



President Sall & President Barrow

ECOWAS Urges Gambian & Senegalese President to Serve 2 Terms

The Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Africa Peer Review Mechanism, of The Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) Parliament, Hon Edwin Snowe Junior urged Gambian President Adama Barrow and Senegalese President Macky Sall to abstain from contesting a third term.

Hon Snowe Junior made these revelations at a press conference on Tuesday 15th August 2022 in The Gambia. According to the Chairperson, ECOWAS delegates visited Senegal to discourage President Macky Sall from contesting ahead of their 2024 Presidential elections.

"We were just from Senegal and we have been very robust in discouraging the President from attempting to serve a third term in office," said the Chairperson of Political Affairs.

With regards to the Gambian President, Chairperson Snow Junior hopes that "after [serving] the second term [President Adama Barrow] will

respectfully leave office so that the Gambian people or he himself may also have the pleasure of seeing a successor" as "It is very important for our (ECOWAS) region".

He seized the opportunity to encourage other "Presidents to desist from running for a third term". Chairperson Snowe Junior also urged the Gambia's National Assembly to pass a bill that bars the President from contesting a third mandate citing Nigeria and Ghana as examples. He describes the problems within the ECOWAS region as "enormous".

ECOWAS Two Term Limit Bill Being Developed

Responding to questions from the press, ECOWAS Parliament's Chairperson on Political Affairs noted that the Banjul meeting will also be "discussing good governance ... that will encourage governments and Presidents in the region to desist from the third term because you ambush your constitution and give the citizens the right to ambush your tenure".

"Now we want to introduce a good governance bill where no president

Continued on Page 2

Hon Fatou Cham Advocates for Female Committee Chairpersons

Hon Fatou Cham of Sanneh Mentereng Constituency spoke with a GPN Reporter on the side-lines of an engagement between the National Audit Office and Parliamentarians from the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) held on 2nd July 2022. As one of three elected female Parliamentarian she spoke about her journey to become a Parliamentarian via a United Democratic Party (UDP) ticket.

She explained that the low representation of women in the fifth legislature motivated her to contest against five male candidate and win. In addition, the only person with disability Nominee contested in her constituency. "My wish was for all the 19 female [contestants] to be in Parliament," said Hon Cham, however, "only three were elected and another two nominated" by the President.

Commenting on the composition of female NAMs in the sixth legislature compared to the fifth legislature Hon Cham highlighted that "it is minus

Continued on Page 2

NAMs Support Flash Flood Victims

Hon members of the Sixth Legislature have been supporting their electorates during flash floods which affected most of the urban population of The Gambia in Banjul, Kanifing Municipal Council and Brikama Area Council.

Continued on Page 5



Committee Tours - Page 3

Youngest Sahel Parliamentarian Awarded as African Icon

Hon Abdoulie Njai of Banjul Central has been recognised with the African Icon Award by the Youth Network for Change during a Youth Leadership Conference in Liberia.

The three day session saw Youth Po-

Continued on Page 3

CREATED BY



Publishers

This Newsletter is produced and written by Yusef Taylor and Edrissa Jallow of Gainako News, and Kebba AF Touray of Foroyaa Newspaper.

Graphic Design Saidou Jallow and printed by R&A Design.

Please send any feedback to yusef.taylor@gmail.com or +2207724140.

SUPPORTED BY





Hon Fatou Cham on Women Leadership

From Front Page

one and who knows how it will be in future legislatures". She deliberated on her approach to win her election bid which included engaging the community "to talk to people about the reality, things that are affecting them in terms of development".

Speaking on her advocacy for women she added that some of the problems of women have not been solved and has been engaging women on these topics during the Parliamentary Election Campaign.

When asked to elaborate on her main objectives during her five-year term Hon Cham highlighted that she plans to "sensitise more women and to work with the Ministry of Gender with my Chairperson of the Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare" to address social challenges. Another of her objectives is "to work hard to make sure that women's representation for next legislature is increased". Shifting her attention to health she added that she'll engage the Ministry of Health to reduce maternal deaths during labour.

