NA-WATCH

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WATCH REFLECTION REPORT

THIRD ORDINARY SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2024

9th - 26th of September

Introduction

The Third Ordinary Session in the 2024 Legislative Year was held from the 9th to 26th of September, 2024, marking another important phase in the Legislative Business of the Parliament. National Assembly members convened to engage in comprehensive legislative discussions aimed at addressing critical national issues. During this session, a number of Bills were introduced, debated, and passed, while various motions were tabled, thoroughly considered, and successfully adopted. Parliamentary committees and delegations presented detailed reports, which were discussed and adopted, providing essential findings and recommendations. The session underscored the Assembly's dedication to ensuring greater scrutiny and accountability through regular interactions with the Executive, as evidenced by the Oral Questions and Answers Sessions conducted with the Honorable Ministers regarding their respective portfolios, departments, and agencies.

The National Assembly remained resolute in its commitment to legislative oversight and accountability, ensuring that the Executive is held to account for its actions. His Excellency, the Vice President, and a number of Hon. Ministers appeared before the Assembly to answer oral questions posed by Hon. Members. These sessions highlighted the Assembly's role in scrutinizing the activities of the Executive and ensuring that governmental policies and actions align with the needs of the people.

Ministers Who Participated in the Question-and-Answer Sessions:

1. Hon. Minister for Lands and Regional Government
2. Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad
3. Hon. Attorney General and Minister for Justice
4. Hon. Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs
5. Hon. Minister for Youth and Sports
6. Hon. Minister for Petroleum and Energy
7. Hon. Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure
8. Hon. Minister for Fisheries and Water Resources
9. Hon. Minister for Tourism and Culture
10. Hon. Minister for Trade, Industry, and Regional Integration
11. Hon. Minister for Defence
12. Hon. Minister for Agriculture
13. Hon. Minister for Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources
14. Hon. Minister for Interior

Minister's Reply to the Reports

Ministers' Replies to Reports Under Order 100 of the Standing Orders:

In accordance with Standing Order 100 of the Standing Orders, various Ministers delivered detailed responses to reports
adopted by the plenary in previous sessions. These replies were crucial in addressing specific issues raised by parliamentary committees and enhancing transparency and accountability.

Minister's Reply to the Report of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Public Enterprises:

The Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs delivered a detailed reply regarding the Report on the Activity and Audited Financial Statements of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) for the years ending 31st December 2019 and 2020. The Minister emphasized the importance of this statutory exercise in promoting transparency and accountability, ensuring that the government and its public institutions are held accountable to the Gambian people. The Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) remains determined to enforce proper Public Finance Management (PFM) policies, ensuring that the government and its institutions are held to the highest standards of accountability.

Minister's Reply to the Report of the National Assembly Select Committee on Trade and Regional Integration:

The Minister for Trade, Industry, Regional Integration, and Employment provided a comprehensive response to the committee's nationwide tour of selected markets. The Minister highlighted the importance of addressing the challenges faced by Gambian traders and fostering regional integration to improve trade conditions.government and its institutions are held to the highest standards of accountability.

Minister's Reply to the Report of the National Assembly Select Committee on Regional Government and Lands, Ombudsman, and IEC:

The Minister for Lands and Regional Government responded to the committee's oversight visit to the Offices of Regional Governors, Area and Municipal Councils, the Ombudsman, and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The response emphasized the importance of enhancing service delivery at the local government level and ensuring the efficient functioning of these key institutions.

Motions Tabled, Considered, and Adopted:

During this session, several significant motions were tabled, debated, and adopted. The motions addressed a range of national and international concerns, reflecting the Assembly's dedication to tackling both domestic and regional challenges.

Deployment of Troops to the ECOWAS Stabilisation Mission in Sierra Leone:

The Vice President of The Gambia, tabled a motion seeking approval for the deployment of Gambian troops to ECOWAS stabilisation Mission in Sierra Leone. The document outlines a resolution by an assembly to approve the deployment of troops from The Gambia to the ECOWAS stabilisation mission in Sierra Leone. It emphasizes the importance of ECOWAS in promoting peace and stability in West Africa and acknowledges the ongoing challenges Sierra Leone faces, such as political instability and humanitarian crises. The resolution underscores The Gambia's responsibility as an ECOWAS member to contribute to regional security.

