

# PARLIAMENTARY NEWS



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## Food and Agriculture

# GHANA: GARDJA Engages Editors On Need To Increase Media Reportage On Cashew Sector

By: Reuben Quainoo,  
GHANA

The Ghana Agriculture and Rural Development Journalists Association (GARDJA) has held an editors' forum in Accra to encourage increased media focus on the cashew sector.

The forum is part of a cashew visibility project by GARDJA which seeks to build knowledge of media persons on cashew sector and expose them to newsworthy issues in the sector.

Deputy General Secretary of GARDJA Joseph Opoku Gakpo explained "the initiative also seeks to expose media persons to practical issues militating against development of cashew sector and draw their attention to recent policy developments in cashew sector.

"The project also seeks to put cashew industry players like farmers directly in touch with media practitioners, and pub-

**"The project also seeks to put cashew industry players like farmers directly in touch with media practitioners, and publicise cashew sector issues to members of public,"**

licise cashew sector issues to members of public," Mr. Gakpo said in a presentation to the editors.

10 editors and subeditors from Adom FM, myjoyonline.com, Citi FM/TV, Home-

base TV, Modernghana.com, Akuafu TV, Graphic Communications Group, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, and TV3 participated.

Despite being a major contributor to Ghana's economy with more than 125,000 farmers growing the crop, the sector is facing varied challenges including low local processing and declining farmer price. But unlike cocoa, very little conversations are happening around the cashew crop.

The Deputy General Secretary of GARDJA explained that the GARDJA cashew visibility initiative will work to ensure the Ghanaian public has access to more and better investigative reports on cashew sector sustainability issues on radio, online, newspaper and TV. It will ensure the voice of cashew farmers and processors will be heard on the challenges facing the industry.

"Through the initiative media houses will contribute to informed public debate on cashew industry and journalists will be able to hold government accountable for their actions and words on the cashew industry," he added.

President of the Ghana Journalists Association Dr. Affail Money told the gathering the GJA was proud of the initiative being rolled out by GARDJA, describing it as a laudable one.

General Secretary of the Cashew Farmers Association of Ghana Clement Anane who was present at the forum said cashew farmers are facing various challenges including pest attacks on their farms. He called for more

support from the media to deal with these difficulties.

President of Cashew Processors Ghana Ed-Malvin Nii Ayibonte Smith said cashew processors are also facing a lot of challenges including inadequate financing and high operational cost. He also called for the support of the media to deal with these challenges.

**The GARDJA cashew visibility initiative will work to ensure the Ghanaian public has access to more and better investigative reports on cashew sector sustainability issues on radio, online, newspaper and TV**



Ghana Agriculture and Rural Development Journalists Association held an editors' forum in Accra to encourage increased media focus on the cashew sector

President of GARDJA Richmond Frimpong assured more initiatives including field trips, workshops, and bursary support for journalists will be rolled out soon to encourage increased media attention on the cashew sector.

## Parliamentary Affairs

# GHANA: Abolish the Whip System to Make Parliamentary Committees Effective -Minister for Parliamentary Affairs

**By: Gilbert Borketey  
Boyefio, GHANA**

The Minister for the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA), Hon Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, has strongly called for the abolition of the whip system at the Committee level to enable Members of Parliament operate independently from party discipline. According to him, "If members work together, as we normally do at the Winnowing Committee, individual members are able to examine issues and alternatives more rationally, if both government and opposition parties are not whipping their party members towards preconceived positions".

Speaking at MoPA's Core Leadership Engagements with the leadership of Parliament, Hon Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, who is also the Majority Leader of Parliament, proposed that the non-partisan nature of Committee work could be reinforced by spreading the chairpersonship among the vari-



Minister for the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Hon Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu

ous parties represented in parliament rather than allowing government party members to dominate these crucial positions, especially in our situation where ministers are picked from parliament and the ruling party is thus manifestly weakened in terms of quality materials.

The Chairpersons of Committees help to set the agenda for Committee business, preside over and determine the course of proceedings and hence significantly influence outcomes, including reports that are submitted to plenary. If such members are seen to be generally incompetent, parliament is significantly weakened.

"This is why I have been a strong advocate for sharing committee chairpersonship among the parties in Parliament. However, admittedly, the extreme partisanship of some MPs especially, some in leadership, who are otherwise normally intelligent people, makes me a bit nervous about what kind of polarization and rabble rousing such a move could possibly engender in our parliament.

He challenged Parliament to do more in providing the Committees with facilities and services to conduct their enquiries, noting that, "Most MPs on Committees are not experts. Committees, therefore, must be sufficiently resourced to engage experts and professionals to conduct due dilig-

ence on various matters to enable MPs probe for relevant answers from the MDAs in pursuit of transparency and accountability. He opined that greater scrutiny and analysis by Committees leads to purer legislation, to less debate on the floor, to a more rational perspective of the scope and meaning of an issue and a broader basis for acceptance and legislation.

On his part, the Minority Leader of Parliament, Hon Haruna Iddrisu, bemoaned the inefficiency of Parliament in playing its role of oversight of the Executive Arm of Government. According to him, "Since 1993, Parliament has not lived up to the expectation of its role of oversight".

He was of the view that until Parliament rises up to the task of true oversight the status quo will remain and many Ghanaians will lose hope in the institution.

He mentioned several instances such as the role of Parliament in Article 177 of the 1992 Constitution and Section 30 of the Bank of Ghana Act, were in his opinion Parliament failed Ghanaians by not being able to hold government in check.

As the elected body that represents society in all its diversity, parliament of Ghana has a unique responsibility for reconciling the conflicting interests and expectations of different groups and communities through the democratic means of dialogue and compromise. Parliament also has the task of adapting society's laws to its rapidly changing needs and circumstances. As the body entrusted with the oversight of government, they are responsible for ensuring that governments are fully accountable to the people.

In his welcome address, the Chief Director of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Evans Aggrey Darkoh indicated that the engagement with the Core Leadership of Parliament, which is the first programme of the ministry in 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic, is interrogating

how the Parliament of Ghana, through its core and auxiliary functions is sustaining Ghana's democracy in this election year, 2020 and beyond.

Held under the theme, "Parliament and the Sustenance of Ghana's Democracy in 2020 and Beyond", Dr. Darkoh noted that despite the numerous challenges posed by the Covid 19 pandemic, the Ministry still expect institutions in the country to function effectively, and expect government to continue to craft effective policies and support the strengthening of institutions including Parliament to generate positive outcomes.

"We are interested in commitment, coordination and cooperation as the three cardinal principles institutions need to ensure that rules and resources yield the desired outcomes."

"Our Ministry, a part of the public bureaucracy, must keep hope alive and function. It is with this in mind that we are pursuing three strategic objectives this year including: Support the deepening of democratic governance; Improve the participation of civil society (media, traditional authorities, religious bodies in national development); and Promote the Fight Against Corruption and Economic Crimes".

To achieve these objectives, six top priority areas have been carefully selected by the ministry to engage its attention this year. These are: Deepen Political Party Participation in National Development; Strengthening Capacity of Parliament to Exercise Oversight of Government Finances and Implementation of Policies and Programmes; Strengthen independent Governance Institutions to perform their functions effectively; Strengthen the Judiciary, Parliament, Security Services and other anti-corruption institutions to perform their functions effectively; Strengthening the engagement with traditional authorities in development and governance processes; and Strengthen Capacity of the Media to play a watch dog role.

**"Most MPs on Committees are not experts. Committees, therefore, must be sufficiently resourced to engage experts and professionals to conduct due diligence on various matters to enable MPs probe for relevant answers from the MDAs in pursuit of transparency and accountability."**

## Health

# SIERRA LEONE: How's Parliament Operating In An Era Of COVID-19?

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

*Chapter No.6 (The Legislature) part No.1 (Composition of Parliament), Section No.82 (Clerk of Parliament) subsection No.1 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) establishes among several things, that the Clerk of Parliament... "Shall be responsible for the administration of Parliament."*

The Parliamentary Service Act, 2007 (Being an Act to provide for the Administration of Parliament and for other related matters), Part 3 (Organisation of Parliamentary Service), Section No.9 states that the Clerk of Parliament is head of the Parliamentary Service, underscoring that the Clerk is a public office but not form part of the public service. Other functions of the Clerk involve the day-to-day administration, management of staff, funds, etc. The general elections of the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone in the year 2018 herald many changes in political and administrative composition, one of which was President Julius Maada Bio's appointment of a new Clerk of Parliament in the person of former (2012-2018) Member of Parliament from Bo District,



Honorable Umarr Paran Tarawally,  
Clerk of Parliament - Sierra Leone

**On a whole, Parliament is sluggish no matter how you look at it, the Covid-19 is hardly hitting and because of that, we meet now very much infrequently and leaders hardly come to their offices. Everybody is in fear**

Southern Sierra Leone, Honorable Umarr Paran Tarawally. Hon. Paran was a radical and firebrand debater and holds a law degree.

