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AFRICAN OPEN PARLIAMENT INDEX LAUNCHED IN ACCRA



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Executive Director of Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica), Sammy Obeng making a presentation on the Index



Gender Advocacy to Parliament Project Initiated to Support Female MPs

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Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

GAMBIA PARLIAMENT RANKED 6TH BY PNAFRICA OPEN PARLIAMENT INDEX

By: Assembly of The Gambia

The Parliament of the Republic of the Gambia has been ranked Sixth (6th) by Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) in the maiden edition of the Africa Open Parliament Index (OPI).



Gambia Parliament

The OPI which assessed the openness of Parliaments in Africa was launched PNAfrica under the auspices of the Africa Parliamentary Monitoring Organisations Network (APMON) on Wednesday 20th July 2022, in Accra – Ghana.

The National Assembly of The Gambia scored 45.03 point next to Benin on the 5th place with 45.32 points.

The Parliament of Ghana is ranked 1st with 63.03 pints followed by Cape Verde on the second place with 61.86 points. Sierra Leone comes 3rd with 57.97 points and

Nigeria with 49.21 points on the 4th place out of thirteen countries in West Africa.

Other countries on the ranking are Cote D'ivoire on the 7th position with 43.86 point, Burkina Faso on 8th with 42.69 points, Senegal on 9th with 41.24, Niger on 10th with 37.15, Togo on 11th with 36.28, Liberia on 12th with 33.65 points and Guinea-Bissau on 13th with 22.36 points.

The Africa OPI is a joint effort with the APMON Working Group, which is made up of renowned parliamentary monitoring organizations in Africa namely, Mzal-

endo Trust (Kenya), Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Parliamentary Monitoring Group (South Africa), Africa Parliamentary Press Network (APPN), and the Pan African Parliament Civil Society Forum which is coordinated by the Center for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria.

The Open Parliament Index (OPI) which uses the three criteria of Open Parliament: Transparency, Civic Participation and Public Accountability, to assess Parliaments across Africa would be subsequently released every two years.

This criterion has been chosen considering the standards of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Principles of Parliamentary Openness and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Indicators for Democratic Parliaments.

According to the Executive Director of PNAfrica, Sammy Obeng, "what does not get measured does not get done" and therefore the introduction of the Open Parliament Index, "would help track the progress of African Parliaments which form the backbone of thriving democracies and offer assistance where there may be shortfalls."



...the introduction of the Open Parliament Index would help track the progress of African Parliaments which form the backbone of thriving democracies and offer assistance where there may be shortfalls

PAP to hold Capacity Building Workshop for the Media

By: Olu Ibekwe

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) will hold a two-day capacity building workshop for the members of the media from 26 to 27 August 2022 at the headquarters of the Parliament in Midrand, South Africa.

This was contained in a letter by the Acting Clerk of the Pan-African Parliament, Mr. Gali Massa Harou.

The workshop participants are drawn from the members of the African Parliamentary Press Network (APPN) and other journalists who have worked with the PAP to enhance the relationship. Consideration was given to regional representation

in the selection of participants.

Harou stated that the workshop is aimed at increasing African citizens' awareness about the PAP's mandate and activities, while enhancing public access to PAP's information.

"The workshop stems from the fact that the press remains indispensable as a vehicle of information even in the face of a dynamic and evolving media and technological environment and the PAP depends on journalists to inform the public about its work. Such work must be done within the norms of a good journalism. The workshop will therefore ensure that the PAP is covered with precision and accuracy" said Harou.

It would be recalled that PAP President, H.E Senator, Chief

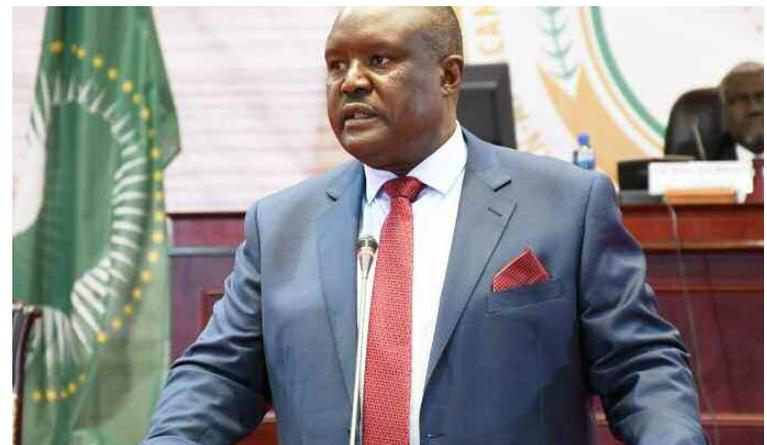
Fortune Charumbira had in a meeting with the members of the African Parliamentary Press Network (APPN) soon after his election, charged them to contribute towards the building of a "visionary and strong African Parliament".

"We need to work together for the betterment of our continental parliament despite all the challenges we are facing", said H.E Charumbira.

"The press plays a very critical role in building, uniting and shaping our societies. Your contribution through meaningful engagements is vital for the growth of the PAPI appreciate the role of the media in our societies. The current PAP administration considers the media as our friends and partners. Let us build a winning team together through your

constructive reporting and engagements".

H. E. Chief Charumbira also added that he would appreciate seeing more stories about the PAP out there as he seeks to make African communities across the continent to understand what PAP is all about.



Chief Fortune Charumbira, President of Pan African Parliament

"A lot has happened and people get to know about the PAP only whenever there are differences or disagreements on issues, but that is a thing of the past. We would appreciate if you assist us in disseminating the vital programs that the new administration will be embarking on" he concluded.

Gender, Children and Social Welfare

Spread Gender Advocacy Across all Parliamentary Committees for Effective Outcomes - CSOs Advised

By: Osman Alhassan

Executive Director of the Gender Centre for Empowering Development (GenCED), Esther Tawiah, has appealed for conversations on gender to be expanded beyond the Gender Committee of Parliament to include other Committees.

This, she said, is imperative because issues affecting the welfare of women are multi-dimensional and need the contribution of not only the Committee on Gender to address.

Addressing a Gender Advocacy to Parliament (GAP) project inception meeting in Parliament, Ms. Tawiah stressed that gender issues go beyond just 'a woman' and also cover those living with disabilities and looking out for other social issues not necessarily affecting women but both sexes.

She was speaking on the theme, 'Strengthening relations between Gender-based CSOs and Female MPs for an increase in gender equality policies and legislation.'



Executive Director of GenCED, Esther Tawiah

The programme was organized by Parliamentary Network Africa (PNA), a parliamentary monitoring civil society organization working to ensure Open Parliaments across Africa. The project is supported by the French Embassy in Ghana.

The GAP Project seeks to strengthen gender-based CSOs for sustained engagements with women Members of Parliament (MPs) and for better parliamentary advocacy towards the adoption of laws and policies that guarantee equality, non-discrimination,

gender equity, and the promotion of economic, social, political, reproductive and sexual rights of women and girls.

It aims to achieve this through regular townhall engagements between gender-based CSOs and women MPs in six regions of Ghana where women have been elected as MPs, with the aim of ensuring that the parliamentary agenda is considered through gender lenses.

The Project will facilitate follow-on actions that ensure the outcomes of these engagements are raised on the floor of Parliament.

According to Ms. Tawiah, it is important for gender-based CSOs to form relationships with all the parliamentary caucuses and argued stakeholders in the gender space are good when it comes to technical issues but lacking in technical knowledge.

"So both CSOs and the caucuses need to strengthen understanding of each other's process to make things happen," she said.

In his opening remarks Executive Director of PNA, Sammy Obeng, questioned how gender-based CSOs

can be connected to female MPs and to the Gender Committee of Parliament so that conversations and exchanges can be smoother so the engagements can be better.

According to him, women MPs who are expected to promote women's rights in gender equality are themselves targeted by colleague MPs and disclosed most Parliaments do not also have mechanisms to enable women to safely speak out.

"It is on this premise that we have met here this morning so that we can be able to discuss among ourselves how to weather the storm in the midst of very bleak statistics," he said.

In order to build the capacity of CSOs on happenings in Parliament to ensure they undertake evidence-based advocacy, daily sittings of Parliament will be monitored and summary reports covering all issues of interest to women, children and groups advocating for such courses will be published to keep parliamentary information readily available.

A parliamentary advocacy handbook and other publications to serve as legacy knowledge products will also be published as part of the Project.

By: Mariam Kanneh

Sierra Leone: New Law Gives Right to Women to Inherit and Own a Customary Land

The Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone has on Monday 8th August 2022 passed into law a Bill titled Customary Land Rights, the said Act eliminates discrimination of land ownership and gives women the right to inherit and own a customary land among others.

The Act gained lots of support

especially from women across the country. The benefits therein are 'The rights to own, hold, use, inherit, succeed to or deal with land under customary law shall be guaranteed to women and men equally,' Section 5 (1) of the customary land rights.

Sub section two provides: 'Any customary law that excludes,

limits or inhibits women from owning, holding, using, transferring, inheriting, succeeding to or dealing with land subject to customary law shall be void.'

It added that where a land is acquired by persons who are married or who may be considered to be in a domestic relationship according to law, the land shall be registered in the joint names of the spouses.

The Act also provides that in case of divorce, the land acquired during the marriage shall be shared fairly.

On the issue of family ownership, The new law also provides that 'Where any land subject to customary law is vested in the family as a unit the right to act on behalf of the family in relation to the land shall be guaranteed

equally to both male and female adult members of that family.'