Key points include the urgency of addressing the situation in Sierra Leone, the critical role of troop deployment for peacebuilding, and The Gambia's commitment to supporting these efforts. The assembly resolves to endorse the troop deployment and empowers the Gambian government to take necessary actions for preparation, including logistical and training support. Ultimately, the document reaffirms a commitment to peace, security, and humanitarian assistance to support Sierra Leone's stability.

Mutual Visa Exemption Agreement for Diplomatic and Service Passport Holders (Gambia-Indonesia):

The document outlines a resolution by an assembly to approve the deployment of troops from The Gambia to the ECOWAS stabilization mission in Sierra Leone. It emphasizes the importance of ECOWAS in promoting peace and stability in West Africa and acknowledges the ongoing challenges Sierra Leone faces, such as political instability and humanitarian crises. The resolution underscores The Gam bia's responsibility as an ECOWAS member to contribute to regional security.

Key points include the urgency of addressing the situation in Sierra Leone, the critical role of troop deployment for peacebuilding, and The Gambia's commitment to supporting these efforts. The assembly resolves to endorse the troop deployment and empowers the Gambian government to take necessary actions for preparation, including logistical and training support. Ultimately, the document reaffirms a commitment to peace, security, and humanitarian assistance to support Sierra Leone's stability..

Mutual Visa Exemption Agreement for Diplomatic Passport Holders (Gambia-Azerbaijan)

Similarly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs presented a motion for the ratification of a visa exemption agreement with Azerbaijan. The agreement will enable holders of diplomatic passports to travel between the two countries without the need for a visa, fostering closer diplomatic ties and promoting cooperation in trade, education, and other fields.

Establishment of the West African Football Union (WAFU) Headquarters in The Gambia:

The Minister for Youth and Sports, Bakary Badjie, tabled a motion for the ratification of an agreement to establish the WAFU Zone A Headquarters in The Gambia. The Assembly unanimously supported the motion, recognizing the economic and socio-cultural benefits that the establishment of the headquar ters would bring to the country.

Manpower Agreement Between the Gambia and Saudi Arabia and the UAE:

The Minister for Trade, Industry, Regional Integration, and Employment, Baboucarr Joof, introduced a motion for the ratification of a manpower agreement with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The agreement aims to facilitate the legal recruitment of Gambian workers to Saudi Arabia and the UAE while ensuring their rights and welfare are protected under fair labor practices.

Confirmation of Members of the Armed Forces Council

The Assembly confirmed the replacements of Retired Rear Admiral Sarjo Fofana and Dr. Cherno Omar Barry as members of the Armed Forces Council, following a motion tabled by the Minister for Defence. The replacements were seen as essential to maintaining the council's integrity and ensuring strong leadership within the armed forces.

Reports of Parliamentary Committees and Delegations:

The session also featured the consideration and adoption of several key reports presented by parliamentary committees and delegations, providing critical insights into various national issues.

Report of the Select Committee on Trade and Regional Integration's Tour to the Senegalese Parliament:

The committee's tour focused on trade facilitation and the free movement of goods between The Gambia and Senegal. Discussions with the Senegalese Parliament and customs authorities aimed at enhancing cross-border trade and addressing logistical challenges.

Report of the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises' Study Tour to Botswana:

The committee's study tour to Botswana focused on SOE governance, allowing members to learn from Botswana's successful SOE reforms. The tour provided valuable insights into improving corporate governance and financial oversight in The Gambia's SOEs.

Report on the Petitions from Concerned Staff of the Gambia Tourism Board:

The Petitions Committee considered concerns raised by staff members of the Gambia Tourism Board. The report provided recommendations to address grievances related to employment conditions and management practices within the tourism board.

Report of the Gambian Delegation to the Pan-African Parliament:

The report highlighted the key issues discussed during the Third Ordinary Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Pan-African Parliament held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Gambian delegates participated actively in discussions on African integration, economic development, and conflict resolution.

Report of the National Assembly Select Committee on Agriculture's Visit to SECCOS

The committee's oversight visits to various Seccos across the country addressed the reported D32 million shortages during the 2023–2024 groundnut buying season. The report provided recommendations for improving the efficiency and transparency of the groundnut purchase process in future seasons.

CONCLUSION

The National Assembly remains committed to advancing its legislative agenda and addressing the most pressing challenges facing the country. This session demonstrated the Assembly's determination to prioritize legislative business and ensure that governance in The Gambia is transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of its citizens. The Assembly as observed expressed willingness in working closely with the Executive and other stakeholders to foster national development and improve the well-being of the Gambian people.