisite skills to effectively man the processing factories. Those that eventually benefit from various training programs end up leaving the sector shortly after to look for greater opportunities in other

sectors of the economy. This situation is making the sector not attractive to investors, as one has to be personally present to supervise operations.

To address this particular challenge, the processing sector has benefitted immensely from numerous trainings from donor partners such as ComCashew.

Currently, the association is banking its hope on the creation of the Tree Crop Development Authority to address its concerns. The Authority is to be led by the private sector.

“We will strongly push our agenda through the Authority. We are better off concentrating equally on the processing sector of the cashew value chain. The country stands to gain more revenue from value addition than exporting the raw nut,” Nii Smith observed.

The ACPG two years ago outlined a five years strategic plan to introduce new small and medium-sized cashew processing factories that will specialize in stage processing within the cashew processing value

Ghana currently has 14 processing units (8 active and 6 closed for lack of sustainable supply of raw cashew nuts)”. The country also has four apple processing units. Out of the eight active primary processors, two are foreign-owned (MIM Cashew and USIBRAS), with the rest being indigenous companies.



chain and to tap into the socio-economic potential of the crop.

“As part of that strategic plan, ACPG hopes to increase processing volumes of Ghanaian raw cashew nuts from 12,000 metric tonnes to 80,000 metric tonnes by 2023. The plan also focuses on maximizing the use of installed processing capacities from 10 percent to 75 per cent. This will lead to the creation of more than 10,000 direct and indirect jobs in the cashew sector, with an accumulated wage of GH c 30 million per annum, especially for women in rural areas.

However, due to lack of funds to run its secretariat the processors association has put its strategic plan on ice for now” Nii Smith disclosed.

This Special Report is part of a visibility and advocacy project for agricultural value-chains implemented by Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) with funding from



General News

Lockdown is making husbands, wives and families bond better



Minister for Communications and Member of Parliament, Mrs. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful

By Patrick Slessor

Ghana's Minister for Communications and Member of Parliament, Mrs. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, has said if nothing at all, the coronavirus and the lockdown would help keep husbands at

home to bond better with their wives and families.

Her comment on the floor of Parliament made a number of male Members of Parliament laugh, as she received heckles and cheers from fellow Members.

Despite some Members complaining about the House sitting for extended hours which lands them late into the night for the past three weeks, and having to sit five days a week rather than the usual four days, the statement by the Minister who represents the people of Ablekuma West provided a form of relief for the MPs who were considering the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) National Trust Fund Bill at the time.

The Bill which was passed under Certificate of Urgency gives legal backing to a proposed fund to allow for contributions of monies and other resources to help in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was during the consideration of whether to amend the word afflict or use impact of the disease that got the Minister to make a contribution about how the disease and the sub-

sequent lockdown are making men stay longer at home with their wives, children and families.

The Minister threw more on the benefits of the lockdown in an interaction with journalists.

She said rather than keeping husbands and wives apart, men should take advantage of the lockdown to get closer and interact more positively with their wives, and wives to do the same.

The Minister had recently announced that her husband, who had recently returned from a trip to the United Kingdom had quarantined himself as part of measures to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.

She said he was served food by leaving it at the door to the room he was in isolation, and the husband was in a room in their house and not having contact with anyone in the house.

"They leave his food at the door. If we want to talk to him, we stand at a safe distance away and talk to him."

Mrs. Owusu-Ekuful said despite the ravaging nature of

the disease, the lockdown in some affected countries is helping their citizens to rediscover their humanity, reduce emissions and improve upon their natural environment; and for mankind to get back to the basics of life and its essential necessities.

She urged that people took advantage of the lockdowns to be more creative, adding "I wonder how this simple tiny virus, which is not visible should cause such global attention."

"Even if it's a pandemic, it should help us to take a step back and take stock of our lives, and reassess what is really of value. Above all, it should help us to get closer to God, our Maker. I'm hoping that after this, we'll reassess our relationship with the universe and our place in it and see that it's all interlinked. So what we can do can impact negatively on other species. And so, we should be more mindful of the way we treat nature."

"We should be more protective of the resources that we have been given so freely, blessed with, and think about leaving a lasting legacy for the next generation" she concluded.