It added 'where family land is to be bequeathed or sub-divided among the family, both male and female members of the family shall be treated equally and enjoy the same rights,' section six subsection three of the Act.

However, if a spouse of a deceased remarries outside the family it right ceased to benefit living or enjoying from the deceased's family land. This further explains that if a widow remarries outside her late husband's family she will not inherit or use the family landed properties including land and houses.

The law also ensures that all citizens be it native or non-native (creoles) have the right to acquire land throughout the

country.

The law further provides that chiefdom committees, also known as chiefdom councils, are charged with the responsibility of oversight of the land in the chiefdoms in the provinces, and both male and female land owning families have equal rights and privileges in respect of the families' land holding.

However, women are only entitled to 30 percent representation of the committee.

Parliament on the same day enacted into law for the establishment of the National Land Commission Act of 2022, for the Land Commission and other land administrative bodies to secure effective and holistic land administration and for other land related issues.



General News



President of the National Assembly of Cape Verde (the speaker of parliament), Austelino Correia

CAPE VERDEAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT LAUDS EFFORTS OF EMIGRANTS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The President of the National Assembly of Cape Verde (the speaker of parliament) Austelino Correia, has commended the efforts of emigrants towards the development of the country; saying "they have been very supportive, especially during all these crises and pandemic" and as such, are very important to the development of their country, Cape Verde.

According to him, Emigrants are important to a nation, as

they help their families overcome crises and also help in the development of that nation and therefore ought to be applauded for their efforts. He was quick to add that, however, they need the support of the officials and the people of their host country to be able to do even more.

President of the National Assembly of Cape Verde, Austelino Correia made the remarks when he presided over the opening ceremony of the 12th Meeting of Emigrants in the City of As-

somada, Santa Catarina de Santiago, which took place on, August 6th 2022.

More than a hundred Cape Verdean emigrants from various European countries participated in the meeting.

The President of the National Assembly says he recognizes the contribution of emigrants in the development process of the country and of Santa Catarina de Santiago, in particular. This contribution, from the point of view of Austelino Correia,

was much more visible and more intense during the initial moments of the pandemic, in Cape Verde, when Cape Verdeans in the diaspora showed solidarity with their families and the country, helping them to overcome the crisis.

For the President of the National Assembly, Cape Verdean emigrants are one of the greatest assets of the country's development, but also a source of pride given their gesture of love for the land, its image, integration and resilience.

Cape Verde's Court Of Auditors Promotes Gender Equality And Equity In Ecowas Sector Institutions

The Court of Auditors for Cape Verde, has organized a training and awareness workshop to promote gender equality and equity, in sector institutions in ECOWAS. This training and awareness creation aim to improve performance and also give visibility to women in the West African region.

In this line of thought, Joao da Cruz Silva announced the carrying out of an audit of State institutions with a focus on gender equality, an initiative that will be developed in partnership with the Sen-

galese Court of Auditors and whose results should still be known throughout the year.

The representative of the Secretariat of the Regional Committee for the Strengthening of Institutional Capacities in Gender Matters, of the organization of the ECOWAS Audit Courts (CREFIAP), also highlighted the importance of this training for access to knowledge and competence, which are necessary for empowerment of women in the exercise of their missions, at a decisive moment for Africa that "needs a new lease of life".

The opening act of the Training and Awareness workshop aimed at the Gender and Women Focal Points in the Directorates of the Higher Institutions for the Control of Public Finances in the Francophone-Sub-Saharan Africa universe was chaired by the Minister of State for the Family, Inclusion and Social Development, who advocated the need for an increased attention to be given to women's empowerment and inclusion in ECOWAS countries.

The city of Praia hosted the training and awareness workshop aimed at the Gender and Women Focal Points in the directorates

of the Superior Institutions for the Control of Public Finances in the Francophone-Sub-Saharan Africa universe, an organization that Cape Verde forms part of.

This initiative aims to improve performance and give visibility to women in the West African region in the exercise of their functions. The training, which run until the 12th of August this year, is an objective considered "very important" by the president of the Cape Verde Court of Auditors to put an end to the "sexist discrimination" that the leader considers to be the rule in the institutions in question.

MAYOR OF GUINEA-BISSAU SUSPENDED OVER ALLEGED CORRUPTION CHARGES

The government of Guinea-Bissau has suspended the Mayor of the capital Bissau in the person of Luis Ntchama, for alleged corruption in a land sale and failure to pay employee pensions of officials.

Mayor Luis Ntchama had been

in office since April 2021. He is a member of the Social Renewal Party (PRS), a formation belonging to the presidential coalition whose leaders are in friction with the camp of the head of state Umaro Sissoco Embaló.

Ntchama is accused of "deliberate acts of corruption in the

distribution of public land, the non-payment of pensions to municipal workers" and "the unfair suspension" of municipal employees, according to an order by the Minister of Territorial Administration Fernando Gomes, dated Tuesday and consulted Wednesday by AFP.

The government decided to "sus-

pend him (The Mayor of Bissau) from all his duties as Mayor alongside two of his collaborators, his first deputy and the secretary-general of the municipal institution. Mr. Ntchama was replaced by Fernando Mendes, a member of a party belonging to the presidential camp.

The mayor of Bissau has since 1994, always been appointed by the government and none other.



President of Guinea-Bissau Umaro Sissoco Embaló

The Government of Guinea-Bissau has been accused of pursuing a deliberate mission to suppress press freedom, as they attack Radio Stations from operating and making almost all the 79 Radio Stations operating in the country to close down. This is said to have greatly affected these journalists as their freedom of expression is being suppressed.

Report has it that dozens of radio stations have been shut down and broadcasters have been attacked. Journalists fear that freedom of information in the West African nation is on

ALLEGED CRACKDOWN ON PRESS FREEDOM IN GUINEA-BISSAU ...As 79 Radio Stations Shut Down

a slippery slope. Is Guinea-Bissau's media freedom eroding?

Guinea-Bissau's government closed 79 radio stations nationwide in April after the expiry of a last-minute 72-hour deadline to pay license fees. This was a move by the government to close down these radio stations into spreading information that may come out as an attack on the Government or Misinformation. All these

radio stations and civil societies fell silent, that is; no information, no news — just dead air.

Only 9 out of 88 registered radio stations appeared at the Communications Ministry to renew their licenses. Others have since paid their fees; however, their broadcasts are still suspended while they wait for the ministry to ensure their equipment is still operating within the terms of their license.

Meanwhile, those that continue to broadcast without a valid license could face up to three years in prison. Guinea-Bissau's journalists are actually in despair and this has left a black hole for information in the West African country to be getting bigger.

Journalists fear it's a deliberate move by the government to suppress their voices since the charges requested by the government were absurd and hence,

have no option than to shut down.

Augusto Mario da Silva, president of the Guinean League for Human Rights (LGDH), accused the government of making the "final push" to eliminate the democratic rule of law and interfere in the editorial work of the media. In his view, "there is no protection of the public interest underlying the decision to forcibly close radio stations."

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

MAIDEN AFRICAN OPEN PARLIAMENT INDEX ALREADY MAKING IMPACT AND INFLUENCING REFORMS

By: Clement Akoloh

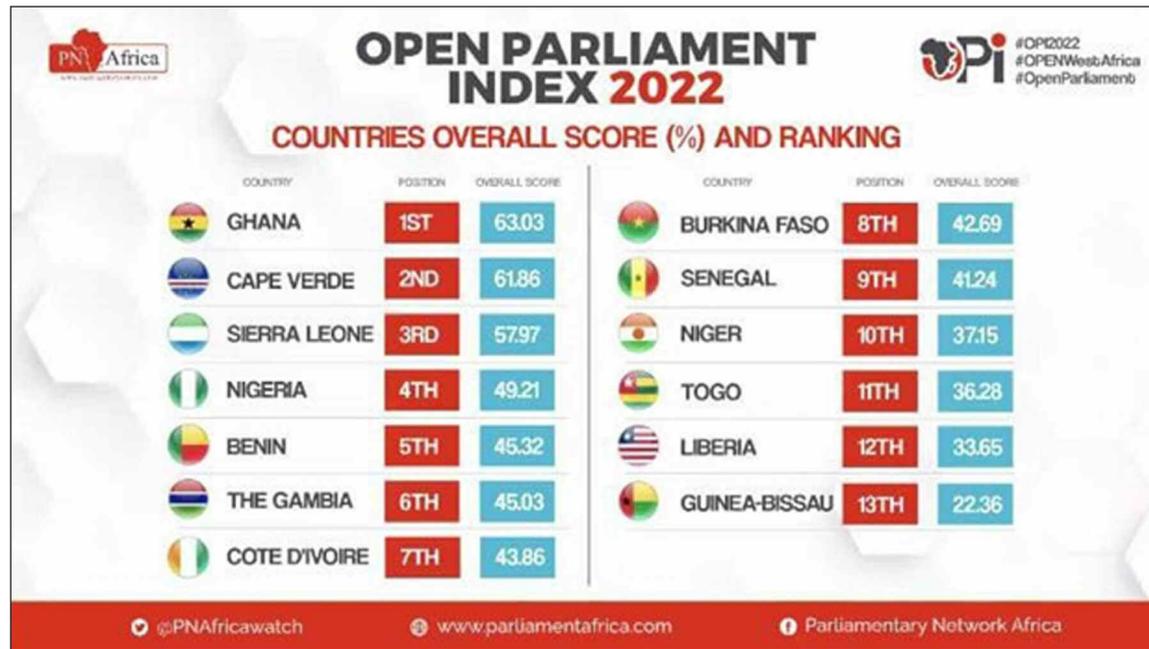
Under the auspices of the Africa Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations Network (APMON), Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) launched the maiden edition of the Africa Open Parliament Index (OPI) on Wednesday, 20th July, 2022, in Accra under the distinguished patronage of the RT. Hon. Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Alban Sumana Bagbin.