Hon. Tarawally's predecessor, the late Hon. Ibrahim Sesay, was also a former parliamentarian under the UNPP, and the SLPP parties in the class of 1996 Parliament. The appointment of former MPs to serve as the Clerk of Parliament is still hotly debated especially when the current Clerk is a member of the President's Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) but today, this issue has been overridden by the coronavirus pandemic or COVID-19 outbreak that has gripped the world.

Sierra Leoneans are no strangers to major disease outbreaks due to its weak health infrastructure. In 2014, the country and its immediate neighbours suffered bitterly from the havoc of the Ebola virus disease. Five years after the Ebola outbreak, Coronavirus is present with the country registering its first case on 31st March, 2020.

On March 24, 2020, President Maada Bio declared a State of Emergency (SoE), invoking Section No. 29 (Public Emergency), subsection No. 1 of the Sierra Leone

constitution which says "whenever in the opinion of the President a state of emergency is imminent or has commenced, the President may, at any time, by Proclamation which shall be published in the Gazette,...". The SoE was proclaimed for the purpose of responding to COVID-19 and on the 26 of March, 2020, the Sierra Leone Parliament accepted the President's Proclamation of a twelve months SoE without the tabling of the rules and regulations which Members of Parliament (MPs) requested for within a timeframe of two weeks. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Dr. Priscilla Schwartz has refused to table the rules and regulations. She argues that what is before Parliament as a legislation already contained the rules and orders and can be reviewed quarterly. This issue has ever since not been abated being the most topical in the second sitting of the Third Session of the Fifth Parliament, held on 2nd June, 2020.

Against this backdrop, Hon. Paran Tarawally, Clerk of the Sierra Leone Parliament, in a face-to-face interview with Parliamentary News (PN), elaborates on the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on the operations of the Sierra Leone Parliament, highlighting cross-

cutting issues and a lot more.

**PN: Let us begin with the fact that Coronavirus is here, how has the Parliament been operating?**

**Clerk:** It is really difficult, as in all over the world but what we have done is this; we have decided that for every sitting, only half (74/145) the MPs will be present in the Chamber of Parliament. The staff also have been divided into four categories and each month a category will work for like a week and they will go home and rest. We have also placed veronica buckets throughout the precinct of Parliament. We ensure that people sanitize their hands before entering offices. Also, my office used to have up to ten chairs for visitors but now you can only see two. Sitting positions in the Chamber have also been rearranged to observe Covid-19 social distancing rules. On a whole, Parliament is sluggish no matter how you look at it, the Covid-19 is hardly hitting and because of that, we meet now very much infrequently and leaders hardly come to their offices. Everybody is in fear.

**PN: Generally, what has been the role of MPs in the Covid-19 response?**

**Clerk:** For the MPs, what we did was that Mr Speaker adjourned for a two weeks break and requested that every MP go to his or her constituency to lead the fight against Covid-19. As we speak, most MPs are currently in their constituencies, however it is very difficult for them because funding and support to ensure that they effectively carry on the campaign is not coming. It is difficult for them really but we are also searching around, once we lay hands on support, we will let MPs know and try to support them. For now there is no support and they are finding it difficult. To me, I see them very committed, using their meagre resources to ensure that they do whatever little that they can. For the administration, we are holding the fort, we are almost always here and we are making sure that Parliament is kept safe. We have worked with UNDP and there is a television slot going on making sure that the public is safe and Parliament also contributes to the fight against Covid-19.

**PN: Apart of the challenges, what**

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## Local Government and Rural Development

# GHANA: Amend Local Government Act To Promote Accountability -Muntaka

By: Emmanuella Dadugblor

**P**arliament is being urged to amend the local government act to promote accountability. This call was made by the Member of Parliament for Asawase, Hon Mohammed Mubarak-Muntaka who said the existing act puts most of the activities of the district assemblies on the blind side of the members of parliament, leaving room for the misappropriation of funds.

Reacting to the performance audit report on capital projects in some selected MMDCs presented to the house by the Committee on Local Government and Monitoring, the lawmaker said the time for the amendment is now. "I believe the time has come for us to take the steps to amend the local government act. In my view, the MPs' memo should go to the Coordinating Director straight and when the disbursement form is ready, the MP should sign it. It takes away the MCE and the conflict



Member of Parliament for Asawase,  
Hon Mohammed Mubarak-Muntaka

between the two on the ground so that the assembly will help the MP in spending the fund and then the MP will get to know how much is taken because he is signing the disbursement form"

The Asawase lawmaker also said clear cut guidelines should be set regarding the processing of memos and disbursement of funds because the current practice allows the assemblies to spend from the MPs' Common fund without approval from the Member of Parliament, which enables the MCEs to use the money according to their dis-

cretion. "What is happening, Mr. Speaker, and I believe even before it used to happen, you will see the assembly dipping their hands into the MPs' Common Fund and taking funds without the MP's knowledge.

And sometimes when you then now write a memo, even the guideline says don't go beyond two weeks [for processing] sometimes it takes months. Apparently, either they have used part of your money and now the money is not there and they are waiting to quickly get the money before they process, or sometimes because of the local politics and bribery that exists, they unnecessarily delay and waste the resources".

He also bemoaned the level of corruption at the district assemblies. This, he attributed to a hijack of the assemblies' activities by party faithfuls whose interests the MCEs always protect in order to retain their positions. Mr. Muntaka said the trend leaves the MCEs always at the mercy of party members. "Now the assemblies have become centers of corruption. Anytime you hear agitation that we don't

want him [the DCE] and he should be removed, it is because they are saying that the DCE is not doing one thing or the other. You're saying that the same common fund that is meant for development should be used in a way that is not proper. And those who stand their grounds and say that I won't allow, the next time you see our party faithfuls teaming up to say the person should be removed"

Hon Mubarak-Muntaka also decried the inability of the assemblies to follow their development plans. He said in a bid to please party faithfuls, they end up awarding several contracts which may not be captured in their development plans. "They owe so much because in their effort to please party faithfuls, they go on awarding all manner of contracts then they owe so much that the moment the common fund comes, it just dries off and it doesn't even allow them to follow their development plan"

He has therefore urged his colleagues to work in their various constituencies to remove these hindrances.

# SIERRA LEONE: How's Parliament Operating In An Era Of COVID-19?

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are other crosscutting issues in the Sierra Leone Parliament?

**Clerk:** Well, currently the crosscutting issues have to do with funding for Parliament because as it is now, funding for Parliament is very meagre therefore we are slowing down our operations. Most of the things we used to do in normal times are now not being done. We are trying to cut down on budget so that we are able to meet the basics and the essentials. Funding is one core crosscutting issue. Another crosscutting issue has to do with the coronavirus regulations. Some MPs are of the opinion that such regulations should have been brought to Parliament for ratification while others hold the view that the only regulations that are to come are only the regulations that last for ninety days. We are basically contend-

ing with the issue and I see Parliament is divided on that.

**PN: Does this contention over the availability or unavailability of the rules for the SoE mean the legitimacy of the SoE is questionable?**

**Clerk:** No, Parliament approved the state of emergency, so it is in force but when it comes to the issue of the regulations, there are two schools of thought amongst the MPs. I am only re-echoing what they are saying.

**PN: And you do not have a hand on what should prevail in this case of contention?**

**Clerk:** I am not a lawmaker, all what I will say if you ask me to give my personal opinion, by the constitution, yes regulations need to come to Parliament for their approval but I will also say it is only those regulations that the government intend to extend

beyond ninety days that should come.

**PN: Amidst Coronavirus, do you think the role of Parliament is important, looking at the emergency, the health threats and risks involved, someone will argue that perhaps Parliament should shut down for now and concentration be devoted to the fight against Covid-19, do you think Parliament has a role to play in all of this?**

**Clerk:** Yes, in fact Parliament is more important than ever before, from lessons learnt, as Sierra Leoneans, we are aware of the fact that during the Ebola epidemic, we had a very big tussle in state with regards to resources, procurement, regulations, etc., so Parliament is in fact even more important now in a time of coronavirus pandemic than ever before to make sure regulations are in place, they are approved; to make sure we are able to give effect to government's actions; to make sure

that MPs go down to their people and take the fight against Covid-19 because their people trust them, and once they lead, the people will definitely follow. To me, these difficult times - Parliament is more important than ever before.

**PN: Media relations and Parliament amidst Covid-19 seem to be estranged at the moment. The Guild of Newspaper Editors condemned the recent requirement criteria set by Parliament for media accreditation to report in Parliament, calling it a muzzling of the Press. Are you willing to review this issue?**

**Clerk:** I was expecting the Guild of Editors to engage with Parliament rather than put out a counter press release. That is in itself confrontational, this is a state of peace, if we want to work, we must be able to dialogue. Two wrongs don't make it right, I am disappointed at the Guild of Editors. Parliament is a complex institution and reporting it requires professionalism. You must have a high level of intelligence and professional education to be able to report on Parliament or else you risk misinforming people about

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## General News

# GHANA: Majority Leader Bemoans Increasing Number Of Visitors To Parliament

By: Emmanuella Dadugblor

The Majority Leader and Head of the Business Committee, Hon. Osei Kyei Mensah-Bonsu has bemoaned the increasing number of visitors to Parliament. This, he said is contrary to a directive by the Speaker Rt. Hon Aaron Mike Oquaye to reduce the number of visitors to the House as part of the house's COVID-19 safety measures. "Mr. Speaker, it has come to the notice of leadership, very worrying phenomenon of the increasing number of visitors to parliament in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic contrary to a directive by your good self Rt. Hon, in line with the COVID-19 protocols" he intimated.