Ghana's Parliament and COVID-19 Response

Continued From Page 3

or impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and to provide for the management of the fund and for related matters."

The Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs met on the same day and considered the urgency of the COVID-19 National Trust Fund Bill, and again the next day.

On 2nd April the Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional, Legal & Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Ben Abdallah Banda laid the committee's report on COVID-19 National Trust Fund Bill after they had determined that the bill be taken under a certificate of urgency. The bill was taken through all the processes of law making and was passed on that same day.

The Finance Minister appeared before Parliament and submitted a request to the Finance Committee to grant

the authorization to access the requisite amount for the contingency plan to confront the challenge that has engulfed the country in this COVID-19. The Speaker afterwards referred the paper to the Committee for consideration and report.

The Parliament of Ghana has since adopted an unprecedented approach of rescinding its decision to adjourn sine die, and has rather resorted to suspending Sittings indefinitely in order that they can reconvene at any time to look into matters of emer-

gency relating to the coronavirus as the situation may present itself. The Speaker of Parliament argues that should the House adjourn "and there is any emergency where our intervention may be required, we may need two weeks notice according to the Constitution and the Standing Orders.

Once sitting is suspended, we can ask the House to proceed to work with a day or two days notice or within hours as the circumstances may demand."

Parliamentary Affairs

COVID-19 in the Saga of the Indefinite Suspensions of Parliament

Continued from Page 7

believed to be full proof are being reshaped; theories are also being rewritten; and philosophies are equally being redefined to accommodate the new paradigm which is gradually being shifted around the world by the novel coronavirus.

Indeed these are not normal times and as it is becoming evident in the Parliament of Ghana, governance and institutions of democracy have not been spared, they have received their fair share of the abnormal doses of the confusion brought about by the COVID-19 phenomenon. It has already infiltrated into the ranks of Parliament and threatening to change the status

"He doesn't have the power to prorogue the Parliament. He is to do so together with the House. He must show respect to the Leaders and Members of Parliament who have been elected. Mr. Speaker, at the time that you should be keeping the country together, you are rather dividing us with the dictatorial tendencies you have shown. We will not accept it. We came here as representatives of our people. The Speaker is not part of the House."

quo with some bulldozing force.

The Mood of the House and the Reaction of the Minority Leader

When the Speaker made the announcement about the indefinite suspension of Parliament, the House first went very quiet for some few seconds before some of them could find their voices again.

Observing from the Press gallery which is sitting directly on top of the Speaker's chair, planted at the head of the horseshoe style sitting arrangement of the House, and overlooking the entire floor of the House, one could tell that almost everyone in the House at the time was surprised by the unusual announcement except the members on the Majority Leadership bench including the Majority Leader, Osei-Kyei-Mensah Bonsu.

The dramatic reaction of the Minority Leader was very worthy of note. He sprang to his feet after the Speaker had finished giving his direction and he said, "Mr. Speaker, I am shell shocked and saddened by the way you are attempting to prorogue Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. You swore an oath and that oath was to uphold the constitution of Ghana, the tenets, the values and the principles of the rule of law and in particular, the Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana. What you have done, I cannot find any space for it in the Standing Orders of Ghana's Parliament."

The visibly shocked Minority Leader did not end it there. He continued and said, "May I refer you to Order 42. This Parliament has come to the end of the 45th Sitting of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Fourth Republic. This House, on 27th March, per the adoption of the Business Statement the House



Minority Leader Hon Haruna Iddrisu

is to adjourn *sini die*. Show me the amendment advertized on today's Order Paper for us to postpone the adjournment *sini die*?

The Bomb Shell from the Minority Leader

Then he dropped the bomb shell. Mr. Haruna Iddrisu indicated that, while the Speaker is not an elected representative of the people, his dictatorial tendencies are rather keeping the House apart instead of bringing them together, especially in this hard and trying times of national emergency.

"He doesn't have the power to prorogue the Parliament. He is to do so together with the House. He must show respect to the Leaders and Members of Parliament who have been elected. Mr. Speaker, at the time that you should be keeping the country together, you are rather dividing us with the dictatorial tendencies you have shown. We will not accept it. We came here as representatives of our people. The Speaker is not part of the House," he shouted into the microphone before succumbing to the deafening sounds of the incessant smashing of the Speaker's gavel on the table.

