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Diplomatic And Bilateral Relations

BENIN: ECOWAS SPEAKER BECKONS FOR WEST AFRICAN INTEGRATION, ETC

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

His Excellency Honorable Sidi Mohamed Tunis Speaker Fifth Legislature of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament has in a dinner with the Speaker of the Benin Parliament and other sub-regional parliamentarians made a strong case for integration among West Africa states and people.

H.E Hon. Tunis thanked

the President and people of Benin for the kind hospitality accorded them during a 'Delocalized meeting of the Joint Committee on Trade, Customs and Free Movement, Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research, Public Accounts, Administration, Finance and Budget' meeting of ECOWAS Parliamentarians and other stakeholders held in Cotonou, the Republic of Benin from the 3rd – 7th November 2020, on the theme "African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Prospects of its Achievement within a context of Cross-

H.E Hon. Tunis said that a single currency will be the hallmark of West African integration, stressing that, "absolutely, we have the CFA, Niara, Leones, Cedi, but if all of these countries are using one currency, I believe we will integrate better. That is why I believe that as a community we should focus on ensuring that we have a single currency."



Hon. Sidi Mohamed Tunis, Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament

Border Threats (Terrorism and Insecurity, Pandemics and Protectionism).

He said that the ECOWAS Parliament has done a lot as a sub-regional body, echoing that the address of the Benin Speaker of Parliament delved a lot on the point of West African unity.

"As an ECOWAS Parliament, we will continue to support our community people because it is this body that represents a community of almost over three hundred million citizens, so our effort to integrate further on what our predecessors have stopped, we will continue to push and push," H.E Hon. Tunis said.

He added that the ECOWAS initially started as an economic body although it has now extended to be political, advancing that, "our leaders at this stage, the Authority of Heads of State are very determined that is

why they are working towards a single currency."

H.E Hon. Tunis said that a single currency will be the hallmark of West African integration, stressing that, "absolutely, we have the CFA, Niara, Leones, Cedi, but if all of these countries are using one currency, I believe we will integrate better. That is why I believe that as a community we should focus on ensuring that we have a single currency."

"There is no way that we are not going to integrate with a single currency. In our last meeting in Niamey, the Authority of Heads of State made a commitment to work towards that," H.E Hon. Tunis said.

The ECOWAS Speaker noted that "it is, therefore, our responsibility as lawmakers to ensure that when those

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Global Affairs

IPU ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT IN HISTORIC VIRTUAL VOTE



Mr Duarte Pacheco

By Emmanuella Dadugblor

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has elected Mr Duarte Pacheco as President of the union in an online election during a virtual session of its Governing Council, made up of parliamentarians from around the world.

This makes Mr Pacheco the 30th President of the IPU, taking over from Miss Gabriela Cuevas Barron, a Mexican parliamentarian, who has just concluded her three-year mandate.

Mr Duarte Pacheco has been a Member of Parliament in Portugal since 1991, serving in different capacities including Member of the Budget and Finance Committee and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Portuguese Communities.

Some 400 parliamentarians

from over 140 IPU Member Parliaments partook in the elections within a 24-hour window despite technological and timezone challenges. The parliamentarians voted in a secret ballot through a secure online platform after which an independent auditor verified the integrity of the election process and outcome. Mr Duarte Pacheco beat three other candidates to emerge winner with 56% of the vote in a single round of voting.

Prior to the elections, the candidates had the opportunity to set forth their vision for the organization and to answer questions from the wider IPU Membership on 21 October this year, to court support for themselves.

Each IPU Member Parliament had three votes on condition that they had gender-balanced delegations. Single-sex delegations were penalized by only having one vote. Over 40 per cent of voting members were women MPs and 27 per cent were under 45, both records for the IPU.

The President-Elect, Mr Pacheco has been a Member of the Portuguese delegation since 2002 and its head since 2016. He was the Chair of the IPU's Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group from 2017-2020 and was also the Vice-President of the IPU's Standing Committee on Peace and International Security from 2014-2016 and Internal Auditor for the IPU in 2007, 2011, 2013 and 2015.

In his maiden address, the new IPU President, Mr Pacheco said, "I believe that the IPU is the ideal forum to reach the goals of success we want for humanity: a world with more equality, social cohesion, peace, better environ-

mental quality, and which can address, in unity, the global challenges we are now facing."

The IPU President is the political head of the organization who chairs its statutory meetings and represents the organization at global events. Previous IPU Presidents have gone on to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Over the past 25 years, the Presidency has been held by prominent parliamentarians from Egypt, Spain, India, Chile, Italy, Namibia, Morocco, Bangladesh, Mexico, and now Portugal. The IPU Governing Council elects the IPU President for a term of three years. The IPU President must be a sitting Member of Parliament for the duration of his or her term in office.

The IPU is the global organization of national parlia-

ments. It was founded more than 130 years ago as the first multilateral political organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Today, the IPU comprises 179 national Member Parliaments and 13 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes democracy and helps parliaments become stronger, younger, gender-balanced and more diverse. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world.

Twice a year, the IPU convenes over 1,500 parliamentary delegates and partners in a world assembly, bringing a parliamentary dimension to global governance, including the work of the United Nations and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Some 400 parliamentarians from over 140 IPU Member Parliaments partook in the elections within a 24-hour window despite technological and timezone challenges. The parliamentarians voted in a secret ballot through a secure online platform after which an independent auditor verified the integrity of the election process and outcome. Mr Duarte Pacheco beat three other candidates to emerge winner with 56% of the vote in a single round of voting.