Hon Mensah-Bonsu who was presenting the Business Statement for the fourth week of the second

meeting of the Fourth session on the floor of the House, also expressed worry over the defiance shown by some MPs Research Assistants and National Service Personnel by their continuous reporting for duty and attendance to the House against the Speaker's directives. He said their defiance is a threat to the fight against the Covid-19 spread in the House. He has therefore appealed to MPs and other stakeholders to desist from receiving visitors in the premises of parliament except in extreme cases. "The Business Committee passionately appeals to Honourable Members and the staff of parliamentary service as well as other institutions working within the precincts of parliament to desist from inviting visitors to parliament unless it is very very compelling" he appealed.

The committee has also directed all Honourable Members and Staff of Parliament to seek clearance from the appropriate quarters if

they have compelling reasons to receive visitors within the premises of the house. "Honourable Members may seek clearance from leadership of their respective caucuses or the Clerk to Parliament".

The business committee has also enlisted the Ministers of Health, Employment and Labour Relations as well as Education to appear before the house this week to answer questions regarding their respective ministries in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rt. Hon. Speaker has since the commencement of the Fourth session been making several arrangements including the testing of Honourable Members and the parliamentary service staff in a bid to prevent the possible introduction and spread of the Coronavirus in Parliament and has used various platforms to urge both Members and Staff to follow the protocols for preventing the spread of the disease.



As part of the house's COVID-19 safety measures, the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon Aaron Mike Oquaye gave a directive to reduce the number of visitors to the House

# SIERRA LEONE: How's Parliament Operating In An Era Of COVID-19?

**Continued from Page 5**

proceedings in Parliament. All we are saying is that this is part of ongoing reform process not only for the Press Gallery. As a way of reform, we want to have a Press Gallery that we all will be proud of, people who are acclaimed. The Parliamentary Service Commission gave me the authority to reform the Gallery to introduce efficiency, efficacy and professionalism.

**PN: Is it the role of the Parliamentary Service Commission to set standards for the Media wherein there is an Independent Media Commission?**

**Clerk:** The basic to be a journalist is five WASSCE but to report on Parliament you must have additional qualification, at least a diploma in journalism or any other related field that is all what we are saying. Parliamentary reporting is highly technical and sophisticated.

**PN: In summary, don't you think Parliament is clamping down on the Media?**

**Clerk:** No, we are not clamping down on the media. I want to see a professional Press Gallery that will be an envy. I am in engagement with the President of SLAJ and the IMC, we are in communication and engagement.

**PN: Has the E-Parliament project commenced?**

**Clerk:** Yes, the E-Parliament project has commenced and it is becoming a reality.

**PN: Looking around the world, what are you learning from other Parliaments during this time of coronavirus, what are the contemporary issues that they are talking about?**

**Clerk:** One core thing we have learnt is the emergence of E-Parliament, most Parliaments are now holding virtual sittings that is one big thing that we have learnt. Another thing is the cutting down of the number of MPs per sitting and we have also learnt that we need to frequently engage with other Parliaments to be attune with new ideas coming up.

**PN: Personally, are you enjoying the job as Clerk?**

**Clerk:** huh, a big question. I am enjoying some part of the job and the other part I am not enjoying. I enjoy the part that says keep going Paran but not enjoying that part of it that is almost becoming insurmountable.

**PN: What insurmountable part are you referring to, the political side, the political party leaders in Parliament recently questioned your indefinite suspension of all parliamentary sittings, calling it ultra vires.**

**Clerk:** See, you are a journalist of high calibre, do I have the power to indefinitely suspend Parliament without consulting the Speaker, no.

Whatever I do is under directive, so I was only working under the directive of Mr Speaker who by the Constitution and Standing Orders is the sole person apart of the President that has the right to determine when Parliament sits or not. To me, certain times to be crying babies is not in place.

**PN: What is your message to the general public amidst political tension?**

**Clerk:** The reality is the one good thing that we have refused to be dragged into what is happening currently in the state.

**PN: Is the present political situation of violence, detention and prosecution of some persons not threatening to the Bo Declaration 2019 (a treaty signed by the party leaders in 2019 to restore calm and encourage more cross party dialogue after a warring first session)?**

**Clerk:** It is not too threatening because as Parliament, we have not allowed ourselves to be dragged into what is happening. Had we been dragged into it, then we would have defeated the spirit of the Bo Declaration. Few days ago, leaders of the government and opposition political parties were with H.E President Bio at State House, we went to plead on behalf of a colleague MP who was being incarcerated at the CID that shows oneness or else no ruling party MP would have ventured to attend. That tells you Parliament is one and we are refusing to be dragged into whatever that is happening because we are the people's representatives.

We are playing our part to make sure decorum returns to the state by supporting the President and government.

## Health

# GHANA: Majority Leader Lied: Two MPs, 13 Parliamentary Staff Test Positive To COVID 19 - *Minority Chief Whip*

By: Ruby Tackie

The Minority Chief Whip, Mohammed Mubarak-Muntaka has debunked claims from the majority leader that some members of Parliament as well as Parliamentary staff have not tested positive for COVID-19.

This following the Speaker's orders for mandatory testing of all staff and MPs as a move to ensure effective contact tracing since MPs interact among themselves often.

The Minority Chief Whip insisted that these are not speculation but fact of which an earlier decision was taken by Leadership to be managed to avoid chaos.

According to him, the infected persons were informed of their status after the Speaker of Parliament directed mass testing



Minority Chief Whip, Alhaji Mohammed Mubarak-Muntaka

**"The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us as the rate of infection is steadily rising. While there is no scientifically approved cure or vaccine, we should adhere to all laid down hygiene protocols to abate the spread. Leaders should ensure that there is one chair space apart in our sitting arrangement. When there is an overflow, the whips would decide what to do,"**

of all members and staff of the House last week.

The Chief Whip explained that the infected MPs and staff have been isolated while contact tracing has commenced.

His reaction followed an earlier denial on Tuesday by the Director of Public Affairs, Kate Addo that a media report of the confirmed infection in Parliament was false.

According to the Ghana Health Service, Ghana's case count at the time of filing this report stood at 7,303 confirmed cases with 34 deaths and 2,412 recoveries.

To ensure that the House was free of the respiratory disease,

Prof. Oquaye tasked leaders to ensure that there was proper physical distancing even in the chamber of the House. "The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us as the rate of infection is steadily rising. While there is no scientifically approved cure or vaccine, we should adhere to all laid down hygiene protocols to abate the spread. Leaders should ensure that there is one chair space apart in our sitting arrangement. When there is an overflow, the whips would decide what to do," the Speaker said.

#### BACKGROUND

The Speaker earlier gave directives to the Clerk and parliament's Medical Officer to liaise with the appropriate institu-

tions to immediately conduct testing of all Hon. Members and staff of parliamentary service for COVID-19.

Delivering his welcome remarks at the commencement of the second meeting of the fourth session, the speaker noted that in addition to observing the established protocols to fight the pandemic all Hon. Members and staff of parliamentary will be tested for COVID-19.

In view of this, the Rt. Hon speaker disclosed that the testing exercise will again commence on Thursday through to Friday for members of parliament.

The Rt. Hon. Prof. Mike Aaron Oquaye lamented that while there is no scientific approved cure or vaccine, Members of parliament must ensure that they adhere to all the laid down hygiene protocols to abate the spread. "I have directed, on the authority of the Parliamentary Service Board, the Clerk and Parliament's Medical Officer to liaise with the appropriate institution to immediately conduct testing for all honourable members and staff of the Parliamentary Service for COVID-19," Professor Oquaye stated.

The Speaker also requested the cooperation of the lawmakers and staff of Parliament for a successful testing exercise.

Meanwhile, the coronavirus has been slow to spread in Africa but cases are rising across the continent. More than 69,500 cases have been confirmed with more than 2,400 deaths, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Special Report

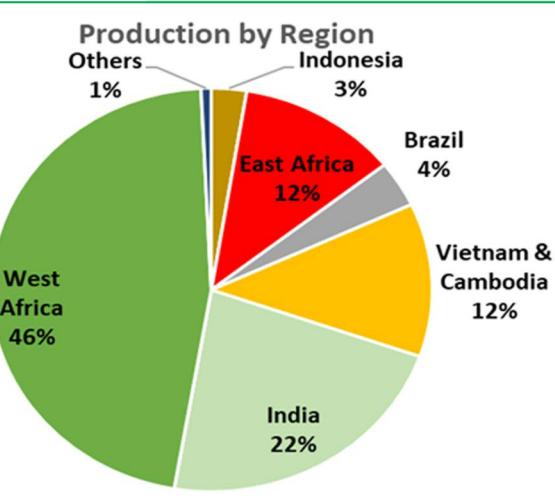
# Expanding The Local Market For Cashew Consumption

**To encourage the consumption of locally produced cashew products**

### 1. What is the current consumption of cashew product in Ghana and Africa?

Africa produced 58% of the world's cashews in 2019. The production by region is shown below in Figure 1:

**Figure 1: Production of raw cashew nuts by region**



Sources: Cashew Digest, Cashew Club, UNComtrade, ComCashew, CEPCI, VINACAS, Cashew Desks in African countries

About 10% of the cashew produced on the continent is processed locally. Ninety percent (90%) is exported to Asia for processing.