The Right Honourable Speaker,

Professor Aaron Michael Oquaye had wanted to make an intervention before the Minority Leader concluded his statement.

Explanation by the Speaker in Defense

The Speaker in his defense, informed the House that, for the past two weeks before the incident, the Minority Leadership except the 2nd Deputy Minority Whip, Mrs. Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe Ghansah, had refused to attend the leadership pre-sitting meetings with the Speaker before every daily sitting in Parliament. He said, it was at this meeting that the decision was taken to suspend the House indefinitely and the Minority Whip was tasked to inform the Minority Leader about the decision.

The Speaker had claimed in his explanation that he did not know what the Minority Leadership was protesting with their absence at the meeting. But the Minority Leader's reaction to his intervention brought another perspective to the feud between the two.

The Bone of Contention between Speaker and Minority Leader

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Parliamentary Affairs

COVID-19 in the Saga of the Indefinite Suspensions of Parliament

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Apparently, the Minority Leader was protesting Mr. Speaker's denial of a letter the Minority Leader wrote to the Speaker detailing the Minority's solution to the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in the country. The Minority Leader felt disrespected when the Speaker denied receiving the said letter and rather tasked the Director of Public Affairs of Parliament to respond to him in that regard.

"You have made reference to pretty-sitting meetings. I wrote a letter to you and you chose to respond to me through the Public Affairs Secretariat. Did you invite me as your leader? You even had to dismiss two people in your office for speaking the truth because you deny that you didn't have correspondence. When you check the dispatch books, I wrote, I communicated but for some reason it was denied and later on some innocent people have suffered.

"I was protesting and I have responded to you through the same media. Knowing that as Minority Leader, this is the time to keep this House together and keep the country together and keep Parliament together. Demonstrate respect to the Constitution of Ghana and the



Majority Leader Osei-Kyei-Mensah Bonsu

Standing Orders of Parliament. To suspend this House, I see it nowhere in this Standing Orders," the Minority Leader lamented.

Majority Leader Osei-Kyei-Mensah Bonsu's Submission

The Majority Leader and Leader of Government Business, Osei-Kyei-Mensah Bonsu was next to speak on this matter. The Minority Leader was looking at him with an eagle eye to gauge his reaction on the unprecedented indefinite suspension of Parliament.

He said, "Mr. Speaker, today if we were in normal times, we ought to have come to the end

of our plenary session of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Fourth Republic successfully. Mr. Speaker, dear colleagues we cannot say so with exactitude. No thanks to the novel Coronavirus COVID-19 that has afflicted the world and it is holding the country to ransom.

"Notwithstanding, I am grateful to have been part of this meeting with you and to account for what has transpired thus far during this meeting," he observed.

At this point, the Minority Leader could no longer hold himself up. He just got up from his chair and started making his way towards the exit of the House. The other Minority MPs were following his lead had also gotten up from their chair ready to walk out too.

But one could see from an observation point from the Press gallery that the Leader was prevailed upon to rescind his decision to exit the House. Some of the stalwarts in the Minority group such as the Second Deputy Speaker, Alban Sumana Bagbin and the MP for Wa West, Joseph Yieleh Chireh talked him out of it and he resumed his

seat but continued to make hand gestures at his counterpart the Majority Leader to indicate his displeasure about his submission.

Towards the end of the submission of the Majority Leader, Osei-Kyei-Mensah Bonsu, he said, "Mr. Speaker, your declaration that the House be suspended indefinitely given the circumstances of the times, would not as the Minority Leader would want us to understand. Perhaps it would not find expression expressly in the Standing Orders, but we must recognize we are not in normal times.

"Mr. Speaker, in such situations as our Orders provide in Order 5, the Speaker shall give direction as he deems fit. If anybody wants to challenge the direction of the Speaker, that person knows what to do... Order 93 is also available and the Orders are clear. I am sad that we should be rising on this rather unfortunate note.

"We may not always agree. I disagree with the Minority Leader on occasions. Sometimes we even raise our voices. Sometimes I disagreed with the Speaker, just as I disagreed with the Former Speaker. But when we disagree, the Orders are set out to for us to express our disagreements," Mr. Osei-Kyei-Mensah Bonsu advised.