Barely some days after the launch of the OPI Index which assessed 13 out of the 15 West African countries and ranked them according to their level of Openness among others, it has already begun to influence some Parliaments in the sub-region to improve on their ranking in the next publication of the index in two years' time.

The Speaker of the Sierra Leonean Parliament, Dr. Abass Bundu, whose Parliament placed third among the most open Parliaments in West Africa, has vowed to ensure that his country tops the next index when it is released in 2024. Making a statement in the Well of Parliament, Dr. Abass Bundu, recognized the efforts of all partners, commended the OPI ranking, and assured Sierra Leone would take the first position in the next report.

The Country Representative of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Sierra Leone, Alusine Diamond-Suma is on record to have presented the OPI index to key parliamentary heads including the Clerk of Parliament in a meeting held in Freetown, after the release to ensure that the gains made over the years are maintained, while frantic efforts are made to avoid the shortcomings. The Open Parliament Index objectively seeks to strengthen Parliamentary Institutions towards the advancement of parliamentary openness across national, subnational and regional Parliaments.

It is also to provide a standard



system for accessing Parliaments across Africa using the three pillars of open Parliament including – Transparency, Civic participation and Public Accountability.

Ghana scored a total of 63.03% to emerge as the most open Parliament in West Africa. It was followed closely by Cape Verde (61.86%) and Sierra Leone (57.97%) in that order. The fourth and fifth positions went to Nigeria (49.21%) and Benin (45.32%) respectively. The Gambia (45.03%); Cote D'Ivoire (43.86%); Burkina Faso (42.69%); Senegal (41.24%) and Niger (37.15%) complete the list of ten respectively. Togo (36.26%), Liberia (33.65%) and Guinea-Bissau (22.36%) were at the base of the table following the order respectively.

The Africa OPI is a joint effort with the APMON Working Group, which is made up of renowned parliamentary monitoring organizations in Africa namely, Mzalendo Trust (Kenya), Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Parliamentary Monitoring Group (South Africa), Africa Parliamentary Press Network (APPN), and the Pan African Parliament Civil Society Forum which is coordinated by the Center for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria. It also received technical support from Directorio Legislativo, an Argentina-based or-

ganization which co-founded the Latin America Legislative Transparency Index and Network about a decade ago.

The Open Parliament Index (OPI) which uses the three criteria of Open Parliament: Transparency, Civic Participation and Public Accountability, to assess Parliaments across Africa would be subsequently released every

to achieving parliamentary openness and to co-create reforms that will strengthen the capacity of parliaments to enhance their openness.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SCORE SHEET
On the Public Accountability score sheet of the Index, Cape Verde and Sierra Leone topped



two years.

This criterion has been chosen considering the standards of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Principles of Parliamentary Openness and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Indicators for Democratic Parliaments.

The Index will enable civil society to work together with national and regional parliaments to identify systemic challenges

the chart with a score of 15.68% appease. Closely followed by Ghana (14.32%); Nigeria and Togo sharing same score of (10.32%); while Cote D'Ivoire and Senegal also share same score (8.86%). The rest are The Gambia (8.18%); Burkina Faso (7.50%); Liberia (6.82%); Benin (6.14%); Niger (4.77%); and Guinea Bissau (1.36%).

CIVIC PARTICIPATION SCORE SHEET

On the Civic Participation score sheet, Cape Verde again came on top with a score of (23.33%); followed by Ghana (21.00%); Sierra Leone (20.42%); Nigeria (18.08%); and Benin (16.33%). The others are: Senegal (16.33%); Burkina Faso (15.75%); Cote D'Ivoire (14.58%); The Gambia (14.00%); Niger (13.42%); Togo (10.50%); Liberia (9.33%); and Guinea Bissau (9.33%).

The rationale for the Index includes: Provide minimum standards to assess the level of parliamentary openness across African national and regional legislative institutions.

Empower parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) and Parliaments to monitor the level of progress in enhancing the principles of open parliament; Document parliamentary best practices towards supporting parliaments to be more open; and Leverage the partnership between civil society and parliaments to co-create parliamentary reforms, policies and action plans that strengthen institutions of parliaments to effectively perform their role of oversight, law-making and representation.



Elections

GAMBIA LAWMAKER CHAIRS PAP AFRICAN CAUCUS AND AFRICA PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE

News Desk

The industrious Gambian lawmaker Hon ALhagie Mbow, Member of Parliament for Upper Saloum has been flying high the flag of his country in many circles on the Parliamentary front on the continent. His leadership qualities led him to occupy some very important portfolios.

The Head of The Gambian delegation to the Pan African Parliament (PAP), Honourable Alhagie Mbow has been elected as Chairman of the West African Caucus. His tenure of office runs until 2025.

Hon. Mbow is supported has by a Vice Chairman from Benin and a Rapporteur from Sierra Leone.

The West African caucus is among five regional blocs working closely with the main PAP bureau where the president and four vice presidents spearhead the governance of the continent's consultative Parliament.

Hon Mbow had served as rapporteur of the Committee on Transport, Industry, Communication, Energy, and Science & Technology and later as the acting Chairman of the

Committee at the Pan-African Parliament.

The Gambian lawmaker was also nominated by the West African countries in 2021 to represent them on the Ad-hoc Committee of the Bureau Elections.

The West African caucus was chaired by a Ghanaian Member of Parliament, Hon. Cynthia who was recalled for a ministerial position after which a Gambia former lawmaker, Hon. Sidia Jatta took as an acting Chairman.

Meanwhile the Gambian lawmaker was nominated as the Deputy Chairperson of the Africa Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (APNIG) when it was launched in Lilongwe, Malawi during the opening of the Africa Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) on Tuesday 19th July 2022.

The network is co-founded by Gambian lawmaker Hon ALhagie Mbow, Member for Upper Saloum who



Gambian lawmaker Hon ALhagie Mbow, Member of Parliament for Upper Saloum (middle)

vergence of twenty-eight parliamentarians from across the African continent for the launch of the APNIG which started with an inaugural two-day digital policy symposium.

The African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance is dedicated to strengthening parliamentarians' role in digital development in the continent.

Hon Mbow, Deputy Chairman of APNIG said that parliamentarians have recognised digital challenges as a cross-border issue that should be responded to.

“Collectively, we have agreed to immediately start with implementing pertinent actions towards inclusive digital development in Africa such as capacity building for APNIG members to enable them to engage effectively in internet governance issues that impact the national level”, he said.

The network has also identified governance for an open and unfragmented Internet, the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa and data governance including data protection.



serves as the Vice Chairperson of the network.

Hon. Neema Lugangira of Tanzania was nominated as Chairperson and Hon Sam George, a Member of Parliament from Ghana as Secretary of the network.

The AfIGF forum which brings together multiple stakeholders in the internet ecosystem around the globe along with youth internet governance advocates and enthusiasts will wrap up on Thursday.

Hon Almameh Gibba of Foni Kansala and Hon Birom J Sowe of Niamina West are among the con-



The African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance is dedicated to strengthening parliamentarians' role in digital development in the continent

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

GHANA'S PARLIAMENT TOPPED 13 PARLIAMENTS IN WEST AFRICA

IN THE MAIDEN AFRICAN OPEN PARLIAMENT INDEX (OPI) REPORT

By: Vincent Amenuveve & Jemima Okang Addae

With an overall score of 63.03 per cent based on three indicators of Open Parliament — transparency, civic participation and public accountability, the country beat its closest rival Cape Verde, which scored 61.86 per cent and Sierra Leone, that scored 57.97 per cent.

According to the report launched in Accra, Ghana scored lowest on public accountability with 14.32 per cent out of 30 per cent while it scored highest in the transparency category with 27.71 per cent out of the 35 per cent allotted to that category. It scored 21 per cent for civic participation out of 35 per cent total scores for that area.

Context

The OPI is a mechanism put in place to assess Parliaments across

Africa using the three criteria of Open Parliament: Transparency; Civic Participation and Public Accountability.

This criterion has been chosen considering the standards of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Principles of Parliamentary Openness and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Indicators for Democratic Parliaments.

Other countries

At the bottom three are Togo with an overall score of 36.28 per cent, Liberia with an overall score of 33.65 per cent and lastly Guinea Bissau with 22.36 per cent as the overall score.

The rest of the countries that were assessed were Nigeria fourth, with a score of 49.21 per cent, Benin fifth with 45.32 per cent, and The Gambia sixth with 45.03 per cent.

The others are Cote d'Ivoire, seventh with 43.86 per cent score, Burkina Faso eighth with 42.69 per cent as the score.

Senegal and Niger both placed ninth and 10th respectively with a score of 41.24 per cent and 37.15 per cent.

Presentation

Giving highlights of the report at the event, the Executive Director of Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica), Sammy Obeng, observed that the OPI would enable civil society to work together with national and regional parliaments to identify systemic challenges to achieving parliamentary openness and create reforms to enhance openness.

"The Index would also measure the level of openness across two regional legislative bodies — the ECOWAS and Pan-African Parliaments — however, they will not be ranked together with the national parliaments," he noted.

Ghana's Parliament

In a speech read on his behalf by the first Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Joseph Osei-Owusu, the Speaker of Parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, noted that "the

public was losing faith in the legislature and politicians as their interests were being sacrificed for personal gains".