The good news is that the consumption of cashew worldwide continues to grow strongly as shown in Figure 2 below, at average of 7% annually. The reasons for this growth are mainly due to healthy eating pattern and affluence in consumption countries.

### Figure 2: Consumption of Cashew kernels continues to grow due to the nutritional properties of cashews

Cashews are very nutritious food, with over 20% protein content (Source: USDA), thereby making them a

good source of nutrition for vegans, vegetarians and all consumers, both young and old.

Beside protein, cashews are rich in monosaturated fatty acids also known as good or healthy fats. It is rich in potassium, copper, Iron, Magnesium, Manganese, Selenium, zinc, phosphorus (Source: International Nut and Dried Fruits Council in collaboration with the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation: www.deccanchronicle.com and www.nutfruit.org). Cashew kernels are also noted to have low glycemic index of 25.

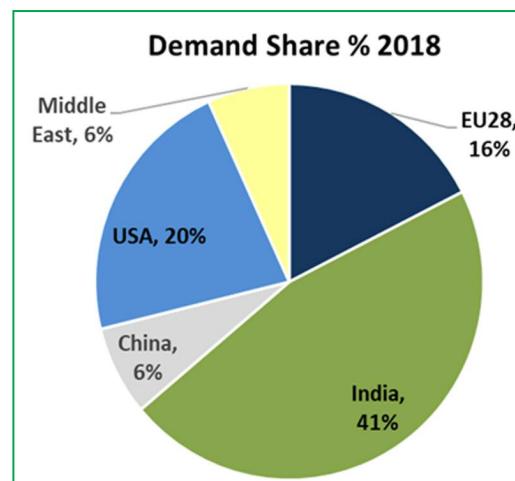
The Glycemic Index (GI) is a rating system that measures how much a carbohydrate-containing food raises your blood-sugar levels. The lower a food is on the GI, the lower the effect on your blood sugar. Low-glycemic foods also can reduce your risk for depression. The standardized Glycemic Index ranges from 0 to 100. The smaller the number, the less impact the food has on your blood sugar. Low glycemic means 55 or less.

Delicately sweet, crunchy, delicious, & healthy, the cashew kernels are popular snack and food source and one of the most popular ingredients in sweet and savory dishes worldwide: India is the Number 1 consumer of cashews consuming

41% of the worlds cashews in 2019. This is followed by the US (20%), the EU (16%) and other countries as shown in Figure 3 below.

Consumption of cashew nuts in Africa, including Ghana is very limited and currently estimated at only 3% of the global consumption (ISS, ComCashew)

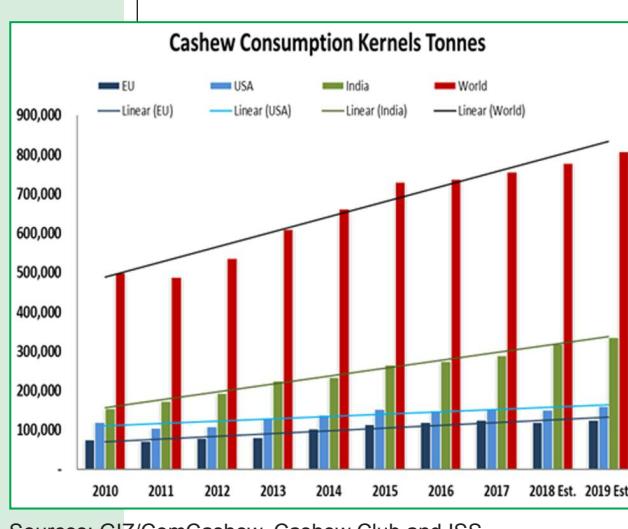
**Figure 3: Consumption of cashew nuts showing demand share per consumer**



Source: ISS and CasewhClub 2019

India has been a long-term processor of cashew nuts. India was the first country to understand the economic importance of cashews as well as its nutritional values. Processing cashews for over 100 years, its domestic market has developed well.

India is the number 1 global consumer of cashews, followed by the USA and Europe. Domestic consumption in India has increased several folds in the last few years to the extent that India is consuming over 70% of its own processed kernels. This means India consumes all its production as well as part of the RCN imports and sells very little to other consuming countries currently. Major uses in 2017 are in biscuits (6%), ice cream (1%), sweet making (15%), hotels,



Sources: GIZ/ComCashew, Cashew Club and ISS

restaurants/catering (22%), home use, gifting and snacking (56%) (Source: International Nuts Council, 2017). High consumer awareness on nutrition and health properties of cashew facilitates local consumption. Also, India boasts of institutions that conduct cashew nutrition research and conducts several studies justifying consumption of cashews and promoting its use further.

In Europe, cashews are consumed, and it is much more about health, as an alternative to complementary proteins instead of red meat.

In the USA, cashews are mainly consumed as snack alongside other nuts and dried fruits mainly for health benefits.

Vietnam has become a major processor of cashews and today, the number 1 exporter of cashew kernels worldwide. Consumption in Vietnam, however, is very minimal.

Cashews are eaten as snack once they are roasted, sweetened, salted and/ spiced up. They are also used as confectionery, for sweet making, as garnishes in and alongside other nuts and dried fruits. They are also used as ingredients in various main dishes.

Consumption of cashew products, mainly the nuts and apple products are emerging in Ghana since cashew processing started some 10 years ago. Before then, the only opportunities available for consuming cashews in Ghana were from importation of the cashew products. Since processing has picked up in Ghana; locally processed fresh white kernels, roasted and salted kernels and other derivatives such as the cashew paste are now available locally for consumption.

Cashew paste for example can be used as main protein food in vegetarian diet or used in cashew sauce and soups that are consumed with local food such as banku, fufu, rice, kenkey etc. The cashew apple is equally used for cashew apple juice, cajuina, cashew apple brandy, aperitif, and other products that are found on the local market during the cashew season.

Having said this, the amount of cashew products on the local market has increased over the years. Roasted and salted nuts can be found in supermarkets, shell shops and by the roadside. During the cashew season in January to May each year, cashew apple products such as juice are available. The nutritional content of cashew and cashew apple products should encourage us to consume more.

### 2. What accounts for the lack of patronage of locally produced

# Special Report

## **cashew products?**

Ghana has been processing cashews for 10 years unlike India and Vietnam which have over 100 and about 30 years' experience, respectively. The growth curve of the processing industry has been slow in Ghana. Ghana only started processing cashews recently. **Consumer awareness on nutrition and health properties of cashew are limited.** Besides, with only a few processing factories available, cashews are not available fully for the consumer. It is sometimes difficult to find cashew products on the local market, especially cashew apple products that are seasonal in nature. **To make cashew and its by-products available, more cashews must be processed locally, and the nutritional properties promoted.** The uses of cashews must also be promoted. For example, very few people are aware that the cashew paste can be used to soup and consumed with fufu or banku. Imagine also having rice with cashew and vegetable sauce. These meals are as complete in nutrition as rice with chicken. Cashews should be exploited in our local cuisines as in India, Brazil and China where they are used in making many dishes.

Though research on cashew, compared with other nuts such as almond, are limited; there is still enough research that can be used **to promote the importance of cashew consumption.** If cashews are so rich in protein, good fat, minerals and vitamins, **local institutions need to create this awareness to promote the consumption of cashew.**

Low patronage means low demand for Ghanaian cashew and cashew apple-based products. **Increasing our consumption locally would boost the cashew industry and provide market opportunity local processors.**

There is also a myth that affects the consumption of cashew nuts and apples to some extent. Some people say that consumption of cashew apple products and milk results in death. It is not clear where and how this myth was created. However, it is worthy of note that some people generally are allergic to some food products. Common allergen causing food products are eggs, milk, soya, gluten and peanuts. People allergic to any of these products, as well as others not mentioned here must pay attention to the food they eat, ensuring that they avoid these food products.

Literature suggests that the prevalence of cashew nut allergy is increasing, although the level of evidence for this is low. (Source: Allergy. 2014 Jun;69(6):692-8. doi: 10.1111/all.12401. Epub 2014 Apr 15., Systematic review on cashew nut allergy). Cashew nut is also classified as a potent allergenic food known to be responsible for triggering systemic immune reactions in **sensitised/allergic individuals** (Source: Clin Rev Allergy Immunol. 2016 Sep 1. [Epub ahead of print] Casew Nut Allergy: Clinical Relevance and Allergen Characterisation.)