The decision to suspend the House *sini die* was upheld and in just three days after that day, the House was recalled on Wednesday, April 8, 2020 to consider a policy statement by the Finance Minister to access the Contingency Fund to support Government in the fight against the COVID-19. The House still stands suspended indefinitely after the statement was referred to the Finance Committee.

"Mr. Speaker, today if we were in normal times, we ought to have come to the end of our plenary session of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Fourth Republic successfully. Mr. Speaker, dear colleagues we cannot say so with exactitude."

Parliamentary Practice & Procedures

THIS MONTH IN GHANA'S PARLIAMENT

By: Benjamin Opoku Aryeh

Amid COVID-19 the Parliament of Ghana has been on an indefinite suspension in order to allow MPs to reconvene when necessary to undertake business in relation to the pandemic and other pressing national issues. The First Meeting of Parliament continues under suspension till further notice as was directed by the Speaker of the House.

BILLS

A number of bills including the Education Regulatory Bill, 2019 and the Technical Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 were taken through the consideration stage. The Pre-tertiary Education bill, 2019 was read the second reading whereas the COVID-19 National Trust Fund Bill, 2020 was considered and passed.

The Corporate Insolvency Bill, 2019 was passed during the period together with the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2020.

The Hon. Majority Leader and Minister responsible for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu withdrew the Public Elections (Registration of

Voters) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 which was presented on Thursday, 26th March, 2020. The referral was accordingly withdrawn from the Committee on Subsidiary Legislation.

PAPERS

The Minister responsible for Finance laid a number of papers.

A request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, GETFund Levy, NHIL, EXIM Levy, Special Import Levy and Domestic VAT amounting to the Ghana Cedi equivalent of Twenty-Nine Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Seven Thousand, Eight Hundred and Eighteen United States Dollars and Ninety Cent (US\$29,687,818.90) on materials, equipment, works and services to be procured for the Construction of Nine (9) State-of-the-Art Technical and Vocational Training Institutes in Ghana. The request was referred by the Speaker to the Finance Committee for consideration and report.

The Minister for Sanitation and Water Resources, Mrs. Cecilia Abena Dapaah, laid an EPC/Turnkey Contract Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (rep-

resented by the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources) and Strabag AG of Austria for an amount of Eleven Million, Five Hundred Thousand Euros (€11,500,000.00) to execute the construction of the Four Constituencies Water Supply Scheme, Phase III for Central Tongu, Adaklu, Agotime-Ziope Districts and Ho Municipality. The Hon. Speaker referred the Agreement to the Committee on Works and Housing for consideration and report.

Hon. Deputy Minister for Finance, Mrs. Abena Osei-Asare, laid these papers: (i). Credit Facility Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance) and Raiffeisenbank International AB, Austria for an amount of Eleven Million, Five Hundred Thousand Euros (€11,500,000.00) to finance the execution of the Four Constituencies Water Supply Scheme, Phase III for Central Tongu, Adaklu, Agotime-Ziope Districts and Ho Municipality; (ii). Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, GETFund Levy, NHIL, EXIM Levy, Special Import Levy and Domestic VAT amounting to the Ghana Cedi equivalent of Three Million, One Hundred and Twenty- Three Thousand, Three Hundred Euros (€3,123,300.90) on materials, equipment and project vehicles to be procured for the execution of Four Constituencies Water Supply Scheme, Phase III for Central Tongu, Adaklu, Agotime-Ziope Districts and Ho Municipality; and (iii). Reconciliation Report on the Petroleum Holding Fund for the year 2019.

The Hon. Speaker referred all the papers to the Finance Committee for consideration and report.

On energy, the Hon. Minister responsible for Energy laid the 2020 Work Programme of the

Ghana National Corporation (GNPC). The Rt. Hon. Speaker referred the Work Programme to the Committee on Mines and Energy for consideration and report.