He said the OPI report would challenge African Parliaments to respond to the collective call and aspirations of the people.

Mr Bagbin said the institutionalization of the public hearings of the Public Account Committee (PAC) had brought progress in Parliament's accountability and oversight responsibilities.

"Parliament is unique in being the only institution with a political mandate from the people to monitor the management of the state by the government," he added.

Engage citizenry

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) Member of Parliament for North Tongu, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, urged PNAfrica and its partners to engage the people on the ground to incorporate their views into the report.

ECOWAS Leadership Failure; Cause of Repeated Military Coups in West Africa - Dr. Kingsley Nyarko

By: Clement Akoloh

The West African region has been inundated with political upheavals, intra-state conflicts, civil wars, military coups and take overs with Ghana's neighboring country, Burkina Faso as the sub-region's latest destination of military coups in a spate of two years.

Just across the isle in Sierra Leone, there are disturbing news of political unrest amidst a curfew with anti-government protests with demonstrations over high cost of living turned deadly and has already claimed several innocent lives.

The political temperature in another West African country Senegal, is also heating up where rumors are rife that President Macky Sall's Government is contemplating a move to amend the constitution to run for a third term in Office as President.

This sorry state of affairs in the subregion has led many to raise concerns about the lackluster approach of the leadership of the subregion to offering proactive interventions to some of the budding problems before they festered into fully fledged conflicts or crisis beyond control.

According to one of Ghana's promising Member of Parliament for Kwadaso in the Ashanti region, Dr. Kingsley Nyarko, the present state of affairs in the sub-region suggests that the Leadership of the sub-regional body, ECOWAS has been sleeping on duty in ensuring a good balance between good governance, economic development and the abuse of fundamental human rights of the citizenry.

The first time MP has therefore called on Ghana to leverage the overwhelming support she garnered to be elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the fourth time in 60 years, to bring sanity into the sub-region.

"This privilege must afford us

preventive measures to enforce rule of law, respect for economic and human rights and end the impunity of political leaders who seek to amend their national constitutions or manipulate electoral laws for their political and parochial gains.

"Mr. Speaker, it is fair to suggest that the failure of ECOWAS leadership to take proactive measures in handling errant leaders has contributed to the recurring wave of new coups in the sub-region," he observed.

Dr. Kingsley Nyarko further suggested that Ghana's overwhelming endorsement as an agent for peace and security in the subregion, owing to her contribution to transitioning countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau from war to democratic and constitutional rule, should be leveraged to set conditions for retaining ECOWAS membership.

He said, "Ghana must leverage on this enviable recognition and in harmony with regional treaties

and other international standards to promote effective democratic principles and rule of law as a prerequisite for retaining membership and in so doing advance measures to end human rights violations and abuses in several member states."

The Member of Parliament made these observations on the Floor of Ghana's Parliament in a statement dubbed: "Ghana's Presence on the United Nations Security Council: Its Prospects in Promoting Peace and Security within the Sub-region."

Having served on the Council for the terms 1962-1963, 1986-1987, and 2006-2007, Ghana will serve a two-year term on the UN Security Council from January 2022 to December 2023 as she makes a return after 15 years.

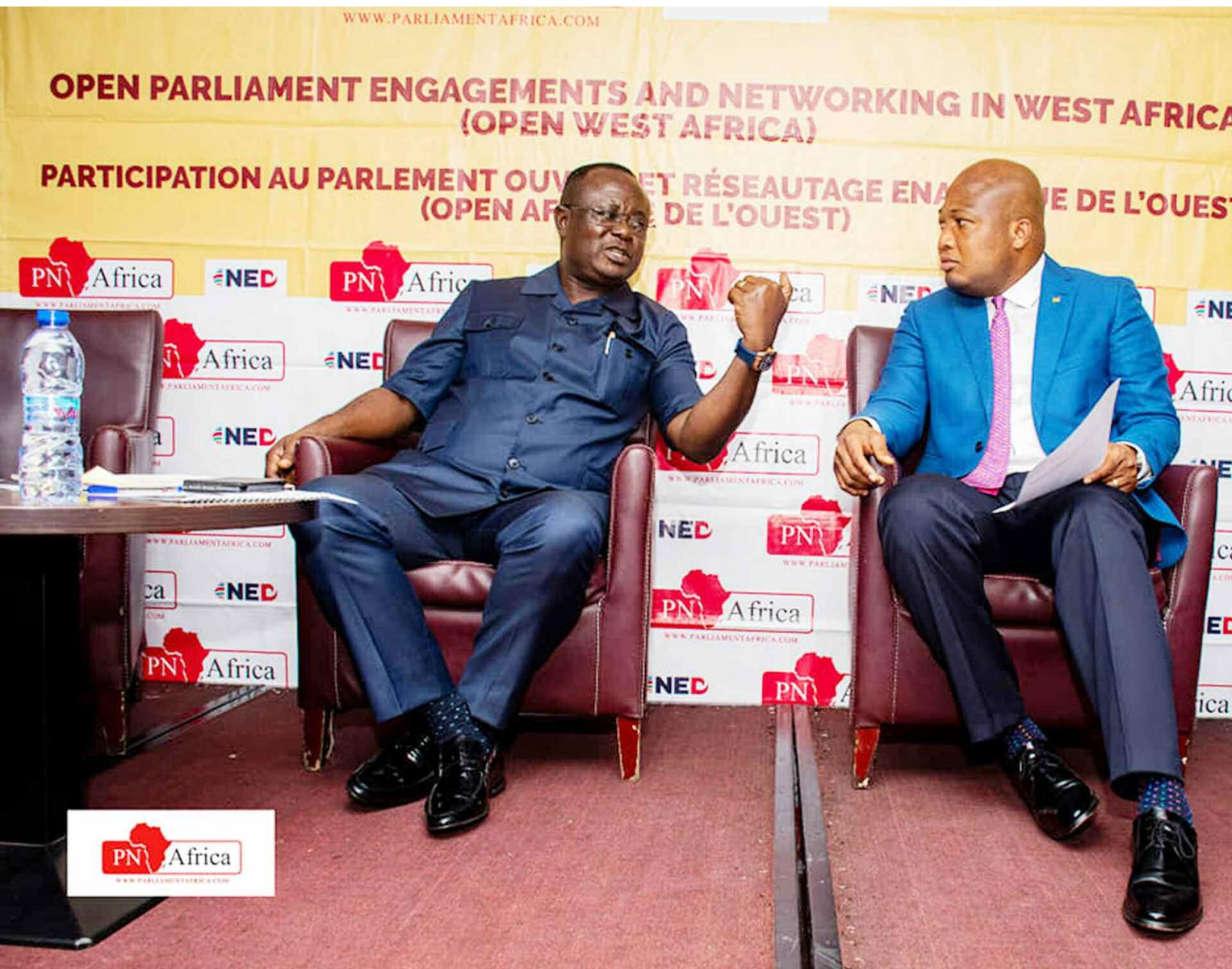
Ghana was admitted to the Security Council together with other four new Member States Elected to hold a non-permanent seat on the Council, including Albanian, Brazil, Gabon, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



Member of Parliament for Kwadaso Constituency, Ashanti Region-Ghana, Dr. Kingsley Nyarko

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

African Open Parliament Index Launched in Accra



First Deputy Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Hon. Joseph Osei Owusu (Left) and Member of Parliament for North Tongu Constituency, Hon. Okudzeto Ablakwa at the Open Parliament Index Launch in Accra-Ghana

By: Deborah Dzivenu

The maiden edition of the Africa Open Parliament Index was launched in Accra-Ghana in a formal ceremony which assembled Parliamentary Monitoring Civil Society Organizations, politicians and representatives of national Parliaments across the 15 West African countries as well as other

Parliaments on the continent and the media.

The Africa OPI is a joint initiative with the APMON Working Group, which is made up of renowned parliamentary monitoring organizations in Africa, including the Mzalendo Trust (Kenya), Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Parliamentary Monitoring Group (South Africa), Africa Parliamentary Press Network (APPN), and the Pan African Parliament Civil Society Forum which is coordinated

by the Center for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. Additionally, Directorio Legislativo, an Argentinean group that was a co-founder of the Latin American Legislative Transparency Index and Network roughly ten years ago, provided technical assistance.

The Open Parliament Index objectively seeks to strengthen Parliamentary Institutions towards the advancement of parliamentary openness across national, subnational and regional Parliaments.



...it is sad to note that the public is losing faith in the legislature and politicians in general...

...the Open Parliament Index initiative is very necessary and as it will go a long way to challenge African Parliaments to respond to the collective call of the people.

It is also to provide a standard system for accessing Parliaments across Africa using the three pillars of open Parliament including – Transparency, Civic participation and Public Accountability.

Ghana scored a total of 63.03% to emerge as the most open Parliament in West Africa. It was

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

followed closely by Cape Verde (61.86%) and Serra Leone (57.97%) in that order. Togo (36.26%), Liberia (33.65) and Guinea-Bissau (22.36%) were at the base of the table respectively.

The First Deputy Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Joseph Osei Owusu who welcomed the initiative said legislative representation is about representing and protecting the collective hope and aspirations of the citizenry by Parliament which is clothed with enough powers to make laws that could save the intended purpose.

Delivering the key note address on behalf of Speaker Alban Bagbin, Mr. Osei Owusu said, it is sad to note that the public is losing faith in the legislature and politicians in general. He said the citizens believe their collective interest is being sacrificed for personal gains.