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

GAMBIA: 15 JOURNALISTS COMMENCE TRAINING ON PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING

By Aji Fatou Faal

Over fifteen (15) journalists from various media outlets (print and electronic) Thursday commenced a three-day training on Parliamentary Reporting held at Mansea Hotel, in Kololi.

The National Assembly Service with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has collaborated with the Gambia Press Union to conduct this important training for Parliamentary Reporters.

Delivering his opening statement, Momodou A. Sise,

Clerk of the National Assembly said that it is obvious that effective and responsible journalism is a fundamental phenomenon in parliamentary democracy. "And there is great wisdom and merit to appreciate that the fourth estate as a geopolitical constituency, should endeavour to present parliament Affairs in a constructive and informative manner relevant to the democratization process of any nation".

He added that it is in this spirit that the National Assembly of the Republic of the Gambia and her Development Partners resolved to strengthen the capacity of public and private media practitioners accredited to this Assembly.

According to him, studies have shown that effective, efficient and responsible journalism contributes immensely in the renowned successes of modern parliamentary democracies.

Thus, Sise cited that effective media coverage of Parliamentary Affairs deepens public trust and public access to the entire legislative structure and business. More so, as an important constituent to the National Assembly, media practitioners under your ethical values and professional etiquette continues to subject parliament worldwide to both public and media scrutiny and oversight.

"In our case, these virtues of this noble profession can be better appreciate by providing a well- structured training course targeting

"As I remain optimistic that the outcome of this training will enhance the good working relations between the National Assembly and the media, I, therefore, challenge all of you to take the training seriously, share experiences and proffer tangible solutions to mitigate the challenges that confront us in the execution of your duties", Momodou A. Sise advised.

accredited media practitioners reporting from the National Assembly", he stated.

Consequent to this dispensation, he assured that this elaborate perspective of the current National Assembly establishment would ensure that parliament remains in the purview and is also within the door-step of the electorate and public at large. Whilst the National Assembly remains highly motivated by the current media coverage of its entire proceedings, there are impacting demands judiciously recognised to remodel approaches that would equally improve and strengthen our democratization process.

Sise emphasised that this training would therefore focus on improving legislative reporting and building an

effective relationship between the National Assembly and the press. It would further provide the journalists and his office with an opportunity to outline areas in which legislative reporting could be improved.

"As I remain optimistic that the outcome of this training will enhance the good working relations between the National Assembly and the media, I, therefore, challenge all of you to take the training seriously, share experiences and proffer tangible solutions to mitigate the challenges that confront us in the execution of your duties", he advised.

He then declared the three-day training on parliamentary reporting append and wished them successful deliberations.



Momodou A. Sise, Clerk of the National Assembly

Legal and Human Rights

AFRICA: OPPOSITION MPS BATTLE ABUSE AGAINST BACKDROP OF ELECTIONS

By Emmanuella Dadugblor

Some Members of Parliament in opposition parties in some African countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe and Tanzania are battling abuses from members of government in their respective countries, the Inter-Parliamentary Union



Venezuelan National Police members stand guard outside the National Assembly.
© Cristian Hernandez / AFP

(IPU) has revealed.

According to the union, new allegations of human rights violations against parliamentarians in countries holding elections have revealed that opposition MPs' basic rights to freedom of expression, assembly and movement have reportedly been severely curtailed in the context of elections, particularly in Venezuela, Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania. The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in its virtual meeting examined and made recommendations to the IPU Governing Council regarding the cases of some 300 MPs from 19 countries.

The IPU says the cases of nine opposition MPs reviewed in Côte d'Ivoire, show violations of their fundamental rights, including arbitrary arrest and detention. In 2019, five of them were detained in the country on charges of causing public disorder, challenging the authority of the State and spreading fake news. There was no material evidence proving their guilt and there are indications that the charges appeared to be politically motivated in the run-up to elections on 31 October.

According to the latest reports, on 24 September 2020, the

authorities released four of the MPs. The MPs have been granted a provisional release but with serious restrictions, including participating in "political meetings".

Another opposition MP, Mr Alain Lobognon, continues to be held in detention for reasons unknown to the IPU despite his fragile state of health.

In the case of Mr Guillaume Soro, former Speaker of the National Assembly and presidential hopeful for 2020, the Ivoirian Constitutional Council invalidated his candidacy to run for election on 15 September. Mr Soro had been sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison. He was also deprived of his political and civil rights for five years, making it impossible for him to run for election and suggesting that the case is politically motivated.

In Tanzania, the IPU examined new evidence of human rights violations against Mr Tundu Lissu, a former parliamentarian and the main opposition candidate in recent Presidential elections. Mr Lissu returned to Tanzania in July after receiving medical treatment abroad following an assassination attempt. According to information received by the IPU, since his return, Mr Lissu

has been the target of numerous death threats and intimidation in the weeks leading up to the Presidential election on 28 October.

The IPU also examined the case of Miss Joana Mamombe, an opposition MP in Zimbabwe who was detained in May after participating in a public protest for better social protection during the pandemic, while the country was in lockdown. Miss Mamombe was allegedly tortured, including experiencing sexual abuse while in detention. Since her release on bail, the IPU has received reports that Miss Mamombe's rights have been severely restricted and that she has been re-arrested several times.