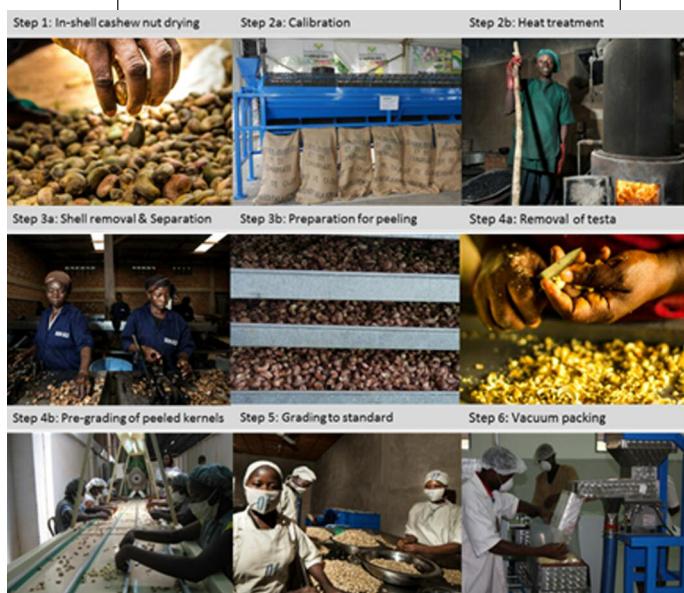
Therefore, people who are sensitive or allergic towards cashew must eliminate cashew from their diet, just as they do with all other foods, they are allergic to.

All others are encouraged to consume cashews and benefit from the huge nutritional benefits that cashew nuts and its derivatives offer.

## **3. What can be done to reduce the high prices of locally produced cashew products?**

Cashew is a very hard nut to crack. In cashew processing, 9 major steps are involved before white consumable kernels are obtained. The final stage of cashew processing may involve roasting, salting, sweetening or spicing up based on the taste of the consumer. It is said that each cashew nut is handled and treated by 10 persons during the manufacturing stage as shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4 demonstrating the stages of cashew processing**



Source: Competitive Cashew initiative. Guidebook 1 – The cashew processing process. [www.comcashew.org](http://www.comcashew.org)

The nature of the cashew nut as well as the multiple stages makes the cashew nut relatively more expensive than its cheaper

alternatives, such as the peanut or groundnut. Therefore, cashew nuts all over the world are more expensive than some other nuts such as peanuts and almonds. Cashews, however, are the cheapest tree nuts in the world. In the United States and Europe, cashew nuts compete with California almonds whose health characteristics are scientifically proven. Thus, for cashew nuts, promotion and research should be improved to compete with almonds.

Equally in Ghana, cashew nuts compete with groundnuts which are easier to produce and process and, therefore, cheaper. As we compare cashew with other nuts, it is important to remember that the nutritional composition of these other nuts is not the same as for cashews. Cashews are richer in protein, monosaturated fatty acids, potassium, vitamin E and other nutrients. In the same way, the cashew apple is very rich in antioxidants and vitamin C. For example, cashew apples have 5 times the vitamin C content of an orange and 12 times of a pineapple.

All the above-stated facts explained, cashew nut prices can be reduced with a more competitive processing. This can be achieved by reduced production cost at the processor level.

## **4. What policies do we need to create the enabling environment that would lead to competitive prices of locally produced cashew products?**

Policies that are private sector friendly are required. This means that Ghana needs to have a clear vision on promoting local processing. The importance of local processing compared with exporting of our RCN cannot be overemphasised. Local processing results in creation of jobs for the local communities, at least 80% for women. If all the RCN produced in Ghana are processed, together with the shells, this would create at least 30 000 jobs in rural communities in Ghana. It would also result in over USD20 million paid annually in wages and gross value of kernel, shell and apple derivatives of 400 million USD annually (ComCashew, 2019). Processors would serve as assured RCN buyers for farmers.

Currently, the competition for Ghana's RCN is very high due to the liberal nature of the market. A regulation that would enable local processors to buy RCN ahead of RCN exporters for example is welcome. This is the case of Mozambique where cashew processors are allowed to buy RCN before exporter.

So, examples of policies could include:

**Delicately sweet, crunchy, delicious, & healthy, the cashew kernels are popular snack and food source and one of the most popular ingredients in sweet and savory dishes worldwide**

- Provision of buying window for processors
- Licensing of exporters
- Regulation of maximum guaranteed price for processors, in order to reduce volatility of RCN pricing
- Increasing access to finance
- Policies to attract more investors/processors into the country
- Policies to increase local production and above all
- A clear vision and strategy for the cashew sector in Ghana

## **5. How can processors leverage on current situation (COVID-19) for increased local processing and marketing?**

Prices of raw cashew nuts have dropped drastically. Processors can take advantage and stockpile RCN so they can process in larger quantities. Both the cashew nuts and apple products are nutritious. They can be projected as products having the potential to boost the immune system in these times of Covid-19 where strong immune system plays a key role in the fight against the virus.

COVID-19 poses challenges to processors while also presenting them with an opportunity. On one hand, processors must now respect social distancing in all their activities. This could mean requirement for more space, equipment and hygienic materials. They also have to ensure that they minimise the potential spread of the disease while ensuring the highest food safety and covid-19 prevention measures among their staff. On the other hand, demand for cashew kernels internationally has been very positive in the first quarter of the year, though prices were below levels of 2019. This trend is expected to continue in 2020, though it might also change depending on how soon the pandemic is eliminated/stopped. This high demand, if continued, also offers the processors the opportunity to market their products.

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

## Parliamentary Affairs

# SIERRA LEONE: Parliament and Executive Wrangle over Withdrawn Public Order Amendment Bill

**By: By Melvin Tejan Mansaray,  
SIERRA LEONE**

The Leader of Government Business in the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, Hon. Mathew Sarh Nyuma has intimated that the Executive arm of Government is to be blamed for defaulting on the submission of an Independent Media Commission (IMC) Amendment Act as a precondition for the enactment of the bill title, The Public Order Amendment Act, 2019 which amongst other things seek to repeal Part No. 5 of the 1965 Public Order Act which criminalises defamation and seditious libel.

The Public Order Act, 1965 (Being an Act to consolidate and

amend the law relating to public order) was signed into law on the 31st day of December, 1965 by Governor-General H.J.L Boston. The Act has seven parts, forty-nine sections and numerous paragraphs. Part No. 5 (Defamatory and Seditious Libel) Section No's. 26 to 37 have been described as most obnoxious and draconian due to the nature of what constitutes the crime, punishments of fines or imprisonment or in some cases both for an offender found guilty by the court.

An infamous provision of this law is Section 28.1, which surmises, "On the trial of an offence of libel against sections 26 or 27, the accused having pleaded such plea as hereinafter mentioned, the truth of the matters charged may be inquired into, but shall not amount to a defence,..." a notion that local and international campaigners have seriously frowned at saying that it does not aid transparency and accountability, among other concerns. On Wednesday 18, December, 2019, Minister of Information and Communication Mohamed Rahman Swaray tabled and read for the first time, The Public Order Amendment Act, 2019. The bill was not read for the second time. Then Leader of Government Business, now Speaker of the

ECOWAS Parliament H.E Hon. Sidi M. Tunis said the bill was important and bothers on the security of people, depositing that there is need for safety gears to be put in place before the bill is enacted.

"There is a need to take care of the people's safety by adequately amending the IMC Act," Hon. Tunis said. President Julius Maada Bio in his 2018 elections manifesto promised to repeal this law, telling the 2019 UN General Assembly that his government has laid the repeal law in Parliament. In all three addresses to Parliament, Pres. Bio registered his commitment to repeal this law. The commitment and efforts of the presidency to repeal this law seem to have been thwarted by Parliament's withdrawal of the bill from its table. At the Second Sitting of the Third Session of the Fifth Parliament, held on Tuesday 2nd June, 2020, six months after the tabling of the libel repeal bill in Parliament, new Leader of Government Business, Hon. Matthew S. Nyuma announced the withdrawal. "It was due to parliamentary procedure based on Standing Order No. 59 (Withdrawal of Bills) Paragraph No. (2) which states that a bill shall be withdrawn, " If an interval of three months elapses after any reading of a bill, without

further action being taken on it, the bill shall be deemed to be withdrawn unless the House otherwise resolves," Hon. Nyuma said, "The bill will come again but since it was laid, it has elapsed for over four to five months.

The process will start all over again - gazetting, first and other readings by the minister." Quizzed on what caused the delay of the consideration of the bill, Hon. Nyuma said, "We had the first reading and we were waiting for the debate to commence, we were ready for the Minister. We proposed that some amendments be made to the IMC Act. We decided that we don't want to give a blanket check to people, we want people to be professional and you have seen what is going on, let us be realistic. I was not there for the first reading but I made to understand that they made a proposal with the chairman which they all agreed to in principle that they will go back and get the IMC Amendment Act combined with the repeal of the Public Order Act. From that time up to this time, we did not see the IMC Act for an amendment. We are looking at it that at the second phase, the Ministry will bring the repeal, we will modify them and we will engage, I have been part and parcel of this."