He said the Open Parliament Index initiative is very necessary and as it will go a long way to challenge African Parliaments to respond to the collective call of the people.

Considering objectives of the open Parliament Index, Mr. Osei Owusu was of a strong view that Ghana's Parliament is not faring badly at all.

The Member of Parliament for the North Tongu Constituency, Okudzeto Ablakwa who represented the Minority group in the Ghanaian Parliament, observed that coming up with this index is an innovative way of shoring up some of the weak Parliaments on the continent to be apar with some of the best in the world.

In her remark, a Member of the working Group of the African Parliament Monitoring Organization (PMO) Network and Senior Program Officer at CDD-Ghana, Regina Oforiwa Amanfo-Tetteh said Parliament alone cannot address its short falls hence the need for support from State and non-State actor organizations such as Civic Society Organi-



From Left To Right: Dr. Amanda Coffie - Board Member - PN Africa, First Deputy Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Hon. Joseph Osei Owusu, Member of Parliament for North Tongu Constituency, Hon. Okudzeto Ablakwa and Executive Director of PNAfrica, Sammy Obeng

zation (CSOs) to assist.

She maintained that the work of PMO is of essence because countries in Africa are experiencing significant democratic backlash as several remarkable democratic progress are eroding.

She said the only arm of government that suffers when there is democratic interaction is Parliament, and therefore, it is important for Parliament as a principal stakeholder to show inherent interest in monitoring and accessing its own performance and ensuring that, it is meeting constitutional obligations and expectations of the public, Civic Society and the private sector.

She called on Parliaments in West Africa to reflect on their performance and improve where necessary to bring maximum efficiency to the work of the legislature.

The Executive Director of the Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) Sammy Obeng who made the presentation on the index, indicated that even though the index is meant for the whole Africa, the maiden index focused on only West Africa as a pilot and the success of it has given the green light

for a fully blown OPI Index on the whole continent in the next edition.

He emphasized the need for Parliaments to endeavor to be open and to proactively disclose information to the public in order to cure several misconceptions about the institution in order to win the confidence of the people in Parliament and democracy at large.

...even though the index is meant for the whole Africa, the maiden index focused on only West Africa as a pilot and the success of it has given the green light for a fully blown OPI Index on the whole continent in the next edition.



Executive Director of the Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica), Sammy Obeng making a presentation on the Index

The Africa OPI is a joint initiative with the APMON Working Group, made up of renowned parliamentary monitoring organizations in Africa, including the Mzalendo Trust (Kenya), Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Parliamentary Monitoring Group (South Africa), Africa Parliamentary Press Network (APPN), and the Pan African Parliament Civil Society Forum. Additionally, technical assistance was provided by Directorio Legislativo, an Argentinean group that was a co-founder of the Latin American Legislative Transparency Index and Network.

Gender, Children and Social Welfare

GENDER ADVOCACY TO PARLIAMENT PROJECT INITIATED TO SUPPORT FEMALE MPS

By: Clement Akoloh

Female MPs in Ghana facing lots of challenges and therefore need support to deliver on mandate.

Women make up the majority of the Ghanaian population, yet their voices are underrepresented. Parliament, as the House of Representation of the people, epitomises this unfortunate situation with less than 15% of MPs being women (40 out of a 275 Member Parliament), and fewer issues around women and girls coming up for discussion there.

Although gender-based CSOs have a recognized role in social change and political dialogue, there is no sustained platform to get them closer to Parliament so they can play active roles in the laws and policies making processes in this area.

This Project which is being funded by the French Embassy in Ghana, seeks to create platforms for such regular engagements and to strengthening CSOs for better



Gender Advocates Esther and Shamima Moslem @GAP Inception Meeting

parliamentary advocacy.

In the pursuit of this agenda, the Gender Advocacy to Parliament (GAP) project was launched in Accra by the Parliamentary Network Africa (PN Africa), a civil society organisation working to ensure Parliamentary Openness across the African sub-region.

Speaking at the inception meeting, the Executive Director of *PNAfrica*, Sammy Obeng, emphasized the need for gender-based CSOs in Ghana to work cooperatively with the Gender Committee of Parliament and other female Members of Parliament (MPs) for effective advocacy outcomes.

He said even though female MPs are naturally expected to promote women's rights and gender equality among others, most Parliaments do not have the mechanisms that would enable women to speak out.

"It is on this premise that we have met here this morning so that we

can be able to discuss among ourselves how to weather the storm in the midst of very bleak statistics," Obeng stated. He said this at an inception meeting of a project



Executive Director of PNAfrica, Sammy Obeng at the GAP Inception Meeting

dubbed "Gender Advocacy to Parliament (GAP)" being implemented by PN Africa with support from the French Embassy.



Group Photo with Female MPs @ GAP Inception meeting

The project seeks to strengthen gender-based CSOs for sustained engagements with female MPs, and for better parliamentary advocacy towards the adoption of laws and policies that guarantee equality, non-discrimination, gender equity, and the promotion of economic, social, political, reproductive and sexual rights of women and girls.

This it will achieve through regular townhall engagements between gender-based CSOs and women MPs in six regions of Ghana which have elected female MPs, with the objective of ensuring that the parliamentary agenda is considered with gender issues in mind.

The Project will also facilitate follow-on actions that would

The project seeks to strengthen gender-based CSOs for sustained engagements with female MPs, and for better parliamentary advocacy towards the adoption of laws and policies that guarantee equality, non-discrimination, gender equity, and the promotion of economic, social, political, reproductive and sexual rights of women and girls.

ensure that the outcomes of these townhall meetings are raised on the floor of Parliament.

"In order to build the capacity of CSOs on happenings in Parliament to ensure that they undertake evidence-based advocacy, daily sittings of the Legislature will be monitored and summary reports covering all issues that are of interest to women, children and groups advocating for such courses will be published to keep parliamentary information readily available.

"A parliamentary advocacy handbook and other publications to serve as legacy knowledge products will also be published as part of the Project," stated Cynthia Dzudzor who is the Head of communications and advocacy for *PN Africa*.

Privileges and Ethics

GHANA: SPEAKER YET TO SETTLE DUST ON FATE OF SARAH ADWOA SAFO FOR ABSENTING HERSELF FROM PARLIAMENT

By: Clement Akoloh

The dust is yet to settle on one of Ghana's few female Members of Parliament who has been caught in the web of the country's constitutional provision which does not permit Members of Parliament to absent themselves from Parliamentary duties beyond fifteen sittings within a meeting of Parliament without obtaining permission from the Speaker of Parliament.

The Rt. Hon. Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Alban Sumana Bagbin, has put on ice, the final decision on the consequences of her action until the House resumes sitting in October, after the House failed to agree on the right procedure to adopt to accommodate the recommendations of the Privileges Committee on her case.

By a Majority decision, the Privileges Committee of Parliament which sat on the referral of her case on the issue of Parliamentary absenteeism including two other male MPs, recommended that her seat be declared vacant pending a new bye election to replace her.

The beleaguered Member of Parliament for the Dome Kwabenya constituency, Sarah Adwoa Safo, who also doubled as the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection until her appointment was revoked by the President just a couple of weeks ago, has not

been seen in Parliament for the whole of the current second session of the 8th Parliament of the Fourth Republic.

Media reports have it that she abandoned her duty to go and take care of some family duties in the United States of America. However, the nature of that family business has not been fully disclosed to the Ghanaian public yet.

Ahead of the adjournment of Parliament sine die in July 2022, the Majority Leader, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu drew the House's attentions to the Privileges Committee's report on Sarah Adwoa Safo.

The Majority Leader had wanted the House to adopt the report and to take a decision on the fate of the MP. But his request was objected to by the Minority Leader, Haruna Iddrisu, who insisted that the entire 275 member House would have to take the decision on the fate on the MP and not just a few members of the Privileges Committee or the Speaker.

The Committee has delivered a split decision on the fate of the Dome-Kwabenya MP, who until her predicament, was one of the shining examples of young female legislators blazing the trail in Parliament and rubbing shoulders with their male counterparts. She rose to become the country's first female Deputy Majority Leader before she was later appointed by President Akufo Addo as Minister.

The Privileges Committee, led by the First Deputy Speaker, Joseph Osei Owusu, failed to achieve a consensus in its recommendations on whether absentsing herself for more than the mandatory 15 days without permission warrants her seat being declared vacant.

The Majority group on the Committee made up of MPs from the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP), according to the report, wanted the seat of their colleague party member declared vacant without delay in line with stated constitutional provisions.

It maintains that Sarah Adwoa Safo failed to take advantage of the numerous opportunities offered her to explain her absence without leave. The Majority MPs on the committee cited Article 97 (1) (c) of the 1992 Constitution and the Court of Appeal decision in the case of Professor Stephen Kwaku Asare v the Attorney General & 3 Others, in this regard. Portions of the report read: "... The majority was of the view that Hon Sarah Adwoa Safo failed to take advantage of the numerous opportunities and facilities offered her to provide reasonable explanation to the Committee with regard to her absence without leave".

On the other hand, the Minority MPs on the committee, however, argued that according to the principle of natural justice, the seat should not be declared vacant because Adwoa Safo did not provide her side of the issue to the com-

mittee.

The committee however determined that the excuse from her two other male colleagues, Kennedy Agyepong and Henry Quartey, for absentsing themselves were reasonable. They took advantage of the opportunity to appear before the Committee to offer reasons for their absence.

In a Facebook post on Sunday, 17 July 2022, congratulating the newly-elected national executives of the NPP, the Dome Kwabenya MP reiterated that despite the "clear political hounding and vendetta by certain elements within the party and parliament" against her, she has "never wavered in" her commitment to the ideals and creed of the NPP and the Akufo-Addo-led government.