In Uganda, the IPU has been following closely the cases of five anti-government parliamentarians, including singer, Mr Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, better known as Bobi Wine, who were tortured in 2018 following arbitrary detention. In a recent development, one of the five, Mr Francis Zaake, was again detained by the police in April 2020 and released 10 days later. According to the information received by the IPU, Mr Zaake was once more tortured while in detention and denied basic human rights including access to his lawyer and family.

In a new case, the IPU examined allegations that Mr Justin Ndoundangoye, a Member of Parliament in Gabon, was tortured and experienced violence of a sexual nature while in detention in January 2020. His right to a fair trial has also reportedly been violated.

The IPU has therefore urging the governments of the various countries to investigate the allegations of abuse against the Members of Parliament in their respective countries and serve justice to the victims.

According to the union, new allegations of human rights violations against parliamentarians in countries holding elections have revealed that opposition MPs' basic rights to freedom of expression, assembly and movement have reportedly been severely curtailed in the context of elections, particularly in Venezuela, Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania.

Parliamentary Affairs

GHANA: Fomena MP Sacked From Parliament

By Emmanuella Dadugblor

The Speaker of Parliament Prof. Mike Aaron Oquaye has expelled the Member of Parliament for Fomena, Hon Andrew Amoako Asiamah from the 7th parliament, making the Fomena seat vacant ahead of the 2020 election.

This comes on the back of his decision to contest the parliamentary seat of that constituency independently following some issues that emerged during the party's primaries. His party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) after several failed attempts to get Mr Amoako Asiamah to rescind his decision wrote to the house requesting the sack

of the Member of Parliament in line with the party's constitution.

"The step taken to contest his party automatically triggers forfeiture of his party membership. Having forfeited the membership of the party, on whose ticket he was elected to Parliament, the operative language of the Constitution is that 'He SHALL', which is mandatory, 'vacate his seat in Parliament. Prof Oquaye said.

According to the Speaker, his action is a breach of the party's constitution specifically Article 3 (9) which makes him unfit to be a representative of the people of that constituency. Article 3(9) of the NPP constitution states that "any member of the



Member of Parliament for Fomena, Hon Andrew Amoako Asiamah

party who supports or campaigns for an independent parliamentary candidate ahead of the forthcoming general election also automatically forfeits his/her membership of the NPP".

Mr Asiamah's expulsion from the house is also backed by Article 97(1g) of the 1992 constitution of the republic which states that "A Member of Parliament shall vacate his seat in Parliament if he leaves the party of which he was a member at the time of his election to Parliament to join another party or seeks to remain in Parliament as an independent member".

Speaker Oquaye described as

ridiculous a situation where Mr Amoako Asiamah will be representing the party in Parliament but campaigning against it and its candidate in the run-up to the December elections.

"This lacuna of a ridiculous situation is not what is anticipated under the 1992 Constitution. In the circumstance and it is determined that the conduct of Hon. Andrew Amoako Asiamah amounts to vacating his seat in Parliament." The Speaker noted.

Rt Hon Prof Aaron Mike Oquaye has since deferred to the Electoral Commission on the next line of action under the country's laws.

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Diplomatic And Bilateral Relations

BENIN: ECOWAS SPEAKER BECKONS FOR WEST AFRICAN INTEGRATION, ETC

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instruments get to our national assemblies, we try to treat them with the utmost urgency that is required," adding that movement of people from country to country in the sub-region is almost borderless if it were not for border or customs posts, citing Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia as an examples.

"This is a clear demonstration that we are one of the same people only being divided by our colonial masters. Yes, we have now been divided but it is our responsibility as citizens of this community to ensure that we come together. Our leaders cannot do it alone, it is our responsibility as citizens to support them," H.E Hon. Tunis said.

He recalled that with unity, wars were curtailed by the ECOWAS security body known as ECOMOG which restored peace to Sierra Leone and Liberia during their times of civil wars.

"We have all the countries contributing troops to the ECOMOG to ensure that there was peace," he said, noting that, "and today we are enjoying peace, democracy with the support of ECOWAS."

However, instability and strife have still got a hold in some West African countries, fuelled mainly by anti-democratic leadership and unfair electioneering exercises held in recent times in some countries like Guinea,

Conakry to name but a few.

The ECOWAS Speaker said: "As far as I know, ECOWAS' business is to ensure that we maintain democracy. Third term is not part of ECOWAS agenda at all but at the same time, we do not interfere into the national politics of individual countries, If countries choose to change their constitutions, we cannot stop them definitely as a parliament."

H.E Hon. Tunis urged that: "Let us all work together to make sure that there is peace, unity and cohesion in the sub-region. We will always have our individual country interest but the interest of the community must be paramount."

On the AfCFTA, H.E Hon Tunis said the presentation by the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA to members of the Community Parliament gave away a whole lot of information that they will be taking back to their various national assemblies. He spoke about the need to sensitize the community as community representatives on the outcome of the meeting, adding that border closure is a challenge stemming from nationalism and protectionism.

"COVID-19 has not helped the situation to ensure that there is dialogue. We also have to take into consideration national security issues but it is all about dialogue and we will collaborate with the ECOWAS Commission to ensure that

"This is a clear demonstration that we are one of the same people only being divided by our colonial masters. Yes, we have now been divided but it is our responsibility as citizens of this community to ensure that we come together. Our leaders cannot do it alone, it is our responsibility as citizens to support them," H.E Hon. Tunis said.

there is dialogue between Nigeria and Benin," the ECOWAS Speaker said.