On the leadership of the Parliamentary Committees, our reporter drew the attention of the lawmaker that only one committee currently has a female chairperson, which is the Committee of Gender, Children and Social Welfare.

Commenting on the under representation of women, Hon Cham explained that gender equality should be factored in the selection of Parliamentary Committee chairpersons. She urged future Parliaments to consider the gender diversity of Parliamentary Committee Chairpersons.

ECOWAS Two Term Limit Bill Being Developed

From Front Page

will seek a third term," said Chairperson Snowe Junior.

Hon Snowe Junior explained that "If the citizens are comfortable with you and you have done well in your first term, then you have a second term but most governments will wait until they enter their second term and say we want to make the constitution better for the people and if they change the constitution, they will go on to serve a new term under the pretext that it's a new republic".

He highlighted that "corruption is killing our region and the issue of a third term too. Sometimes, people are afraid to talk about the issue of a third term but it is only fair that when you serve your people for two terms you step down".



Hon Njai: "Women should be given their dues"

Hon Fatoumata Njai of Banjul South commended the recommendation of the ECOWAS Joint Committee to increase women representation in African Politics.

"I believe that women should be given their dues, we are the majority in this world and we are the majority in the region, we are [the] majority in this country, so we should be respected and given what is due to us," says Hon



Njai who won her first term via the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) ticket. However, she went independent for her second term after a fallout with the PPP which resulted in her expulsion from the Party.

The resilient Parliamentarian defied all the odds to contest via an independent ticket to win her second term in office despite fierce competition.

Hon Njai who is among the Gambia's delegation of the ECOWAS Parliament noted that she is "not going to give up until [she] sees the number of seats that women deserve occupied in parliament".

It could be recalled on Monday 21st February 2022, Hon Njai and former Vice President of The Gambia, Dr Isatou Touray clashed over the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2021. The Private Members Bill tabled by Hon Njai proposed to amend The Gambia's 1997 Constitution to expand the number of elected members in Parliament by an additional fourteen (14) seats for women and persons with disabilities.

The Bill failed at its second attempt to be read for its second reading due to the failure of a sufficient number of Parliamentarians attending for a vote to be held on the bill. In that regard, the Hon Speaker of the 5th Legislature, Hon Mariam Jack Denton ruled out the bill from Parliament's agenda. "The National Assembly has never encountered a situation where voting on the Second Reading of a Bill was hampered because of the absence of the required threshold," Hon Denton noted in her reaction to the failed Bill.

Hon Njai contested in April 2022 Parliamentary Elections against 3 three men in Banjul South and secured 1,538 votes to win.

According to Elections Results from the Independent Electoral Commission, 19 women were nominated for the April 2022 Parliamentary election. However, only 3 were elected in the name of Hon Fatou Cham for Sanneh Mentereng (10,794 Votes), Hon Amie Colley for Foni Berefet (3,034 Votes), and Hon Fatoumata Njai for Banjul South.

Hon Suwaibou Touray Reveals How He Spent D100K on Electorates

Three Parliamentary Committees Conduct Weeklong Tour



Hon Touray of Wuli East (c) GPN

Hon Suwaibou Touray of Wuli East released a publication detailing the commencement of the D100K Clothing Allowance which was published on the 3rd GPN Edition. This continuation features Hon Suwaibou Touray's explanation of how he spent his D100K Clothing Allowance on his electorates.

By Hon Suwaibou Touray

When I received this amount, I made an enquiry and confirmed that it was indeed budgeted and I came to the conclusion that it is on the high side which triggers the question, what should I do? I then came to the conclusion that there are priority challenges in my Constituency which require urgent attention. It was my intention to seek for support from NGOs and charities to address some of those challenges but with the availability of this amount, I could readily use it to address them headlong. So, I came up with a rough budget as you can see below which was approved by my Constituency Development Committee and is being implemented.