According to the Dome Kwabenya MP, during her time as Deputy Majority Leader in Parliament and Leader of the Women's Caucus, she, "together with the leadership of the Majority, did our very best to protect a colleague female Member of Parliament who had to be away in London for close to two years to take care of family issues".

"We did this on compassionate grounds because it involved children and didn't go around making hue and cry about her absence".

"This is just one example of how we protected one of our own as leaders in parliament."

She however noted: "In the last



Member of Parliament for Dome Kwabenya constituency, Hon. Sarah Adwoa Safo

few months that I have been away from official duties albeit not intentionally, I have become a victim of a sustained political witch-hunt by certain elements in the NPP and in parliament to achieve their own parochial goals".

"This has left me asking myself if this is happening because I am a woman, who, for just this one time, needed some time off to deal with a few personal issues which were too dear to share with the larger public."

She continued: "As a member of the party, I have served with utmost diligence (both in opposition and in government) and have at all times put the fortunes of my family at the disposal of the party."

She added: "At no point in time have myself nor my family withheld anything of ours from our great party, yet today, I am conveniently being called a traitor and all manner of names with several schemes being put to play and employed to oust me from my position as MP and minister."

By: Mariam Kanneh

Sierra Leone Parliament Enacts New Mining Law

Parliament of Sierra Leone has enacted into law the Mines and Mineral Development Act of 2022 that seeks to improve provisions for the socio-economic benefit of the country.

The new law also geared towards the facilitation of transparent

and accountable management of mineral sector in accordance with international best practice. The law that was passed into law on Tuesday 9th August, 2022, also caters for improved employment and employment practices in the mineral sector.

After the approval of the new law, the Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, Musa Tim-

othy Kabba, described it as a historic day for the mining sector because it is a guiding document that regulate activities of investment in the sector, protect the environment, promote the interest of the people in the country.

He said the law is developmental because government now recognises the significant role mines and minerals contribute to the national development to the country.

He explained the difference the new law will create, he said 13 years down the line since the enactment of the old law in 2009, a lot has changed in the mining sector. Mentioning the Global event like changes in the energy landscape, disruption of the COVID-19, logistics and supply chain, the emerging of

new minerals.

He said it also addresses the new phenomenon in the governance system which he described as Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), that tries to promote women's issues, increase revenue and give more resources to the people that are directly affected by mining activities as well as protecting the environment.

According to him, it also geared towards increasing citizen's participation in the mining sector as well as making mining become the centre to the development of the country.

In the same Law, the Parliament has regulated artisanal mining wherein only citizens of Sierra Leone are allowed to engage in

artisanal mining and the act of any persons who are not citizens engaging in the it has been criminalised. The Minister also added that the law also provides for the use of machinery that will increase more production as well as preventing illicit and illegal mining where they are not allowed to use those machines.

He said the use of dredge in areas of illicit and illegal in machines he said are 'contrary to law is therefore punishable by law'. He noted that the new law prescribed through in attendant and accompanying the upcoming regulations that will prescribe for the penalty on defaulters. He said this is because while extracting the minerals it is the



Gender, Children and Social Welfare

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IS CRITICAL TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - PAP VP DOS PASSOS



PAP Vice President, Hon. Lucia Dos Passos

By: Pan African Parliament

The National Assembly of Cabo Verde played host to the Pan-African Parliament's celebrations of the Pan-African Women's Day, led by third Vice President Hon. Lucia Dos Passos.

On the occasion of an engagement with parliamentarians, government officials, civil society organisations, diplomatic corps and immigrant communities, PAP's Vice President underscored that African Union member states have demonstrated political will and commitment to promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and

women's rights.

She further highlighted how steps have been taken throughout the last decade to elevate the status of women through legal and constitutional means, institutional gender mechanisms as well as creating conducive environments for women to realize their potential.

According to Hon. Dos Passos, the focus of the PAP as a next step is to ensure that financial inclusion of women is prioritized and regarded as a pathway to sustainable development.

"African women and girls must be fully integrated into all spheres of human endeavor, not only as beneficiaries of equal opportunities, but as powerful shapers of social and economic development. As Africa enters the new African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion of African Women 2020-2030, AU Member States have to take appropriate action to fully and efficiently implement their commitments to advance the welfare of women in the continent and consolidate the gains realized during the 2010-2020. The PAP will be monitoring the realization of these commitments," said Hon. Dos Passos.

The event addressed by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Cabo Verde as well as the Minister of Family Affairs, Inclusion and Social development, centered around the theme: 'Towards the African Women's Decade: Realizing Women's Human Capital through accelerated social and economic development, addressing the scourge of violence, food insecurity and good nutrition on the African continent'.



Community Parliament's Delocalized Meeting Takes Off in Banjul

The Community Parliament will start a five days delocalised meeting in the Gambia Banjul from, Tuesday, August 16 to 20 2022 on the theme, "Community texts relating to peace, security, democracy and good governance: challenges in their implementation and the oversight role of ECOWAS Parliament".

Three of the fourteen Standing Committees of the Parliament, comprising the following: Committees on Political Affairs, Peace, Security and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) / Legal affairs and human rights / Social Affairs, Gender and Women Empowerment, constitute the Joint Committee that will be meeting.

According to a statement released by the Communications Division of the Parliament, the main objective of the meeting is to create an opportunity for the Members of the Joint Committee to acquaint themselves with and take ownership of the

ECOWAS texts on peace and security, democracy and good governance as well as identify the best mechanism for oversight for their effective implementation within Member States.

Since its creation on 28 May, 1975, ECOWAS has adopted a significant number of Texts aimed at preventing, managing and/or settling conflicts within the Community, as well as maintaining and promoting peace

and regional security.

However, attempts to effectively implement these Community Texts have thrown up, several apparent challenges. Consequently, the impact of these texts on improving the security and good governance climate and environment within the ECOWAS region, remains insufficiently evident.

It is therefore within this context

that the Joint Committee will meet to reflect on the role of parliamentary oversight in the effective implementation of the ECOWAS texts on Peace, Security, Democracy and Good Governance.

The ECOWAS Parliament is composed of 115 seats. Each Member State is allotted a guaranteed minimum of five seats. The remaining forty seats are distributed in proportion to the

population of each country.

Consequently, in total, Nigeria has 35 seats, followed by Ghana, with eight seats and Côte d'Ivoire, with seven seats.

Others are Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal which are allotted six seats each, whereas Benin, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo have five seats each.



Hon. Snowe Sall



Hon. Tunkara Billay, Majority Leader of Gambian Parliament

Corruption

PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT PARTICIPATES IN ANTI-CORRUPTION PARLIAMENTARY FORUM IN BENIN

The First Vice-President of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), Hon. Prof. Massouda Mohamed Laghdaf represented the PAP in Cotonou, Benin where she took part in the 8th Biennial General Meeting on anti-corruption, organized by the African Parliamentarians' Network Against Corruption (APNAC).

The four-day anti-corruption conference was held under the theme: "Creating Synergies for an Efficient Fight against Corruption-the Role of Parliament and Parliamentarians." The gathering in Cotonou centered around various issues including achievements, challenges and lessons learned in the fight against corruption by regional and national chapters giving reports on corruption fights in their respective countries and sharing knowledge and experience.

In her remarks, on behalf of the

President of the PAP, Hon. Prof. Laghdaf described corruption as an obstacle to development in Africa. She called on Parliamentarians to use their oversight and control powers over governmental actions intensify the fight against corruption. Hon. Prof. Laghdaf further pledged the PAP's resolve to continue working with the different stakeholders to promote transparency and good governance.

"For its part, the Pan-African Parliament pledged to work more closely with the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption to eliminate this phenomenon by constantly including issues related to the fight against corruption in its agenda. These actions lead to periodic annual meetings that bring together all the organs of the PAP to discuss anti-corruption measures in Africa," said Hon. Prof. Laghdaf.

The APNAC is an organization which aims to coordinate, involve

and strengthen the capacities of African parliamentarians to fight corruption and promote good governance. Since its formation in 1999 in Kampala, Uganda, APNAC has promoted accountability, transparency, and public participation in the processes of government, as the best ways to control corruption. APNAC's mandate is promoted by its presence throughout the Eastern, Southern, and Western regions of Africa, via its National Chapters, and by working with other anti-corruption bodies worldwide.

As the supreme parliamentary assembly on the continent, the PAP was invited to actively participate in the conference in line with its mandate to encourage good governance, transparency and accountability in the Member States, while facilitating cooperation among Regional Economic Communities and their Parliamentary fora.

APNAC's 8th Biennial General



Hon. Prof Massouda Mohamed Laghdaf

Meeting included the elections of new members of the APNAC Board as the meeting brought together the different national sections, countries or regions without national sections, as well as strategic partners, in order to forge a path toward the strengthening and institutionalization of the Network.

back to full functionality, we require all the resources we can muster to make up for lost time."

Specifically, the President of the PAP has requested additional resources to enable the Bureau to effectively carry out its mandate for the 2022 operational year; and a review of the 2023 draft Operational Budget to allow the PAP to effectively carry out its mandate for the 2023 operational year.

H.E Mrs Aissata Tall Sall, Chairperson of the Executive Council and Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the appeal by the President of PAP and indicated that the Council would consider the request in due course. She also reiterated the commitment to accompany the transformation of the PAP given its importance in achieving the integration of the continent and giving a voice to the peoples of Africa.