The synergy between the ECOWAS Parliament and other national parliaments is something that the ECOWAS Speaker said needed more work.

"If everything works out well by January, I am going to have the first meeting of conference of Speakers of all national assemblies in Abuja to talk to them so that whatever decisions that we are taking in the ECOWAS Parliament, it is cascade down to national assemblies," H.E Hon. Tunis said, noting that this is just the beginning of a process of diffusing knowledge about the ECOWAS Parliament from across the board.

Community levy is a major source of funding for the ECOWAS Parliament, H.E Hon. Tunis said that they are discussing and pushing

for these collections to be made with series of resolutions that members go to their national government to tell them to pay whatever amount of money that they owe the ECOWAS Parliament.

The ECOWAS Parliament Speaker, H.E Hon. Tunis said that going forward, West Africans must expect the best under his Speakership.

"I want to bring the ECOWAS Parliament to the people, we are millions of miles away from the people. This is a community Parliament.

We have moved away from the community of states to that of the community of people, so this is the peoples' assembly. My plan and vision is to see that the people own the ECOWAS Parliament and I am going to start with that immediately. After COVID-19, we are going to hit the ground running," H.E Hon. Tunis said.

General News

BENIN: SIERRA LEONEAN MP ADVOCATES FOR INCLUSION OF ECOWAS LAWMAKERS IN POLICY FORMULATION/IMPLEMENTATION

"...You cannot just go and draft policies and bring them to us as parliamentarians to ratify like that as if we are rubberstamped and then we just go with that. If they want us to be a part of them and play our critical role in setting up benchmarks for the implementation of the free trade agreement, we must all plan, seat together, cross the tees and dot the I's, which will make us not to be seen as a rubberstamped parliament by our people."

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay representing constituency 094 Moyamba District, Chairperson Trade and Industry oversight Committee, Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone and a member of the country's delegation to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament made a strong call for the inclusion of the Community Parliament members in every stage of policy formulation and implementation for the goals to be achieved by the sub-regional economic and political body, ECOWAS.

In an exclusive interview with *Parliamentary News (PN)* following the conclusion of a 'Delocalized meeting of the Joint Committee on Trade, Customs and Free Movement, Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research, Public Accounts, Administration, Finance and Budget' meeting of ECOWAS Parliamentarians and other stakeholders meeting held in Cotonou, the Republic of Benin, 3rd – 7th November 2020, on the theme "African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Prospects of its Achievement within a context of Cross-Border Threats (Terrorism and Insecurity, Pandemics and Protectionism), Hon. Sesay restated her positions also stating what Sierra Leone and other countries stand to gain from the implementation of this agreement in 2021.

She, however, argued strongly pointing out that with the inclusion of the ECOWAS Legislators in policymaking from the onset among other issues, they desired results will be achieved for the beneficence of everyone.

Hon. Sesay said: "Talking about the AfCFTA and the role of Members of Parliament – we have a role to represent, legislate and oversee policies, and the policymakers are calling on us to play our roles by going back to our electorates to sensitize them in our various communities but I told them outright that yes, we know our roles and responsibilities but we should be in this together. You cannot just go and draft policies and bring them to us as parliamentarians to ratify like that as if

we are rubberstamped and then we just go with that. If they want us to be a part of them and play our critical role in setting up benchmarks for the implementation of the free trade agreement, we must all plan, seat together, cross the tees and dot the I's, which will make us not to be seen as a rubberstamped parliament by our people."

Hon. Sesay said that with their inclusion at every stage of the process, it would ensure understanding and support for the laws that are enacted in their various community parliaments.

She noted that among the eighteen member states of the ECOWAS, eight countries are yet to ratify the AfCFTA to which she said that the ECOWAS have to do more in bringing them onboard to avoid a situation of the feeling of exclusion and excuses by these countries.

"I asked the ECOWAS what modalities have they put in place to bring these countries

on board to sign the free trade agreement," Hon. Sesay said, adding that all member states must have a reason to sign up to the agreement to avoid any unforeseen situation of a feeling of rejection.

Her position was well received by the stakeholders who said they have taken good note of the concern on the need for an all-out inclusion of MPs in the entire process to give it the viability it requires.

Sierra Leone has a challenging economy with a GDP strength that cannot be compared to most AfCFTA signatories.

Responding to the question of what does Sierra Leone stand to benefit from the free trade agreement, Hon. Sesay said: "Sierra Leone will benefit because if the smaller or bigger nations are benefiting, we are part of them, we will also benefit from it."

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Veronica Kadie Sesay representing constituency 094 Moyamba District

Finance

GHANA: PARLIAMENT APPROVES GH¢27.4 BILLION FOR Q1 2021

By: Emmanuella Dadugblor

Parliament has approved a request by the Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, to spend GH¢27.4 billion on the country's expenses in the first quarter of 2021. His request was contained in his 2021 budgetary presentation to the house on Wednesday, October 28, 2020, where he requested the said amount to be spent from January to March next year, a call that has generated debate in the house.

Minority Leader and member of Parliament for Tamale South, Haruna Iddrisu in his comments on the presentation, questioned the accuracy of the figures presented to Parliament by the Min-

ister for Finance.