The finance committee headed by Dr. Mark Assibey-Yeboah laid: (i). Report of the Finance Committee on the Financing Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and the International Development Association (IDA) for an amount of Twenty-Five Million, Five Hundred Thousand Special Drawing Rights (SDR 25,500,000.00) [equivalent to US\$35.00 Million] to finance the Ghana COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Project; (ii). Report of the Finance Committee on the Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, GETFund Levy, NHIL, EXIM Levy and Special Import Levy amounting to the Ghana Cedi equivalent of Twenty Million, Nine Hundred and Fifty-Three Thousand, Sixty-Six United States Dollars and Sixty-Nine Cent (US\$20,953,066.69 [made up of US\$1,229,515.69 local purchases and US\$19,723,551.00 imports]) on materials, equipment, and vehicles required for the Construction of the Second Phase of the Tamale International Airport; and (iii). Report of the Finance Committee on the Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, GETFund Levy, Import NHIL, and EXIM Levy amounting to the Ghana Cedi equivalent of Ninety-Nine Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty-Five United States Dollars (US\$99,925.00) on materials, plant, machinery and equipment or parts to be procured by Kaskazini Limited as well as Corporate Income Tax for five years of operation under the implementation of the One



Parliament House Of Ghana, Accra

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Parliamentary Practice & Procedures

THIS MONTH IN GHANA'S PARLIAMENT

Continued From Page 13

District One Factory (1D1F) programme.

The Chairman of the Finance Committee also laid other papers on the floor of the House.

(i). Report of the Finance Committee on the Term Loan Facility Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance) and Cooperative Rabobank U.A. and Commerzbank Aktiengesellschaft, Brussels Branch for an amount of Ninety-Six Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-Six Thousand Euros (€96,696,000.00 [inclusive of CREDENDO ECA Premium of €11,696,000.00] for the Elmina Fishing Port Rehabilitation and Expansion Project; and (ii). Report of the Finance Committee on the Mixed Credit Facility Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and the African Development Fund (ADF) for an amount of Five Million, Three Hundred Thousand Units of Account (UA5.3 Million) [comprising a concessionary loan amount of UA3.2 Million and a grant amount of UA2.1 Million] to finance the Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Domestic Resource Mobilisation

and Economic Management Project.

On 17 April Parliament approved the Rapid Credit Facility Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an amount of Seven Hundred and Thirty-Eight Million Special Drawing Rights (SDR738 Million) [equivalent to about US\$1.0 Billion] to Mitigate the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COMMITTEES

During the week the House Committee met and discussed issues relating to the welfare of Hon. Members and Staff.

The Committee Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs met and considered the urgency of the COVID-19 National Trust Fund Bill, 2020. The Committee on Defence and Interior met and held discussions with officials of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior on the current status of security in the country towards curbing the COVID - 19 pandemic.

The Committee on Finance also met and considered the following:

i. Term Loan Facility Agreement

The Committee Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs met and considered the urgency of the COVID-19 National Trust Fund Bill, 2020. The Committee on Defence and Interior met and held discussions with officials of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior on the current status of security in the country towards curbing the COVID - 19 pandemic.

the African Development Fund (ADF) for an amount of Five Million, Three Hundred Thousand Units of Account (UA5.3 Million) [comprising a concessionary loan amount of UA2.1 Million] to finance the Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Domestic Resource Mobilisation and Economic Management Project.

iii. Ghana Development Cooperative Policy (GDCCP)

The Committee met again and considered the EPC/Turnkey Contract Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources) and Strabag of Austria for an amount of Eleven Million, Five Hundred Thousand Euros (€11,500,000.00) to execute the construction of the Four Constituencies Water Supply Scheme, Phase III of Central Tongu, Adaklu, Agotime-Ziope Districts and Ho Municipality.

The Appointments Committee met on 15 April 2020 and held a public hearing to consider the President's nomination of Hon. Bernard Okoe Boye (Dr.) as Deputy Minister for Health.

STATEMENTS

The Hon. Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta made a statement in Parliament in which he apprised the House on the economic impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the economy of Ghana and measures being undertaken by Government to mitigate the impact. The Minister also made a statement on 8 April in which he requested for the withdrawal of the sum of Two Hundred and Fourteen Million United States Dollars (\$214,000,000.00) [equivalent of GH¢ 1.2 Billion Cedis] from the Contingency Fund to finance the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP).