The budget which has been implemented half way is as follows;

- 2-cylinder borehole pumps @ D20,000 each - D40,000
- Jerseys and Footballs for 6 teams @ D4000 each - D24,000
- Support to 2 women group farmers @ D10,000 each - D20,000
- A house for Samba Jallow, physically challenged young man - D31,000
- Total one hundred & fifteen thousand Dalasis only - D115,000

The deficit in the Budget, D15,000 shall be contributed by Hon. Touray himself from the proceeds of his Committee meeting allowances in due course.

What is already accomplished is the installation of the two pumps and water is now available for the two communities, i.e. Bohum Kunda and Koli Kunda.

Football jerseys are provided to 4 out of the 6 teams, ie. Passamas Fula, Boro Sambara Sasi, Boye Kunda and Brifu. Sare Bohum and Sutukoba will follow suit.

The physically challenged young man Mr. Samba from Brifu who lost his hut to a storm last rainy season is allocated D31, 000 and in case of deficit, the NAM will surely take care of the deficit. However, the mud block, corrugated roof one bedroom house will soon be completed. What remains is the plastering and fixing of doors and windows.

The 2 women Kafoo farmers have also received their allocation of D10,000 each to engage in Kafoo farms and produce food crops hopefully to contribute to food security in their small way.

Youngest Sahel Parliamentarian Awarded as African Icon

From Front Page

litical Leaders from the Sahel region converge to share experiences and boost collaboration between African Youth Leaders.

Hon Njai gratefully received the award which he called "a significant milestone in" his fledgling Political career. He thanked the hosts, his electorates, his family members, supporters and the National Assembly for their continuous support.

The Independent MP rallied support "as young leaders [because] we don't claim to have a monopoly of wisdom". He called on "the general public to continue to put us on to task to deliver in their best interest".

Soon after the National Assembly's Srecess in August 2022, three Parliamentary Committees conducted a weeklong Tour starting on 5th September 2022.

GPN Editor secured an interview with three Committee Chairs of the National Assembly that went on Tour on the popular Coffee Time Radio program on West Coast Radio 92.1 FM. Speaking to Hon Madi Ceesay of the Human Rights and Constitutional Matters Standing Committee he explained that "we discovered that the cells are small and the ventilation is bad. Which does not match with people's rights. So, we have advised station officers to improve the ventilation of the cells by increasing the windows. Which was accepted by many of them".

Hon Ceesay explained that among the cells visited in the North Bank the "Farafenni was the worst. The cell was so small and very little ventilation". However, he noted that the Officers are cooperating with them to improve the ventilation.

On access to justice Hon Ceesay explained that their tour of Jangjangbureh Prisons revealed that a prisoner has been remanded for seven years without their case being concluded. He added that "there are many who are two years, three years, five years, six years. We saw all these things at the Jangjangbureh remand wing. And that is a cause for concern for us because justice delayed is justice denied".

Parliamentarians will eventually compile their report and recommendations, table it in Parliament and question the Head of Security Institutions.

GPN Editor spoke to Hon Sulayman Jammeh, the Chair of the Select Committee on Regional Government, Lands and Ombudsman on the progress of projects implementation. Hon Omar Darboe, the Chair of the Select Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development also spoke to GPN. More on this will be published in the next edition.



Hon Abdoulie Njai

NAM Questions Security Chief's Commitment to SSR



A Counsel from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) confirmed that the suspensions of all those adversely mentioned in the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) and the Government White Paper have been effected. Speaking at a Security Sector Reform Stakeholder Interface organised by the Solo Sandeng Foundation on Saturday 6th August 2022, Counsel Kimbeng Tah who spearheads the Governments efforts on the TRRC told victims and Parliamentarians present that “as recently as this month we’ve also carried out suspensions from public service of all those who were adversely mentioned by the TRRC Report and confirmed in the White Paper”.