"What is worrying is that if we don't get the statistics right on debt and GDP, we will not get the other figures right; even inflation, we will not get it right," A breakdown of the request as given by the Minister includes compensation of Employees valued at GH¢7,708,960,148, Goods and Services at GH¢1,595,571,683, Interest Payments at GH¢7,002,221,941, Subsidies at GH¢259,087,194. The Ministry also intends to spend GH¢4,340,216,517 on Grants to Other Government Units, GH¢41,271,000 on Social Benefits, GH¢813,610,025 on Other Expenditure and GH¢1,903,658,408 on Capital Expenditure.

The rest are GH¢350,000,000 on Arrears Clearance, GH¢3,419,583,605 being budget for Amortisation as well as GH¢27,434,180,520 for Appropriation, bringing the total budget to GH¢23,664,596,915.

The Minister explained that "For the purposes of the 2021 Expenditure in Advance of Appropriation, we have projected the 2021 first-quarter total revenue and grants at GH¢13.3 billion while total expenditure including the clearance of arrears is projected at GH¢24.0 billion. This results in the projected fiscal deficit of GH¢10.7 billion for the period,"

He revealed further that to support the 2021 budget and liability management, his Ministry plans to source funding from the international capital market. According to the Minister, the sourcing of funds from the international market will include the issuance of sovereign bonds of \$3 billion, with the option to increase it to \$5 billion, if market conditions are favourable. He said \$1.5 billion will be used to support the 2021 budget and \$3.5 billion for liability management.

Meanwhile, the house has also



Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta

approved a request by the government to raise US\$3 billion as part of its 2021 International Capital Market Funding Programme.

The amount is expected to be used to support growth-oriented expenditures, re-profile domestic debt, and to conduct liability management of refinancing all or part of the 2023 sovereign bond with an option to raise it by a further US\$2 billion.

Chairman of the Finance Committee, Dr Mark Assibey-Yeboah, who moved the motion for the adoption of the programme said the proposed bond programme would enable government address challenging capital market conditions, which have been impacted negatively by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. He said the proceeds would be used to finance growth-oriented expenditure in the 2021 budget to the tune of US\$1.5 billion, and the rest to re-profile domestic debt.

"Mr Speaker, the committee, having carefully scrutinised the programme, recommends to the House by a resolution to adopt the committee's report and ap-

prove the programme", he submitted.

But speaking taking his turn to speak on the motion, Minority Leader, Hon Haruna Iddrisu, the funding programme is unclear on how much government intended to raise on the market in 2021 adding that the amount will add to the country's already alarming debt stock which he said already positions the country as a debt risk distress country.

"Mr Speaker, what are we approving? Three billion or five billion? But if you read the committee's report, it means the government intends to borrow US\$5 billion," he observed.

Defending the programme, the Minister for Monitoring and Evaluation, Dr Anthony Akoto Osei said the claim that the proposed amount would add to Ghana's debt cannot be true.

"You are borrowing to replace a much expensive debt with a cheaper debt. All I hear is to re-profile such that you end up saving the country some money. We are helping Ghana have a lesser debt," he explained.

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General News

BENIN: Gambian Lawmaker Highlights Success/Challenges of AfCFTA Implementation

“This is an opportunity for us to go back and also inform our colleagues and also line ministries that are responsible for the implementation of the agreement. It is an opportunity for us to share updates to our colleagues and other partners both at the levels of the Commission, the Executive and National Assemblies,” Hon. Barrow said.

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

On the aftermath of the Fifth Legislature of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ‘Delocalized meeting of the Joint Committee on Trade, Customs and Free Movement, Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research, Public Accounts, Administration, Finance and Budget’ meeting of ECOWAS Parliamentarians and other stakehold-

ers meeting held in Cotonou, the Republic of Benin, 3rd – 7th November 2020, on the theme “African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Prospects of its Achievement within a context of Cross-Border Threats (Terrorism and Insecurity, Pandemics and Protectionism), Honorable Kabba K. Barrow Majority Leader National Assembly of the Gambia and Chairperson Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research of the ECOWAS Parliament has outlined possible successes and challenges lurking the implementation of the AfCFTA's implementation in the sub-region ahead of its implementation in the year 2021.

Hon. Barrow said that it is the role of Members of Parliament in their national assemblies, the media and other partners to cascade the information learnt from the meeting by informing their various publics to know what has been discussed about the AfCFTA which many countries have ratified including the Gambia.

“This is an opportunity for us to go back and also inform our colleagues and also line ministries that are responsible for the implementation of the agreement. It is an opportunity for us to share updates to our colleagues and other partners both at the levels of the Com-

mission, the Executive and National Assemblies,” Hon. Barrow said.

During the AfCFTA deliberations, ECOWAS Legislators like for example, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay from Sierra Leone expressed concerns that the ECOWAS Commissions goes about implementing projects and afterwards come midway to involve the Parliament, a trend which she said needs a paradigm shift.

Hon. Barrow said: “That is why we are saying involve us since at the negotiation time. It is important that as partners we all start on the same lane and not be in front of each other. We all must start together because this is a discussion that we all have our niche into. As parliamentarians, our focus and main goal is to ensure that we legislate and also represent and perform oversight, so those are the issues, that

we need to be in a better position to be able to do so that we know what the package is all about so that before these agreements are signed, the people will know about it through us as their representatives and that will make life easy for all of us and the implementation and monitoring of the program will be easy at the level of our countries.”

Quizzed on if the ECOWAS Parliament be involved in the process of negotiation at the onset will not mean, MPs attempting to be players and referees at the same time, Hon. Barrow said no.