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Hon. Mathew Sarh Nyuma,  
Leader of Government Business



Minister of Information and Communication Mohamed Rahman Swaray

The sincerity of Parliament and the Executive to amend this bill is under serious questioning by journalists and activists more so when past governments have not fulfilled their promises to repeal this law. Hon. Nyuma said Parliament is committed to bring to fruition the promise of President Julius Maada Bio. "This is a commitment from him and we have to follow this

**Continued On Page 14**

# Environment, Lands and Forestry

## SIERRA LEONE: Impact of Climate Change on the Environment

### *...People in Higher Places Should Put the Environment at the Top of the Scale - Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh*

By: By Melvin Tejan Mansaray,  
SIERRA LEONE

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on the Environment in the Fifth Parliament (Third Session) of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, Honorable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh representing Constituency 112, Western Area Urban said as a solution to the climate change problem in Sierra Leone, persons in higher places of authority should make sure the issue is made a topmost priority.

Hon. Tawa said: "Collaboration is a key way forward to address the issue of climate change but also people at higher places should try as much as possible to put environmental issues at the top of the scale." Hon. Tawa further stated, "if the environment is not properly managed, we are destroying our own very lives."

The Government Bencher made these comments in an exclusive interview with **Parliamentary News** wherein he catalogued a litany of issues around the interventions of Parliament in addressing climate change and environmental issues in one of the world's most disaster prone nations, according to the UN and other statistics. In an overview, Hon. Tawa said the Ministry of Environment was created in November, 2019, a week after the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Environment was formed in tandem with provisions of Section No. 93 of the Sierra Leone Constitution. "Since the Environment Committee was formed, we have taken pragmatic steps to visit key areas like forest reserves and protected areas to see how we can maintain the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and ensure we do not deplete them," the Legislator said.

Hon. Tawa noted that the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Environment has also been working together with the Ministry of Environment to get environment related agencies do better coordination in their operations and discharge of duties.

He highlighted as significant the impact climate change is having on communities and constituencies referencing the mudslide and flooding disasters that struck some few years ago. "If you look at our waterfall, the

Guma dam that supplies water to the city and the level of deforestation going on around that area, the increase in charcoal burning, increase in logging of trees for timber, etc, are all part of the businesses that affects the environment," Hon. Tawa said. He stressed that there is a symbiosis between the environment and climate change, adding, "of course, the negative effects on the environment affects the climate, because if you look at the current reading of the Meteorological Department on the rain pattern, it says we are to experience lesser amount of rain this year and at some point, the rain will be heavier and cause flooding and environmental disasters." The MP said the low rainfall is as a result of the depletion of the rain forest for construction of houses, logging and other purposes that is adversely affecting the climate.

Asked about what is his Committee's most major achievement so far, Hon. Tawa said: "We have been able to look at the problems which form the basis of finding a solution. What activities that are impacting the environment and at what level. The Environment Ministry cannot function effectively if it does not have related Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) managing the environment under its purview. As a Committee, we have been able to advocate that in the Well, push that through to the Executive branch and they have approved a number of agencies. The Forestry Department at the Agriculture Ministry has been moved to the Ministry of the Environment, same for the Meteorological Department, Nuclear and Radiation Safety Authority, National Protected Area Authority, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and all of these are legislated agencies. They are agencies born out of Acts of Parliament because they cannot just be established like that. Together with the Ministry of Environment, we have worked as a Parliamentary Oversight Committee to ensure that we review all of those legislations and they have been gazetted under the name of the Minister. This shows that Parliament has targeted the issues by firstly getting agencies to be able to improve the coordination and define clear cut lines of duties and monitoring."

On the bigger scale, Hon. Tawa said, "we have done a number of policy reviews with the Ministry of Environment with most of the regulations -- 1972 Wild Life Act, 1989 Forestry Act, etc, being reviewed." Hon. Tawa

underscored that they have done these policy reviews to reflect current changes and challenges to the environment.

"We have also been working with the Ministry of Energy to ensure that renewable energy is seen as the way to reduce things like charcoal burning. We are working with the Ministry to pilot clean energy cooking for women. If we can pilot clean cooking energy and bring up a bill on use of clean energy for cooking, reducing the cutting down of trees for charcoal burning will minimize if not eliminate LPG so as to reduce the negative impact of climate change," Hon. Tawa said.

The Environment Committee Chairman said several strides including the President embarking on the planting drive of five million trees across the country are all efforts to improve on the environment and climate change, stressing that the establishment of new agencies, review of older policies for which a zero draft has been done on all of them now awaits onward submission by the Attorney General's office to Parliament. This he said is a major achievement on the side of the legislature's intervention on climate change.

Despite the successful strides being made by Parliament and the Executive branch of Government, Hon. Tawa said there are still challenges that ought to be addressed. "A major challenge is that there are a number of manufacturing and industrial companies in Sierra Leone and unfortunately most of these companies fall under the First Schedule of the 2008 EPA Act, as amended in 2010. Most of these agencies started operations without going through the EPA and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. It means, they will be polluting the environment, using chemicals that are not friendly for the environment, affecting the air quality without the EPA knowing. This is the first problem," Hon Tawa said.

The MP however urged organizations to ensure that regardless of who is piloting an organization, institution or business, they "must ensure that they go through the EIA process and cross all the tees and dot the ayes properly." The Parliamentary Environment Oversight Committee Chairman, Hon. Tawa also cited another challenge that has to do with the number of illicit companies especially in the mining sector. He added



Honorable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh

that the NMA Act and EPA Acts have critical aspects of land reclamation especially for mining companies." Mining companies will dig up lands in search of minerals which is also good but these lands after being dug they should ensure that such land is reclaimed for agricultural purposes so as to make the environment friendlier and improve on the country's carbon footprint. Do not forget that there is a carbon budget, if we can improve on these areas, we can benefit from the carbon budget."

Hon. Tawa said it is also challenging for some people to understand the powers of limited agencies and the Ministry of Environment which should cut across all agencies and MDAs. "As MPs we must also know that the Environment Committee like the Transparency and Accountability Committee's role cut across every MDA because they all deal with the environment," Hon. Tawa expressed furthering that there is a need for MPs to be sensitised so that in turn they can also sensitize their constituents and related subvented and non subvented agencies.

Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh said for climate change and environmental issues to take a firm hold there is all need for collaboration noting, "People at higher places should try as much as possible to put the environment at the top of the scale because if we don't manage the environment, we are destroying our own very lives."

Before now, Sierra Leone used to be having a higher percentage of protected areas but today the country has only three percent of forest cover left and Hon. Tawa said, "if we don't improve on the environment now, in the next ten years Sierra Leone will become a grassland. Collaboration is key and people in high places should ensure that whatever they do they must ensure that they follow the process. What is illicit we must prevent not to happen regardless of our relationship, with these we can map the way forward."

## Parliamentary Affairs

# CORE LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT "PARLIAMENT AND THE SUSTENANCE OF GHANA'S DEMOCRACY 2020 AND BEYOND"

## *Address By The Minister For Parliamentary Affairs Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu on Wed. 3rd June, 2020.*

*The Right Honourable Speaker, Professor Aaron Mike Oquaye  
My Colleague the Minority Leader,  
Dear Friends and Colleagues,  
Chief Director and Staff, MoPA,  
Good morning,*

My Ministry's engagement with the Core Leadership of Parliament runs very high on our annual agenda. Normally, it is our curtain raiser for the year. However, even though we are not in normal times, we have since March this year made efforts to have our first meeting of the year. Unfortunately, our efforts were scuttled by the imposition of restrictions on meetings and conferences occasioned by the advent of the rather very unfriendly and disruptive Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I must pause at this juncture and acknowledge the yeoman's role of the 7th Parliament of the 4th Republic in the nation's fight against the much dreaded Covid-19. For the first time in the history of the 4th Parliament, at the behest of Mr. Speaker, the first Meeting of the 4th session was suspended instead of rising sine die as is usual. During the suspension, parliament sat for four times. Members heeded to the clarion call and supported the Executive by contributing the quota only the 275 of us are privileged so to do in the governance architecture of our country. Our

sacrifice has not gone unnoticed by the nation and, most importantly, His Excellency the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. He conveys his sincerest gratitude to the Leadership and the House as a whole.

### FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENT

Colleagues, in acclaimed democracies there is a recognition of the principal functions of Parliament which must be efficiently and effectively performed in order that Parliament would be relevant. These functions are:

1. Representation
2. Deliberation
3. Information Transmission
4. Legislation
5. Financial Control
6. Oversight
7. Problem resolution
8. Ratification of Agreements, Loans, Treaties, Protocols etc.

The legitimacy of Parliament is measured by these roles that they perform and how effective they are.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT

A democratic parliament should have the following features:

1. Representative – that is socially and politically representative of the diversity of the people the Parliament represents and ensuring equal opportunities. Women Representation is paramount in this regard. Since 1993 Ghana has never attained 15% of women representation in Parliament. Today, women make up just about 13% of the membership of the House. Is the first-past-post system good enough or should Ghana gravitate towards proportional representation as a cure to this?
2. Transparent: Parliament expects transparency from the Executive. Parliament itself must be transparent.
3. Accessible – Parliament must involve people including associations, groups, Civil Society Or-

ganisations (CSOs) in its work.