Counsel Tah went further to say that he “can confirm that [the MoJ] has received responses from all those agencies that the suspensions have been carried out while we wait to concretise the removal from service following due process”.

Present at the dialogue which took place at the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Headquarters in Kotu were three National Assembly members in Hon Yahya Menteng Sanyang of Latrikunda Sabiji, Hon Muhammed Kante of Busumbala and Hon Abdoulie Njai of Banjul Central. Also in attendance were the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the NHRC as well as a number of victims who had protested alongside Solo Sandeng and supporters.

Hon Sanyang Questions Security Chief's Commitment to SSR

Although the MoJ, the NHRC and Parliamentarians had honoured the invitation the dialogue was incomplete as the National Security Advisor, the Inspector General of Police and the Ministry of Interior all failed to attend or even send representatives to the dialogue. The meeting agenda noted that the Office of the IGP was

to provide an update on its “preparedness to carry out reforms” and to brief stakeholders on the implementation of the TRRC Recommendations.

Hon Yahya Menteng Sanyang was unwavering in his condemnation of Security Officials for failing to attend the “friendly dialogue”. Speaking to the MoJ representative while on the podium, Hon Sanyang said “I would advise next time there is this kind of friendly conversation we have to prevail on the IGP, the Defense, the Security Sector to be here because it’s friendly. Nobody is taking anybody to court here this is a friendly conversation. When the IGP, the Ministers of Defense and Interior [are] present [it] will boost the morale of these victims”.

Hon Sanyang went further to add that “when we have this kind of conversation let’s make sure all the stakeholders are here. We also make a frank conversation. But for the fact that they are absent now am trying to question their commitment to the Security Sector Reform. There is Security Sector Reform in the offing but you as a stakeholder, you are invited to a very important function like this, you abstain it means you’re not committed to it”.

“Reform is commitment it’s not just putting everything to paper. We go to conferences; we travel international and make a case. No, we have to show commitment to it,” enthused Hon Sanyang.

Hon Jammeh Pumps Water from Inundated Compounds

Former Councillor and now member for Bundung Constituency, Hon Sulayman Jammeh has provided significant resources including water pumps to help flash flood victims during July and August rains. The Hon member volunteered to drain inundated compounds in his constituency. Other NAMs were also seen volunteering their time and resources to help their constituents.

NAMs Split over President Barrow's Annual Leave Amidst Flash Floods

On 3rd August 2022 Gambian President Adama Barrow announced that he would be going on annual leave starting on 5th August 2022 to the end of August 2022. This news came just days after the second flash flood which affected the majority of Banjul and numerous settlements in urban Gambia. Two National Assembly members one from Banjul Central and the other from Old Yundum spoke to GPN about the President's timing of his leave.

According to a report issued by the Red Cross on 8th August 2022, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) has estimated that a total of 17,201 people are affected by the recent flash floods. The provinces affected include North Bank Region, West Coast Region, Kanifing Municipality and Banjul.

However, after the second wave of flash floods on the weekend of 30th and 31st July 2022, a statement from State House announced that “His Excellency, Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia, will on Friday, 5th August 2022, go on 15 working days leave as part of his annual leave entitlement. The President will resume duties on Wednesday, 31st August 2022”.

Independent Parliamentarian, Hon Abdoulie Njai of Banjul Central believes that “it’s not a good show of leadership and also what amazes me is this was just days after his tour around Banjul”. State House is based in Banjul the capital city, however, of late the flash floods have really affected the city forcing the President to conduct regular site visits to areas worse affected even while on leave. However, Hon Njai believes that after the tour and seeing first-hand the challenges presented by the flash floods the declaration “that you’re going on leave definitely is quite unethical in my point of view”.