“We are not going to be a player and a referee at the same time, this is information sharing. We need to be equipped and be able to know what is the content of the document that

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Honorable Kabba K. Barrow Majority Leader National Assembly of the Gambia and Chairperson Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research of the ECOWAS Parliament

Defense and Interior

GHANA: WE ARE SET FOR 2020 POLLS - IGP

By Emmanuella Dadugblo

The Inspector-General of Police James Oppong-Boanuh has said the service is in readiness to contain the security situation in the country come December 2020. He has also revealed some measures being put in place by the security agencies in the country to ensure a violence-free atmosphere during this year's polls.

With barely a month to the 2020 general elections, the IGP said all unforeseen circumstances have been duly considered in their preparations and that security of citizens will be prioritised before, during and after the December polls.

Mr Oppong-Boanuh who was addressing parliament on Thursday, 5 November 2020, intimated that the service has

seen a lot of improvement in the area of deployment. The IGP said the service, having drawn lessons from disturbances from the voter registration exercise, has identified hotspots which have been well targetted to ensure maximum safety.

"Mr Speaker, we intend printing what we call an aid memoir. That is best practice in the modern world for officers on operations like this," he said.

Mr Oppong-Boanuh noted that the deployment will see the assignment of personnel to polling stations and centres to assist the presiding officers, mobile patrols and proactive deployment forces to attend to volatile public order situations and other emergencies, adding that some security personnel will be on standby.

He intimated that the memoir, serving as a reference, will contain "the do's and don'ts for the security officers who



Inspector-General of Police, Ghana, James Oppong-Boanuh

will be deployed so that when they are in doubt, they can remove the paper from their pockets and look at it to refresh their memory."

He emphasised the services' preparedness for the election adding that the service is "not just sitting down and waiting for election day to come and then we get there and we don't know what to do. As a result, therefore, we have had some training and capacity-building for our officers.

Mr Oppong Boanuh said personnel have been taken through several forms of training in a bid to get them to properly understand the activities during the election and how to deal with security situations.

"For instance, we've had high-risk operation and confidence building for regional operational teams for our special weapon and tactics and rapid deployment forces. We've also had the counter-terrorism and emergency operations training for our counter-terrorism unit. Mr Speaker we have also had a nationwide investigation and prosecution of electoral offences training for all our officers and this, we did in collaboration with the Attorney-General's Department and the Judicial Service."

According to the IGP, the officers were also taken through some security courses on Election Violence and Security course at the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) all in readiness for the December polls.

With barely a month to the 2020 general elections, the IGP said all unforeseen circumstances have been duly considered in their preparations and that security of citizens will be prioritised before, during and after the December polls.

General News

BENIN: Gambian Lawmaker Highlights Success/Challenges of AfCFTA Implementation

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is going to be discussed, in doing that we can go back to our people and say these are the projects or documents that are coming and we should be able to tell them what are the benefits and what are some of the capacity gaps that are there that the document or agreement will bring to our respec-

Hon. Barrow said: "Yes, there is political willingness on the part of many countries, if not the AfCFTA Secretariat would not have been set up by the African Union..."

tive countries. I think it is important that we have those information on time and share it with our electorates," Hon. Barrow said.

It is a fear that the implementation of the AfCFTA will be a great gain to countries with bigger economies and a loss to countries with little or no production capacities thus posing a challenge on the political will on the part of the implementa-

tion of the AfCFTA by some of the signatories and state parties, but the Gambian Majority Leader Hon. Barrow sees it differently.

Hon. Barrow said: "Yes, there is political willingness on the part of many countries, if not the AfCFTA Secretariat would not have been set up by the African Union. Now that the Secretariat has been set up and the appointments already being done and you can see the deliberation of the Secretary-General who gave us an insight as to the work that they are doing and the encouragement that is given to the respective countries so that they may go into this. The benefits are greater than the losses that we are going to have. It is going to bring on board the bigger and smaller economies together to better understand what their roles should be and then we should have inter-trade amongst ourselves so that the capacities and economies of smaller nations would be able to sustain their countries."

He said that it is based on how the issues are presented or presented themselves that is how the criticism of would be winners and losers can be perceived on the implementation of the AfCFTA.

"It is depend on how it is being presented, some times it is also different,

as you know we are also at different stages of the implementation of the AfCFTA because the economies are different and some of the things that are going to be traded in most of those countries are not industrialized they don't have the capacity to be able to change to added value of the raw materials to get them to where they are but this will give them an opportunity to be able to learn from other countries and see how they do the value change so that in the future, they will be able to take that trend and as they progress, more

efforts will be done and they will be in the position to gain from them," Hon. Barrow said.

The issue of unilateral border closure by Nigeria with Benin and other countries was a hot talking point with various sides of the story underpinning the theme of pandemic and insecurity.

Hon. Barrow said the justification of this action by Nigeria is something that the politicians must discuss, " because the issues

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General News

BENIN: SIERRA LEONEAN MP ADVOCATES FOR INCLUSION OF ECOWAS LAWMAKERS IN POLICY FORMULATION/IMPLEMENTATION

Continued From Page 8

She gave an analogy of a housing survey which does not discriminate a zinc or cement house in its counting exercise, categorizing all of them as houses.

“So if they are counting the benefits of the agreement to the bigger countries, we also as signatories and members of ECOWAS will also benefit. The free trade area agreement is really necessary because some of the problems of border closures as experienced by Benin will be overcome,” Hon. Sesay said.