The Executive Council of the African Union coordinates and takes decisions on policies in areas of common interest to the Member States. It is answerable to the Assembly. It considers issues referred to it and monitors the implementation of policies formulated by the Assembly. The Executive Council is composed of foreign ministers or other ministers or authorities as are designated by the governments of Member States.

PAP President Appeals to the Executive Council For More Resources to Deliver on Mandate

In his first address to the Executive Council of the African Union, the President of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) H.E. Chief Fortune Charumbira sent a clear message to African Ministers of Foreign Affairs: the PAP is back and entirely operational again, but it requires adequate resources to perform its functions effectively.

The President of the PAP told the Council that while the institution stands ready to fulfil its mandate of "ensuring effective participation of the peoples of Africa in the development and economic integration of the continent", the current budget allocation will render the mission almost impossible.

"We acknowledge the challenges faced by the PAP and the criticism that it has not lived up to expectations. We also hear calls for the PAP to play a more prominent role in achieving the objectives of our Union. We now have new leadership in place that understands these challenges and is determined to steer African Parliament in a new direction. But it will be a mammoth task if we are not given the tools and resources to achieve our mandate,"



PAP President, H.E. Chief Fortune Charumbira (middle) makes poignant appeal for adequate resourcing of the pap

warned H.E. Charumbira.

He added: "The PAP Bureau appreciates the efforts exerted in considering its proposed 2023 Budget, albeit, in the absence of the political leadership. The Bureau wishes to draw the attention of the distinguished policy organs to the serious challenges pertaining to the 2022 Operational Budget and the proposed 2023 Operational Budget, which, if not addressed, will adversely affect PAP's effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate."

The President of the PAP cited, among others, participation in African Union activities, statutory committee sittings, ordinary sessions, and parliamentary diplomacy missions, as some of the key areas where the budget was either reduced or simply cut in 2022 and 2023 budget allocations. While acknowledging the austerity measures to contain the impact of Covid-19, President Charumbira appealed, on behalf of his Bureau, for the 2022 and 2023 PAP budgets to be revised to match the pre-pandemic period to enable

the PAP to carry out its work.

"For instance, the budget for statutory committee sittings has been reduced by almost half in the 2023 budget. Committees, as we all know, are the engine room of Parliament. In the absence of Committee work, even the Plenary cannot achieve any tangible outcomes. We urgently need to restore the PAP's pride and place in the continental governance matrix and repair the institution's battered image. These activities come at a cost. Now that the institution is

Diplomatic And Bilateral Relations

NIGERIA THREATENS TO PULL OUT OF ECOWAS OVER RECRUITMENT CONCERNS

News Desk

Nigeria has threatened to withdraw its membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) if the regional body does not suspend the ongoing recruitment exercise as recently directed in the 2022 First Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja.

Nigerian representatives at the parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) issued the threat when some principal officers in the regional bloc defied the directives and embarked on the illegal process of recruiting their relatives and cronies.

The lawmakers cite the huge financial commitments which Nigeria makes to the body while relegating funding its internal security challenges.

They said there was no commensurate return on investment for Nigeria in ECOWAS for all the country has done and is doing for the region.

This face-off is coming on the heels of recent lopsided recruitment exercise at the ECOWAS parliament

which is manifestly skewed to serve the personal interest of member states to the exclusion of Nigeria.

Leader of the Nigerian delegation and Deputy Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives, who is also the First Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Ahmed Idris Wase said it has become imperative that Nigeria review its relevance and membership of the bloc.

“If you are in a system, and you are not getting the right results, where you are investigating your money, it pays best to walk out of the union.

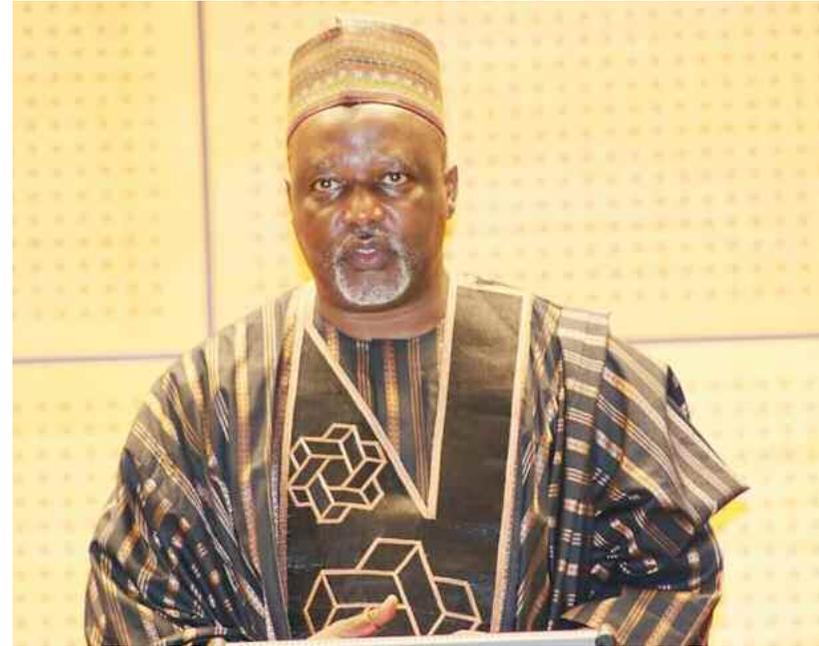
“In a situation where we are having an infrastructural deficit and witnessing security challenges, why should we continue to invest our money where it will not benefit our country? “Yes, we will pull out if we don’t get the desired result from this,” he said. He said “we are asking for justice not just for Nigerians alone, but for the entire ECOWAS community. That is what MPs are asking for. There are few countries that want to run ECOWAS like a cabal but we will not tolerate that.”

The Nigerian Permanent Representative to ECOWAS, Musa Nuhu, also wrote to the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Sidie Mohamed Tunis on the nepotistic employment scandal rocking ECOWAS. The letter from Nuhu was dated July 20, 2022, and titled, “Formal complaint about unfair treatment and confirmation of staff at the ECOWAS parliament.”

He wrote in the letter that “I have the honour to refer to our verbal discussion on the above subject matter and formally inform you that the attention of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the ECOWAS Commission has been drawn to a number of complaints by Nigerian staff working at the ECOWAS Parliament. The grievances border around stagnation and overlooking of staff already working in the parliament in favour of outsiders in the ongoing recruitment for divisional heads and professional staff.

“This action directly contravenes the recommendations of the 30th meeting of the ECOWAS Administrative and Finance Committee as well as the position of the Council of Ministers, which directed that internal candidates should be prioritised in filling existing vacancies in ECOWAS institutions, as recommended in the Staff Skills Audit Report.

“The Honourable Speaker may kindly wish to note that the mission has examined the complaints of the staff of the parliament based on existing staff regulations as well as the



Leader of the Nigerian delegation and Deputy Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives, who is also the First Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Ahmed Idris Wase

decisions and guidelines given by the AFC and Council of Ministers for ECOWAS institutions to carry out the recruitment and found that their grievances are genuine.

“Therefore, as you rightly observed during our discussions, recruiting individuals outside the system to place them above the existing staff would only lead to discontent, demoralisation and continued stagnation of the staff. This will inevitably affect the overall performance of the Parliament.”

At the centre of all of this controversy is the implementation of the provision of the staff regulation of ECOWAS. It is understood that each institution in ECOWAS gets the permission (since there is a freeze on recruitment) to employ from the AFC/Council of Ministers. Thus, Parliament needs to show that the permission was given.

Again, Parliament’s Bureaucracy is subject to the Bureau of Parliament. Were these positions first considered and approved by the Bureau of Parliament before the recruitment exercise or even before taking such a request to recruit to the AFC/Council of Ministers? They should not be complicit with illegality maybe because they are benefitting one way or the other.

The problem is that the process of ensuring that internal candidates are first considered for positions (internal advertisement of positions with the institutions of ECOWAS) before looking externally for candidates where internal candidates have not measured up to requirements, have been jettisoned because it allows the

powers that hold sway to bring in their relatives to occupy those positions.

“Let me tell you, those recruitment exercises are never fair because before they are even conducted, you will start hearing about preferred candidates already and about instructions to the so called consultant in charge of bringing out the long-list from the entire list of applicants, to ensure that some people are not on that list and also that those preferred candidates make it to the top of those lists,” a source said.

According to Wase, the fact remains that as at today, Nigerian lawmakers are in receipt of certain misgivings, and protestations by people who are so affected.

“I may not know if such protestations existed in the Fourth Assembly, as at today, these protestations are evident before us and we are duty bound to attend to them like we have indicated and in the cause of our engagement we are not restricting ourselves to what has happened today. If you listened to our intent on the floor, we said that for the past ten years, whatever it is that had happened in the past ten years, the one that has to be remedied, the one that requires sanctions, I am sure that at the end of the day, without preempting the resolve of the committee, we will get to that point.”

Honourable Wase reiterated that Nigeria has done so much for ECOWAS, explaining that over 60 percent of ECOWAS funding comes from Nigeria.

“We have staffers who are of Niger-



Therefore, as you rightly observed during our discussions, recruiting individuals outside the system to place them above the existing staff would only lead to discontent, demoralisation and continued stagnation of the staff. This will inevitably affect the overall performance of the Parliament.

Diplomatic And Bilateral Relations

NIGERIA THREATENS TO PULL OUT OF ECOWAS OVER RECRUITMENT CONCERNS

ian origin that may have done better or progressed rapidly in their career if they were within the bureaucracy of the Nigeria Nigerian civil service. Their colleagues and contemporary in the Nigerian civil service are now directors and even permanent Secretaries and those of them in ECOWAS institutions have stagnated for years.