However, Hon Abdoulie Ceesay of Old Yundum believes that “it’s [the President’s] right, he deserves to like any other civil servant who goes on leave, I don’t have any problems with that”. According to the Parliamentarian who secured his second term in Parliament via President Barrow’s National People’s Party, he would “recommend that the President goes because if you are President you

Continued on Page 5

NAMs Split Over President Barrow's Annual Leave Amidst Flash Floods

From Page 4

don't go on leave the Vice President wouldn't know what is happening at the State House".

Hon Ceesay opined that the timing of the President's leave "is not a problem. Whether there is a flood or not what is important is the President is with the people, the President is supporting the people, the President feels that the people of his country are badly affected with floods and then giving them the moral support, he can. That is the most important thing".

The Banjul Central Parliamentarian agrees that the President's annual leave is constitutional and is part of his given rights, however, given the timing and the devastation recorded "the situation is dire and this is a crisis — emergency situation".

According to the Independent Parliamentarian who won a seat in President Adama Barrow's registered Constituent "leaders are highlighted in terms of emergency situations, in terms of [how] they step up when things get really bad. So, I think it's not a good show of leadership".

Calling for the need to show urgency Hon Njai added that "in situations like these even in official duties one has to accelerate whatever work that you have to do in making sure that at least if [the disaster is] not mitigated but at least [make] efforts to curb it". Hon Ceesay argues that the President is entitled to 26 days of leave however, he decided to take only 15 days instead. According to Hon Ceesay although his Party Leader "took the 15 days" leave he spent most of his holiday with flash flood victims.

In his view "we don't talk about the importance of President taking leave again". The member for Old Yundum stated that "since the approval of the leave, [President Barrow has been] staying in Kombo going round to check people. At least about 3 or 4 days have gone out of the 15. So, I think it's timely for him to go".

Both Parliamentarians have been visiting their electorates and supporting them through the flash floods by providing donations in kind and identifying alternative shelter during the emergency.

Numerous Parliamentarians provided support to their electorates during the torrential rains that damaged homes in July & August 2022

Serekunda NAM Donates D43K to Flood Victims, Calls for KMC and NRA Collaboration

Hon Musa Cham of Serekunda has called on the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC) and the National Roads Authority (NRA) to collaborate effectively to improve the drainage system in the Serekunda constituency. After the August rains caused more flooding in Serekunda, Hon Cham of the People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS) distributed D43 Thousand Dalasi worth of food to electorates on Sunday 14th August 2022.

The Hon member distributed 25 kilograms bags of rice to the victims of the recent flash floods in his Constituency. This support was initiated by the Emergency Response Fund (ERP) created by Hon Cham during his term as Councillor for London Corner. This he explained was due to the late aid support from government during times of need. At the presentation one of the beneficiaries thanked Hon Cham, his board members and donors, for the humanitarian support as the flash floods have destroyed their food provisions.

It could be recalled that Hon Cham alongside Barteiz Ward Councillor Hon. Karim Darboe, conducted site visits in Serekunda and found numerous compounds inundated with water. According to Hon Cham, the rainwater was not moving as drains were blocked with debris and Sand.

The newly elected Parliamentarian who replaced PDOIS Party Leader, Hon Halifa Sallah, revealed that the council doesn't have "enough resources to ensure that these drains are properly managed". He added that it is the responsibility of the NRA to conduct regular drainage cleaning exercises because they "collect revenues from signboards ---[which] generate revenue" from activities on the highways.

From his vantage point as a former KMC Councillor, both KMC and NRA conduct similar drain cleansing exercises. Hon Cham advocates for a more long-term solution which he believes involves proper coordination to maximise the impact of the limited resources from both institutions. "This cleansing of the drains that KMC is doing costs lots of money and the NRA is doing the same thing, [meaning that there are] duplications. So, they need to sit and re-design these drainage systems," he said. Hon Cham is in both the Finance and Public Accounts Standing Committee and the Foreign Affairs Standing Committee.