She added that the said issue between Benin and Nigeria should be investigated to know the root cause of this conflict urging stakeholders and Civil Society Organizations to find a way to address the issue.

Amidst the closure of land, sea and airspaces, Benin remained open although having an extra robust COVID-19 testing measure.

Hon. Sesay said the issue between Benin and Nigeria is thorny especially with not only border closure but the ban on products from Benin in Nigeria as a result of doubts in standards among

other things.

“On this issue, I called on all the Ministers of Trade, Stakeholders and CSOs to come together to sort out the prevailing and envisage problems to foster oneness and inclusion in the sub-region,” Hon. Sesay said.

Talking about what she will take back to Sierra Leone on the aftermath of the joint committee on the AfCFTA meeting, Hon. Sesay said: “As the Chairperson of the Trade and Industry Committee in my Parliament, I am happy because that is why I am here, coming in two folds as a member of the ECOWAS Parliament’s budget and finance committee that deals with all monetary issues and the budget for the year 2021 which we came to discuss and of course, I said if the budget is implemented it will be good if implemented well.

On the trade area, Sierra Leone will also benefit from it because if the single currency is well deliberated and implemented, the traders will be happy. With the single currency, traders will be able to use one money with no need for exchange rates which sometimes they can cheat us on when we go to other West African countries, so with a single currency, we will be able to do business unimpeded.”

Hon. Sesay also raised the issue of cattle rearing for which she asked if they have trade corridors as business people.

“They must have a trade corridor for these people be-

cause if they fail to do that, as in the case of Mali, there is unrest in border areas with people fighting each other over damages caused by cattle on peoples plantations which in turn causes the killing of the cattle too. I called the attention of this meeting to this area because it should be considered in a free trade area agreement,” she said.

Hon. Veronica emphasized that: “We in Sierra Leone will have to benefit wherein we can carry our minerals and raw materials and other countries can also bring in their raw materials too. For example, zircon is used in the development of mobile phones, so if the free trade area agreement is implemented, countries that mine zircon, rutile or bauxite like ours can be able to export it, then they will pay the taxes and we too will benefit from whatever that they are manufacturing. These are some of the important things that I contributed during the ECOWAS Parliament’s joint committee meeting in Benin. I think is very beneficial for our countries.”

The AfCFTA provides a unique opportunity for countries in the region to competitively integrate into the global economy, reduce poverty, and promote inclusion, citing that although Africa has made substantial progress in recent decades in raising living standards and reducing poverty, increasing trade can provide the impetus for reforms that boost productivity and job creation, and thereby further reduce poverty.

“We in Sierra Leone will have to benefit wherein we can carry our minerals and raw materials and other countries can also bring in their raw materials too. For example, zircon is used in the development of mobile phones, so if the free trade area agreement is implemented, countries that mine zircon, rutile or bauxite like ours can be able to export it, then they will pay the taxes and we too will benefit from whatever that they are manufacturing. These are some of the important things that I contributed during the ECOWAS Parliament’s joint committee meeting in Benin. I think is very beneficial for our countries.”

Parliamentary Practice & Procedures

LAST WEEK IN GHANA'S PARLIAMENT

By: Benjamin Opoku Aryeh

Bills

Anti-Money Laundering Bill, 2020 was referred to the Committee on Finance for consideration and report. After that, the Ghana Enterprises Agency Bill, 2020 was taken through consideration and passed.

And rather interestingly the Cyber Security Bill, 2020 was withdrawn from the Committee that it was referred to by the Min. For Communication, and laid once again. The Speaker referred the bill to the Committee on Communications, and directed the Leadership of the Committee on Defence & Interior to join the Committee on Interior to consider the Bill. The Public Universities Bill, 2020 which has drawn a lot of public scrutiny, in addition to the Pre-Tertiary Education Bill, 2020 was presented and read for the first time in Parliament after they were withdrawn by the Minister for Education.

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The Ghana Enterprises Agency Bill, 2020 together with the Air Navigation Services Agency Bill was passed during the week in parliament.

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Papers

The following papers were laid on the floor of Parliament during the week.

The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Dr. Mark Assibey-Yeboah, presented to plenary on the Borrowers and Lenders Bill, 2020. Again, the report of the Finance Committee on the Insurance Bill, 2020, the Public Private Partnership Bill 2020, were presented.

The Minister responsible for Monitoring & Evaluation, Dr. Anthony Akoto Osei on behalf of the Minister responsible for Finance presented the Additional Financing Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance) and the ING Bank of Belgium SA/NV for an amount of Four Million, Seven Hundred and Fifteen Thousand, Eight Hundred and Ninety-Eight Euros (€4,715,898.00) being loan component of the cost of Seven Million, Twelve Thousand, Four Hundred and Ninety-Ghana Euros (€7,012,498.00) to finance the Upper East Region Water Supply Project.