They are not promoted because they are engaged as casual staff. We cannot subject these staff to remain at the same level for more than 10 years. ECOWAS employed them as casual staff, and kept them as casual staff for that long.

“It offends the International Labour Organization (ILO), Convention on Forced Labour. I was an activist and a unionist, before joining politics. We cannot keep an employee for more than six months on a casual basis, it is against international law. But here we have kept them for a number of years, up to nine years, it is inhuman.

“What the Parliament is talking about is transparency, and doing the right thing in the right manner. I heard them saying that the audit report was inconclusive, it then meant that there were issues. Whether in-

conclusive or not, in Parliament, there is what we call an interim report. So, there was an interim report, and that is what some members were relying upon, it does not mean that because they were unable to conclude, then there was nothing. There was something on the table, and I will refer to that inconclusive report that the Secretary General mentioned as an interim report before the Parliament, which of course should be used, and considered because it raised issues regarding the imbalance in the composition of the staff.”

According to Wase, the Nigerian constitution in Section 14 (4) provides that, the composition of government shall be in a manner that it reflects the federal character. “Now, we have people who possibly have one opportunity and they want to bring in their relatives, and their siblings against the larger interest of our community. Common judgment teaches us that when you have nations coming together, we should do the distribution in such a way that justice and fairness takes the centre stage”

He said that if Nigeria had not asked for 60 percent benefit in ECOWAS before now, it must have been a mistake “because our dividend should be equivalent to our contribution and investment. And if that is not done and the little that we have in the system is being humiliated, we will not take it.

“From the National Assembly of Nigeria, we are also going to probe our Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Finance Minister who is giving the money and the Commissioner who is representing us at the Commission. What are they doing there, are they part of this nonsense going on, possibly because they have one interest to protect or the other? We will not allow that to happen. We will expose everybody from the Nigerian Parliament and sanctions will follow. We will sanction anybody found wanting in the process,” he added

Last two month, at the 2022 First Ordinary Session of the Parliament, the lawmakers had passed a resolution to suspend the recruitment exercise after Nigerian representatives at the parliament alleged discrimination and lopsidedness in the recruitment of workers at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja.

The motion to suspend the recruitment and promotion in the ECOWAS Parliament was moved by Hon. Awajim Abiante, a Nigerian lawmaker at the ECOWAS Parliament.

The motion was seconded by Sen. Abiodun Olujimi, a Nigerian Lawmaker at the Parliament, supported by Hon. Yousoufa Bida and concurrently agreed by House.

Abiante, who represents Andoni/Opobo/Nkoro federal constituency in the House of Representatives, said “The Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament is duty bound to respect the resolutions of Parliament.

“If he does not respect the resolution of Parliament, I wonder which Parliament he is heading.

“So, it is left for him to answer where he stands.

“You know, probably some of us are not well experienced, relative to Parliamentary requirements and procedures.

“Therefore, if one is not experienced, we could expect this kind of action. But the Speaker is duty bound to obey the resolution of Parliament.” “He is first amongst equals, but we are all members of Parliament, by certain requirements, somebody has to lead.

“So, if he is the Speaker today, it does not make him senior or superior to any Member of Parliament.

“And who is he speaking for? He is

speaking for the entirety of all of us and if we have come and raised issues, and resolutions taken, saying stop this, he is duty bound to obey.

“So, whatever they had done, we the parliamentarians see it as an effort in complete futility.”

When contacted, the Secretary General of the Parliament John Azumah from Ghana said he was unaware of any audit report that talked about employment and promotion. “I don’t know where they got that information from that they were talking, but you know that on the floor of the Parliament, you cannot stop them.”

“For me, I don’t have any information about this, but let me tell you this, the First Deputy Speaker would have done himself good, if he had called me to explain what is happening in ECOWAS to him. I don’t know where they got that information from. There is no audit report like that. It is true that ECOWAS did a skill audit some time ago, but it was inconclusive. The skill audit that was done for the whole ECOWAS institutions was inconclusive.

“So, if you went and were extracting information and you got something from staff, you are looking for your interest, sometimes they will give you half information, because of their interest. They would not give you the full information, then you just pick it as an MP and you start talking.

“The staff will tell you that this is happening at the Commission, this is happening at the court and this is happening at the Parliament, it is not true, just because of their interest. For me, if you have that, you have to rely on some credible officers to validate the veracity or otherwise of the information before you come to the floor. When they were talking, I was just laughing in my heart, I am telling you the truth because they were just ridiculing themselves,” he added.



The motion to suspend the recruitment and promotion in the ECOWAS Parliament was moved by Hon. Awajim Abiante, a Nigerian lawmaker at the ECOWAS Parliament

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duty as government to protect the environment.

The Chairman of the Committee on Mines and Mineral Resources in parliament, Emerson Saa Lamina, of constituency 030, Kono District Eastern Region, described the new law as a fulfilment, profit and that it serves as the most progressive law since the beginning of mining in the

Sierra Leone Parliament Enacts New Mining Law

country in 1930.

He referenced section seven of the constitution which states that if ‘harness all the natural resources of the nation to promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy.’

Answering to questions surrounding the implementation of the new laws, he noted that there

are several regulatory institutions like National Mineral Agency, which he said is charged with the responsibility of regulating mining companies and activities, while the ministry has the overall policy and supervision role.

He also pointed out that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) works collaboratively with mining and environment issues.

He added that the parliamentarians on the other hand have the constitutional mandate for the oversight supervision of all the Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs), which the Mines and Mineral Resources Ministry include.

He noted that when the supervisory role are being carried effectively the country will definitely benefit a lot as it caters

for 10% of the profits of mining companies to the government, one percent of its profits to chiefdom in mining communities as Community Development Agreement (CDA) annually, he also highlighted the Mining District Development Fund will get 20% of royalty of the mining district among others. He noted that it also protects the rights of women and children in mining communities.

Photo Report



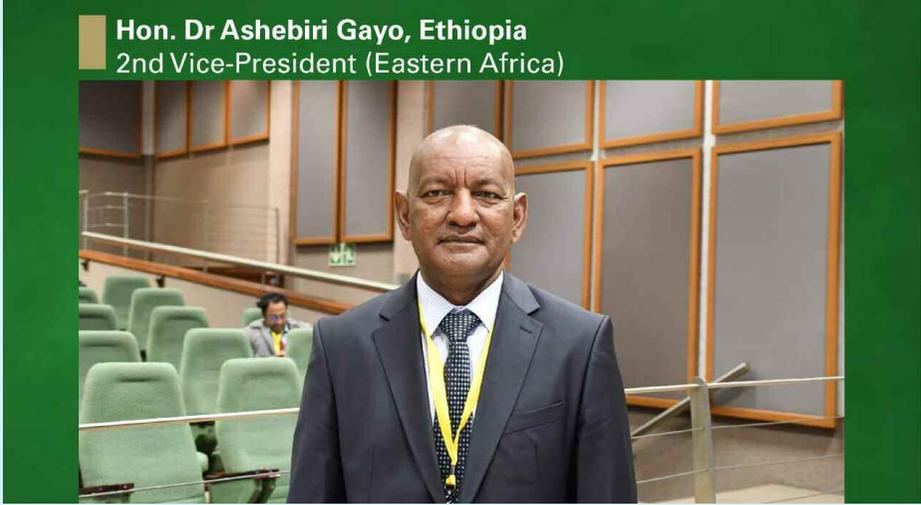
Chief Fortune Charumbira, President of Pan African Parliament



Hon. Fortune Zephania Charumbira, Zimbabwe
President (Southern Africa)



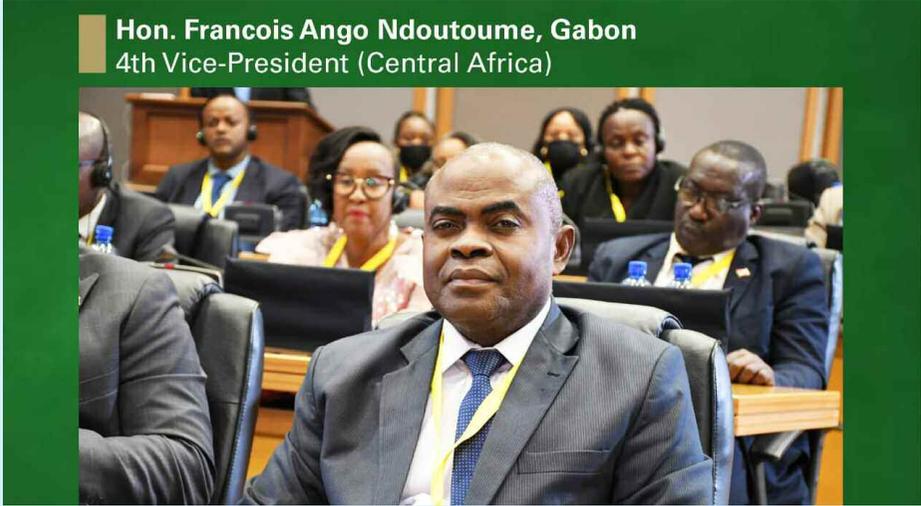
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2nd Vice-President (Eastern Africa)



Hon. Lucia Mendes dos Passos, Cape Verde
3rd Vice-President (Western Africa)



Hon. Francois Ango Ndoutoume, Gabon
4th Vice-President (Central Africa)



PAP President and AUC Chair