Two Banjul NAMs Support Electorates during Flash Floods

Two Hon members from Banjul namely; Hon Abdoulie Njai of Banjul Central and Hon Modou L B Bah of Banjul North have been gathering support from benevolent donors, volunteering their time, energy and resources to alleviate the inundation which plagued their electorates during flash floods in late July and August 2022.

The flash floods affected Banjul significantly this year with numerous people relocated to temporary shelters due to inundation and damage to their homes.

Both Hon members have also raised questions to hold the Contractors of the Banjul Urban Drainage Project accountable through the appropriate Institutions.

Future publications will feature some of the deliberations of both Hon members on the D1.4 Billion Banjul Urban Drainage Project implemented by Hadim Gai Construction.



Hon Abdoulie Ceesay Supports Constituents with 20 Bags of Rice

Hon Abdoulie Ceesay of Old Yundum facilitated the donation of 20 bags of rice to flash flood victims via the support of Food Bank Gambia on 14th August 2022. Hon Ceesay noted: "I am extremely happy with the Food Bank Gambia supporting seriously affected-flood victims. This temporal measure to keep the family going by providing them with food is an amazing intervention which gladdens the heart so much. I thank Awa and her Volunteers for a job well-done".

Gam Petroleum Should be Punished Says Parliaments Environment Committee Chairperson



Oil Spill Photo

The Chairperson of the National Assembly's Select Committee on Environment, Sustainable Development and NGO Affairs has vowed to punish institutions responsible for the oil spillage at Mandinary. Speaking to a GPN reporter on 1st July 2022 after a committee meeting Hon Yaya Gassama revealed that Gam Petroleum "will be definitely be punished for" the oil spill which occurred on 28th May 2022.

Lawmaker for Kiang East, Hon Yahya Gassama told GPN in an exclusive interview, that Gam petroleum will definitely be punished for the oil spillage which recently occurred at Mandinary, in the West Coast region. A joint press release signed by the National Environmental Agency (NEA) and the Gambia Maritime Administration (GMA) published on Friday 3rd June 2022 on the NEA official Facebook page disclosing that over seventy thousand eight hundred and sixty-five (70,865) litres of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) was discharged on the river bank due to leakages.

The release adds that emergency briefing with relevant stakeholders including Gam Petroleum was summoned to discuss the way forward on the spillage.

To get to the bottom of the oil spillage, the Environment Select Committee conducted a site visit at Mandinary national depot on Thursday 9th June 2022 to gather first-hand information on the cause of the leakage. Speaking to the Chairperson of the Committee Hon Gassama highlighted that besides cleaning up the oil spillage Gam petroleum "will be definitely be punished for it [leakage]".

"They should be punished for it because Gam petroleum is a big company, they have been making a lot of

money," and one "cannot set up a big company like that which potentially can wreck serious damage [on] the environment and yet you don't have in your plans any equipment to contain all it should in case [an oil spillage] occurs".

Hon Gassama enthused that Gam Petroleum should not "have to wait until a problem occurs before you can start to think of the solution. They should have thought about it before [and] they should have prepared before. I think in all fairness they should be punished actually".

According to Hon Gassama it was so sad that Gam Petroleum Mandinary depot "did not even have a boat" to take the delegation to the spillage which has resulted in them not being able to access the main leakage.

The Chairperson also explained that the equipment required to contain the oil spillage and clean up the disaster were also not available.



Youth Speaker Hon Cham

NYP Speaker Ejects Youth NAM

From Back Page

gent-at-Arms to obey all orders and directions for the preservation of order and proper conduct in the parliament which the Speaker may give him or her".

The ejection took place during the

NYP's Third Ordinary Session for the 2022 legislative year.

Speaking on the committee selection process Hon Bah noted that the "selection committee have not done their work properly, that's why we (Parliamentarians) are having a commotion today".