Deputy Minister for Finance, Mr. Kwaku Agyeman Kwarteng on behalf of the Minister also presented the Financing Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance) and the International Development Association for an amount of Two Hundred and Fifty Million United States Dollars (US\$250,000,000.00) to finance the Ghana Development Finance Project (GDFP);

Facility Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Finance), Deutsche Bank AG (as Original Covered Lender), and Export Credits Guarantee Department (operating as UK Export Finance [as Direct Lender and Covered Lenders' Guarantor]) for an amount of One Hundred and Forty-Five Million, Four Hundred and Two Thousand, Two Hundred Ninety-

Eight Euros and Eighty-Five Cents (€145,402,298.85) to finance Tranche 2 of Phase 2 of the Redevelopment and Modernisation of the Kumasi Central Market and its Associated Infrastructure in the Ashanti Region of Ghana; and Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, GETFund Levy, NHIL, ECOWAS Levy, EXIM Levy, and Special Import Levy amounting to Ten Million, Two Hundred and Sixty-Six Thousand, Nine Hundred and Thirty-Eight Ghana Cedis and Ninety-One Pesewas (GH¢10,266,938.91) on goods and materials to be procured in respect of the implementation of Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System ICT Upgrade Project among several others.

Waivers presented by the Hon. Minister responsible for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu on behalf of the Minister responsible for Finance.

(i). 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 Fifteen Million, Eighty-Six Thousand, and Ninety-Six Euros (€15,086,096.00 [made up of €7,280,629.00 on imports and €7,805,467.00 on local purchases]) on materials, equipment, and services to be procured in respect of the Elmina Fishing Port Rehabilitation and Expansion Project by Messrs. BellSea Limited and International Marine and Dredging Consultants.

(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 Twenty Four Million, One Hundred and Seventy-Four Thousand, and Four Hundred and Thirty-Seven Euros (€24,174,437.00 [made up of €20,476,372.00 on imports and €3,698,065.00 on local purchases]) on materials, equipment, and works to be procured in respect of the construction and equipping of a new 330-Bed Maternity Block at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital (KBTH).

Committees

The committee on Youth, Sports and Agriculture met and held discussions with officials of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and Stakeholders in the Creative Arts Industry on the Creative Arts Bill, 2020.

The Committee on Mines and Energy met on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2020 at 2:00pm and considered the following:

i. Renewable Energy (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

ii. Bui Power Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

iii. Contract Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana (represented by the Ministry of Energy) and Thegashep Ghana Limited for an amount of Fifty Million Euros €50,000,000.00 for the supply and Erection of Electrical Materials and Equipment for the Electrification of 205 Communities in the Upper East Region (SHEP 4) – Phase 2.



Parliament House, Accra, Ghana

General News

BENIN: Gambian Lawmaker Highlights Success/Challenges of AfCFTA Implementation

Hon. Barrow said, " the biggest achievement of the meeting held in Benin is the update that we have from the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA and also the notification of MPs on the development and plans that they want to do. One of the initiatives is the plan that every six months they are to have a forum in all the member countries to be able to discuss not only with the parliamentarians but key stakeholders like the Civil Society Organizations which I am very much always passionate about because they are the people on the ground and they have the niche and the comparative advantage to be able to disseminate the message and also to us the parliamentarians, this is an opportunity for all of us to speak the same language."

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have not been clearly explained to us."

Hon. Barrow said: "If you go to Benin's end they are giving the information that is different to what the Nigerians are saying, so what I will advice is for the ECOWAS Commission to talk to the politicians. They are the people who signed these protocols, they should be able to tell their people what they have done as state parties.

I think it is important that they go back to the drawing board and discuss these things because if not, it is going to be an impediment in the implementation of the free movement of people in our sub-region."

Giving and upbeat and downscaled assessment of the possible successes and challenges of the AfCFTA's implementation, Hon. Barrow said, " the biggest achievement of the meeting held in Benin is the update that we have from the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA and also the notification of MPs on the development and plans that they want to do. One of the initiatives is the plan that every six months they are to have a forum in all the member countries to be able to discuss not only with the parliamentarians but key stakeholders like the Civil Society Organizations which I am very

much always passionate about because they are the people on the ground and they have the niche and the comparative advantage to be able to disseminate the message and also to us the parliamentarians, this is an opportunity for all of us to speak the same language."

However, it is Hon. Barrow's envisioning that the AfCFTA's implementation will be faced with the challenge of timely dissemination of information.

"This is very key, we need to be able to have the information channel be done and the resources also have to be there. Some of the national assemblies do not have these things, it has to be, the cost implications are there, so that is why we are telling the ECOWAS Commission that they need to put in something that can build the capacity of the ECOWAS Parliament and that will filter down to the representatives so that they can go back to their communities and talk to them and work with other partners so that they can make the implementation process of the agreement easier," Hon. Barrow said.

According to the World Bank Group, the AfCFTA provides a unique opportunity for countries in the region to competitively integrate into the global economy, reduce poverty, and promote inclusion,

citing that although Africa has made substantial progress in recent decades in raising living standards and reducing poverty, increasing trade can provide the impetus for reforms that boost productivity and job creation, and thereby further reduce poverty.

AfCFTA can provide this spark, the World Bank Group said, adding that by 2035, "we estimate that implementing the agreement would contribute to lifting an additional 30 million people from extreme poverty and 68 million people from moderate poverty.

Real income gains from full implementation of the agreement could increase by 7%, or nearly US\$450 billion. As African economies struggle to manage the consequences of COVID-19, AfCFTA can provide an anchor for long-term reform and integration."

AfCFTA would significantly boost African trade, particularly intraregional trade in manufacturing and by 2035, the volume of total exports would increase by almost 29% relative to business as usual.

Intra-continental exports would increase by more than 81%, while exports to non-African countries would rise by 19%. This would create new opportunities for African manufacturers and workers.



2020
INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF THE NURSE AND
THE MIDWIFE

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