The Hon. Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta made a statement in Parliament in which he apprised the House on the economic impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the economy of Ghana and measures being undertaken by Government to mitigate the impact.

between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance) and Cooperative Rabobank U.A. and Commerzbank Aktiengesellschaft, Brussels Branch for an amount of Ninety-Six Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-Six Thousand Euros (€96,696,000.00 [inclusive of CREDENDO ECA Premium of €11,696,000.00] for the Elmina Fishing Port Rehabilitation and Expansion Project.

ii. Mixed Credit Facility Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic and delivering parliamentary democracy:

Toolkit launched by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

The outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and its subsequent spread as a global pandemic that has rapidly spread to at least 180 countries, has consequently plunged many Parliaments and Legislatures across the world into a state of emergency. Commonwealth Parliaments and Parliamentarians are grappling with many different issues both to implement the emergency health measures during this global pandemic while at the same time looking at new ways to conduct debates, scrutinise and pass legislation, hold parliamentary committees and question the actions of their governments. At their heart, Parliaments need to be able to deliver democracy and democratic accountability, but can this be achieved while practicing social distancing measures?

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat has conducted research amongst its membership of 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures to synthesise a forward-looking 'CPA Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures on the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic and delivering parliamentary democracy'. This toolkit provides various measures and recommendations that can be adopted by both Parliaments and Parliamentarians in order to continue to deliver on the Legislatures' role of scrutinising legislation and delivering democracy during a global pandemic.

The Acting CPA Secretary-General, Mr Jarvis Matiya said: "The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has been championing parliamentary democracy across the Commonwealth since 1911 and has since

COVID-19
What is Coronavirus?
Coronaviruses (CoV) are a family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC
A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and can spread between people sustainably. Because there is little to no pre-existing immunity against the new virus, it spreads worldwide. The virus that causes COVID-19 is infecting people and spreading easily from person-to-person. Cases have been detected in most countries worldwide and community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. On 11 March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the WHO.

Common signs of infection include:
• Respiratory symptoms
• Fever
• Cough
• Shortness of breath
• Breathing difficulties
In more severe cases, infection can cause:
• Pneumonia
• Severe acute respiratory syndrome
• Kidney failure
• Death

SYMPTOMS

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS
The public health impacts of the Coronavirus outbreak are widespread. Some of the areas of public health affected will include:
• Increased mortality rate – the primary health impact of the global pandemic
• Physical health of the general population – for those who suffer from the virus but also through lack of exercise/fresh air, poor diet, etc during social distancing measures
• Social care provision – particularly for elderly or vulnerable groups
• Mental health – particularly through stress, anxiety, isolation especially during social distancing measures
• Health services – a global pandemic will have a huge effect on the public health services in any given jurisdiction.

PREVENTION

- Washing of hands frequently**
Regularly and thoroughly clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- Maintain social distancing**
Maintain at least 2 metre (6 feet) distance between people, especially those who are coughing or sneezing.
- Practice respiratory hygiene**
This means covering mouths and noses with either the bent elbow or a tissue when people cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**
Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to the eyes, nose or mouth.

served as a forum that enables the development of the best parliamentary practices and most effective policies. The CPA upholds the advancement of democracy under all circumstances and seeks to support its membership particularly during times of uncertainty. The measures outlined for consideration in this toolkit

are inspired primarily by measures actioned by various Commonwealth Parliaments in the midst of this current outbreak, combined more broadly with independently sourced research on business continuity and crisis management.

It has been acknowledged that the current COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak is continually developing and at different stages in different areas of the world, and as a result, the circumstances surrounding this global pandemic are also continually changing. We hope that this toolkit will serve to bring some insight into the recommended practices to prevent disruption to parliamentary continuity that have thus far been executed in order to assist all Commonwealth Parliaments in their different stages of development."

CPA recognises that this toolkit is "for the benefit of its membership and for the wider international community. This information is intended to supplement the current global pandemic advice and information from a wide range of international organisations. This toolkit does not supersede existing national guidance and plans. Rather, this toolkit should be used to augment existing relevant national plans and focus the support of the international community."

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), now in its 109th year, exists to develop, promote and support Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and to implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA is an international community of over 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth's commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance. The CPA Executive Committee is the principal governing body of the Association and includes Commonwealth Speakers and Members of Parliament.





2020
INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF THE NURSE AND
THE MIDWIFE

#SupportNursesAndMidwives

#COVID19

The world needs **millions more midwives and nurses**



Add your voice to those calling for
MORE INVESTMENT
in nurses and midwives