4. Accountable – Parliament and MPS must be accountable to the electorate for their performance in office or ensure the integrity of conduct.

5. Effective – which means effective organization of business in accordance with these democratic values and the performance of parliament's core functions, especially, legislative, financial control and oversight in a manner to cater for the needs of the entire populace.

### Tools for Parliament's Oversight Responsibilities

The notable tools are:

1. Question Time: This involves a Member filing a question to summon a Minister to Parliament to answer questions relating to public affairs with which they are officially connected, proceedings pending in parliament or any other matter of administration for which such Ministers are responsible.

Speakers are singularly responsible for the admissibility of questions. Since this 4th Republic some Speakers have played tricks with such authority to unnecessarily delay the admission and transmission of questions such that the questions tend to lose their potency over time. Speaker Prof Oquaye is not a member of this group, thankfully!

Another resort by some Speakers presiding over Question Time is preventing the sequential flow of questions to a hard pressed Minister. Also, Question Time is for one hour. If the time is packed with so many questions on a given day, prosecuting the questions to elicit relevant truthful answers could be guillotined in order to save the face of government. The current Speaker has been extremely open in his admission of questions except that some of the Ministers do not respond to questions timeously. Parliament into 2021 should improve on this.

2. Motions: A second vehicle for Members in their oversight responsibility is moving motions at plenary. A motion in Parliament means "a proposal made by a member that Parliament or a Committee thereof do something, or order something to be done, or express an opinion concerning some matter". Do Speakers have the authority to grant or admit motions? This is something that the Members of Parliament must interrogate and come to some determination on. The current Speaker has not done badly on this.

3. Statements in Parliament: This is a third avenue open to Parliament in its oversight role. A Minister may make a statement on government policy for the information of Parliament. A Member of Parliament may make a statement on a matter of urgent public importance which may attract a response from a Minister or the relevant person concerned. Some of the Speakers that we have had since 1993 have shown their discomfort with or allergy to statements that have the potential of criticizing government by unduly stalling or pruning them to avoid embarrassment to governments. Parliament needs to work on this.

It must also be admitted that increasingly the house is being served with statements that are not well-researched. Some Members submit Statements which are saturated with half-truths and plain untruths. Parliament and Parliamentarians must always speak to credible, authentic information, not as we are seeing these days, statements drawing from opinions expressed in the social media. That is unhelpful and unacademic.

4. Petitions: MPs could submit petitions on their own, or shepherd petitions to the Speaker in respect of any commission or omission and the consequent remedy sought.

***Continued On Page 15***



## Parliamentary Practice & Procedures

# Last Week in Ghana's Parliament

By: Benjamin Opoku Aryeh

**A**fter several controversies surrounding the Elections (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (C.I. 126), Parliament adopted the Subsidiary Legislation Committee's report. The leader of the Minority Caucus, Mr. Haruna Iddrisu challenged the voice vote declared by the Rt. Hon. Speaker on the Motion and called for division in accordance with Standing Order 113(2). MPs took turns to cast their votes, and in the end the Ayes had 106 and the Noes 92.

#### Bills

The Ghana Communications Technology University Bill, 2020 was passed during the week, while the Land Bill, 2019 went through consideration stage in the House

#### Papers presented

The Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Mr. Benito Owusu-Bio on behalf of the substantive Minister laid the Mineral and Mining (Mineral Operations- Tracking of Earth Moving and Mining

Equipment) Regulations, 2020. The Speaker referred the Regulations to the Committee on Subsidiary Legislation for consideration and report. The Meat Inspection Regulations, 2020 was also laid by the Youth and Sports Minister on behalf of the Minister for Health. The Regulation was referred to the Subsidiary Legislation Committee by the Speaker for consideration and report.

In respect of Local Government and Rural Development, the Minister, Hajia Alima Mahama, laid the Local Governance (Consultations) Regulations, 2020, which was referred to the Subsidiary Legislation Committee for consideration and report.

The Subsidiary Legislation Committee report on the Public Elections (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (C.I. 126) which was presented on Thursday, 4th June, 2020 was withdrawn. The Vice Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Bernard Aphiafor, re-laid another report of the committee which was adopted by the House.

#### Committee

The Committee on Mines and Energy met to consider the 2019 Operational and Budget Performance of BOST. The Committee on Trade and Industry also met to discuss a policy brief on a Research into Ghana Tax Regime, the need for reforms in Taxation of Micro, small and Medium-Sized Enterprises(MSMEs) in Ghana to Enhance Compliance and Tax Revenue" by Private Enterprise Federation (PEF).

On Education, the Committee met to continue consideration on the Public University Bill, 2020, whereas the Committee on Works and Housing met and considered the Budget Performance Report in respect of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources for the period



Parliament House Of Ghana, Accra

January to December, 2019.

ects.

#### Questions

The Minister of Health answered a question asked by Hon. Philip Basoah (Kumawu) inquiring about the status of the Kumawu District Hospital project being undertaken by the MNS Company from the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Mavis Nkansah-Boadu (Afigya Sekyere East) also asked the Minister responsible for Gender, Children and Social Protection if there are measures to liaise with the Ministry of National Security to get children beggars off the streets. In her answer the Minister mentioned that her Ministry has initiated a project that seeks to withdraw children from the streets, reintegrate them with their families, and assist those who are of school going age to go back to school.

Mr. Frank Annoh-Dompreeh (Nsawam-Adoagyiri) asked the Minister for Works and Housing what the Ministry is doing about the uncompleted housing projects started by ex-President John Agyekum Kufour at Koforidua, Wa and Tamale. The Minister answered saying that work on the projects in question have stalled for some years, however, the government is exploring other funding sources to fund the abandoned proj-

In another question Mr. Frank Annoh-Dompreeh sought to ask the Minister for Works and Housing the coastal protection undertaken by the Ministry and its relevant cost to the nation. The Ministry mentioned that the Ministry is undertaking ten sea defense projects.

#### Statement

The Deputy Minister for Health, Dr. Bernard Okoe Boye made a statement in commemoration of World Food Safety Day. The Minister for Employment and Labour Relations, Mr. Ignatius Baffuor Awuah also made a statement on 2020 World Day Against Child Labour where he indicated that his ministry is working with civil society and other stakeholders to increase the education on the effects of child labour and to curtail the increase in the menace.

#### The Week Ahead

As members of the Majority Caucus prepare for their primaries, business during the week is expected to accommodate such activities in order to allow some space for MPs to travel to the constituencies in respect of the activities that come with primaries. Ministers of State are expected to answer some questions on the floor during the week.

**The Ghana  
Communications  
Technology University  
Bill, 2020 was passed  
during the week, while  
the Land Bill, 2019 went  
through consideration  
stage in the House**

## Parliamentary Affairs

# SIERRA LEONE: Parliament and Executive Wrangle over Withdrawn Public Order Amendment Bill

**Continued From Page 10**

commitment, only that we want to sanitize the whole document. You cannot just say let me repeal, you have to take into consideration other concerns coming from citizens. This is a legislative arm, we are representing people, the Executive is also doing their own job but you know, we should be seen independently working for the interest of Sierra Leoneans. We did not throw out the document, we just followed the procedure as provided by SO59 (2). There is no where we can continue with it, it has elapsed and we are in a new session. We need to go over the whole process again. We need to have the IMC Act again and look at certain provisions, which is not forthcoming. We think and we will do the professional thing that is required of us as MPs," Hon. Nyuma said.

Mohamed Rahman Swaray Minister of Information and Communication said he is 'surprised and taken aback' by Parliament's decision to withdraw the bill after audacious steps taken by the government to repeal the Act. I have kept in touch with parliamentary leaders, writing letters requesting to meet with various parliamentary caucuses, he said. "We have been in touch with Parliament, if they felt that the bill will not make it, they ought to have drawn our attention to it and we would have done whatever we needed to do but that was not done and it is what surprised us," the Minister explained.

On the statement that Parliament requested safety gears through an IMC amendment act, Minister Swaray said: "It is not true that they asked us for an IMC amendment act," adding that they had already put safety gears in practical steps like the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) reconstituting a Disciplinary Committee of credible people to uphold ethical standards

among journalists, the IMC popularizing new media landscape post-repeal, and a lot of work before the taking of this bill to Parliament. "The review of the IMC act was not supposed to be a precondition for the criminal libel repeal, they are separate and apart," Swaray said, noting that there is a Civil Defamation Act, Bankruptcy Act, all of which are stringent enough for journalists to be professional and in the protection of public safety. The President's promised repeal will be done because he still have a substantial part of his five years tenure remaining in office, Minister Swaray said.

"We still remain irrevocably committed to the repeal of the criminal libel," Swaray said, adding that the President believes that the only thing that is holding the bill's repeal is democracy (separation of powers).

He said MPs have expressed willingness to pass the bill into law in this current session and he hold them by their word as the President is not ready to interfere into their duties. "This withdrawal is a slip not a fall, we will collaborate with Parliament," he assured, beckoning, "moving forward journalists, civil society, and others have to do more by dedicating time to the repeal of this law. This is a wakeup call to all of us to put the necessary pressure on Parliament to repeal this act." Critics say the repeal is a gimmick and a façade from the politicians who deep down their hearts do not want this law to be changed, but the Information Minister said, "it is a complete nonsense imagination" because the bill went through cabinet, and other consultation processes to reach the table of Parliament.

George S. Khoryoma, Chairman IMC said the procedural withdrawal of the bill by Parliament is regrettable considering it as another delay of efforts of the IMC and other players including the President's political will. No

request was made by Parliament to amend the IMC act, he said. "We are now working on the IMC Code of Practice, 2020, it is at the Law Officers Department, we have validated it, but I have no idea about what the Leader of Government Business is saying about the post laying of the bill condition," Chairman George said.

He agreed that the current IMC act is not tough enough but will be strengthened to ensure that journalists adhere to the rules, in the 2020 act.

"We want to have that power to really regulate the media, right now, we cannot just close down any newspaper and it should be our right to do so, if we really want to regulate the press which is made up of many good journalists but few ones that a bad," he said. Some media outlets (radio) across the country do not have offices, etc and need to be improved for congenial journalism, the IMC Chairman said.

He cited issues of journalists not being paid while others are underpaid, all of which makes need for a stringent IMC act. It is unclear when the IMC repeal will be ready but Chairman Khoryoma said the repeal of the Part 5 is a different document. "The criminal libel is like a sword hanging over journalists, it is not good at all. Journalists are not criminals, all other professionals - doctors, engineers, etc, go wrong but they are not convicted as criminals," he said, furthering that the laying and abandoning of this bill was a problem.

"It does not just stop at laying documents in Parliament, it takes lobbying. I don't think effective lobbying was done with this bill, so we are all to be blamed. This time we should go all out and try to lobby for this bill to be repealed." He called on everyone involved to revive the bill from an 'induced comma', cautioning that Parliament should not be blamed but all those who did not follow-up. Khoryoma said

although there are many good journalists in the country, the bad ones outshines the good ones thus the need for media ethics and professionalism. Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, SLAJ said what Parliament did was procedural and the right thing to do, adding that the bill has lapsed three months without any follow ups or deliberation from the Ministry of Information.

Nassralla however confirmed that, "Yes they have been working on the amendment of the IMC act. I believe the IMC has done their part and the Information Ministry had submit the bill to the Law Officers Department, from there it was supposed to be gazetted, I think that is where the delay had been. For our own part, it was the reconstitution of the Disciplinary Committee and strengthening of the IMC act which we have done and formally launched. It is not the duty of SLAJ to lead the process, it is that of the Ministry of Information and Communication."

Abdul Fataima Executive Director Campaign for Human Rights and Development International (CHR-DI), a civil society organisation said Parliament displayed lack of appetite to see this Executive promise come through from the onset. Part 5 of this law does not only affect journalists, but students, activists, and ordinary people and the repeal will have economic gains over current derogatory human right postures in terms of balance.

"I urge MPs to make better laws now because tomorrow you will be former MPs and this law might be used against you as we are seeing today. The public expect Parliament and the Executive to work in synergy to do this repeal as soon as possible. The public, journalists and activists are impatient now than ever before. We urge the government and Parliament in particular to ensure that this law is repealed faster and quicker before the end of this third session."

## Parliamentary Affairs

# CORE LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT “PARLIAMENT AND THE SUSTENANCE OF GHANA’S DEMOCRACY 2020 AND BEYOND”

### *Address By The Minister For Parliamentary Affairs Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu On Wed. 3rd June, 2020.*

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5. Media & CSO Partnership: A fifth avenue open to Parliamentarians is media engagement. Since the space accorded matters that come on the floor as part of the normal business is often very little, MPs scheme to engage the media by press releases, press conferences and other media encounters to elicit responses from government or put government on the carpet for excesses that might have been committed. CSOs may also be roped in to partner parliamentary groups to critique particular programmes or projects of government or aspects thereof.

#### **6. OVERSIGHT THROUGH COMMITTEES**

The sharpest tool for oversight of the Executive is by Parliamentary Committees. The sheer volume of business in Parliament makes it impossible to transact every business in plenary, hence the Committee system. The Committee track the work of the MDAs, Constitutional and Statutory bodies and conduct special investigations into particular salient aspects of their policy and administration.

Certain conditions precedent must prevail to render Parliamentary Committees and, indeed, parliaments effective.

i. Committees must operate independently from party discipline. If members work together, as we normally do at the Winnowing Committee, individual members are able to examine issues and alternatives more rationally, if both government and opposition parties are not whipping their party members towards preconceived positions.

ii. The non-partisan nature of Committee work could be reinforced by spreading chairship among the various parties represented in parliament rather than allowing government party members to dominate these crucial positions, especially in our situation where Ministers are picked

from parliament and the ruling party is thus manifestly weakened in terms of quality materials. The Chairpersons of Committees help to set the agenda for Committee business, preside over and determine the course of proceedings and hence significantly influence outcomes, including reports that are submitted to plenary. If such members are seen to be generally incompetent, parliament is significantly weakened.

This is why I have been a strong advocate for sharing committee chairship among the parties in Parliament. However, admittedly, the extreme partisanship of some MPs especially, some in leadership, who are otherwise normally intelligent people, makes me a bit nervous about what kind of polarization and rabble rousing such a move could possibly engender in our parliament.

iii. Committees serve the purpose for public participation in policy making. Parliament should open their committees to public participation.

iv. Committees must be armed with facilities and services to conduct their enquiries. Support staff – competent, neutral and impartial in their own right, the right to summon witnesses and the funds to hire outside advisors and experts are vital for effectiveness. Most MPs on Committees are not experts. Committees, therefore, must be sufficiently resourced to engage experts and professionals to conduct due diligence on various matters to enable MPs probe for relevant answers from the MDAs in pursuit of transparency and accountability. Parliament must do more in this regard.

v. Greater scrutiny and analysis in committees leads to purer legislation, to less debate on the floor, to a more rational perspective of the scope and meaning of an issue and a broader basis for acceptance and legislation.

#### **INSTITUTIONS FOR OVERSIGHT**

There are some key institutions which Parliament must be over-

seeing:

- i. The Electoral Commission
- ii. The National Commission for Civic Education
- iii. Commission for Human Rights and Administration Justice
- iv. Auditor-General
- v. The Attorney-General
- vi. Statistical Service
- vii. The Judiciary
- viii. The Security Agencies

#### **NEW KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

1. The role of Parliament in Article 177 – when advances are made from the Contingency Fund to the Finance Minister at the instance of the Finance Committee how does parliament exercise its oversight function? Parliament has to think through.

2. When advances or borrowings are made to the Minister of Finance by the Bank of Ghana in line with Section 30 of the Bank of Ghana Act, how is Parliament to exercise its oversight responsibility?

In these two instances the laws do not afford any clear opportunity for Parliament to oversee the advances or borrowings except to wait for the presentation of a Supplementary Estimate or a Mid-Year Review of government’s budgetary performance.

3. Article 181(5) obligates Parliament to apply the necessary modification to Article 181(1), (2), (3) & (4) which relate to an Agreement to grant a loan out of any Public Fund or Public Account to an International Business or Economic Transaction to which government is a party as it applies to a loan. Since the genesis of the 4th Republic, that is into its 28th year, Parliament has not done this. We need to act.

4. Article 22(2) obligates Parliament to “as soon as practicable after the coming into force of this Constitution (in 1992) enact legislation regulating the property rights of spouses”. Twenty eight years on, Parliament has not discovered the “as soon as practicable” period.

Clearly, the Parliament of 2020 and the years after shall have to work extra hard to consolidate the gains made by the previous parliaments and, much more critically, expand the frontiers of democratic governance.

#### **HIGH ATTRITION RATES**

Parliaments and parliamentarians must be capacitated. Building the capacity of Parliamentarians is not a four-year effort. It requires much more longer time. As a general rule, the longer one stays in Parliament, the better Parliamentarian the one becomes. The M.P becomes very knowledgeable, experienced and a prolific debater and law-maker. The rather high attrition rate of MPs, attributable, primarily to the increasing monetization of our internal party politics is proving very detrimental to parliamentary work. The political parties have to do serious introspection as this practice of opening the sluice gate at the end of every four years is not advancing our democracy.

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has started a dialogue session with the political parties, the NCCE, the academia, civil society organisations and the media. They all share in the principle that the high attrition rate in parliament is turning out to be a curse.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are crucial issues that we must join parliament to attend to in order to reposition parliament, to grow parliament and parliamentarians to, at least, keep pace with the Executive, thus maintaining the delicate balance between parliament and the Executive. This is the hallmark of democratic parliamentary systems.

Colleague leaders and Members of Parliament, the Chief Director, Senior and Junior staff at the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, I thank you all very much for your indulgence.

God bless our homeland Ghana and make her great and strong, corona virus or no corona virus.



#SupportNursesAndMidwives

#COVID19

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



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