In reaction to the Serrekunda Youth Representative's comments, Youth Speaker, Hon Cham demanded that Hon Bah "cannot address the selection committee that they did not do their job rightly". He urged the Youth Representative to "respect the selection committee, ---appreciate the work they do and put up your observation---without having to derogatively address any member of the selection committee".

Responding to the Youth Speaker, the Serrekunda Youth Representative insisted that his observation still stands because the selection committee's "work has not been done properly". This prompted a suggestion from the Youth Representative for Foni Berefet, urging the Youth Speaker to take action against the Hon member for Serrekunda for contempt.

NYP Speaker, Hon Cham gave numerous warnings for the Serrekunda lawmaker to withdraw his statement against the committee a suggestion which Hon Bah declined.

Youth Speaker Hon Cham eventually ordered the Sergeant-at-Arms "to escort the Hon member out of the House".

The defiant Hon Bah resisted when he declared that the Youth Speaker did "not have the right or the latitude to kick [him] out of this house," adding that the speaker "cannot quote any section in the constitution or in the standing order that has given [him] the latitude to send [him] out of this house".

Nonetheless, the Sergeant-at-Arms executed the Youth Speaker's order and removed a reluctant Hon Bah from the Assembly house. In his defence Hon Bah argued that he didn't use any offensive or abusive words during his deliberation when he opined that the work was not properly done.

Follow GPN on Social Media for Live Updates.

Facebook - GPN Gambia Parliamentary Newsletter

Twitter - @Gambia_GPN

WFD Trains Parliamentary Staff



From Back Page

Mr Jobarteh explained that NAID-RIG “is like a technical working group comprising heads of unit who would meet, review, plan, design, monitor the entire work of the National Assembly so that at the end of the day each and every unit is seen to be performing well and delivering well”. He thanked the National Assembly and the Office of the Clerk for their collaborative relationship which has resulted in the two-day training of Parliamentary Staff.

Delivering the official opening remarks, Deputy Clerk for Admin and Finance, Mr Buba M.E. Jatta welcomed the support of WFD and Madi Jobarteh who he recognised as a strong critic and supporter of Parliament. Mr Jatta highlighted that “when we say the National Assembly, the staff plays a critical role”. One of the key roles of Parliamentary staff is to provide information and Parliamentarians will “make their decision based on the information we provide. So, time to time coming together” to see how we provide that support is very critical, noted Mr Jatta. The Deputy Clerk referred to NADRIG as the engine room of the National Assembly.



IEC CEO Mr Njie (c) GP

GP Engages NAMs on Electoral Bill

From Back Page

tions next year.

The discussion was held under the context that the Electoral Reforms Bill has already been tabled at the National Assembly. It's worth noting that a new Elections Bill was tabled in Parliament during the tenure of the Fifth Legislature. This meeting afforded Parliamentarians the opportunity to take note of citizens' concerns which could be addressed via the new Elections Bill.

The current Elections Decree was issued in 1996 by the APRC Government after seizing power via a coup. The Elections Decree was promulgated a year before the 1997 Constitution came into force. Most elections in the Gambia are regulated by the Elections Decree and the 1997 Constitution, this includes the Presidential and the National Assembly Elections.

Besides the Elections Decree and the 1997 Constitution, the Local Government Act is another regulation which regulates the conduct of local government elections for Mayors and Councillors.

Various stakeholders took turns to share ideas of how the Elections Bill could be improved.

Stakeholders present called for Alkalos to be honest in the issuance of attestation forms to people during voter registration as it is one of the root causes of most of the disagreements affecting elections in the country.

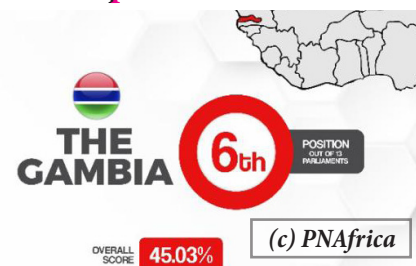
The IEC's Chief Electoral Officer, Mr Sambujang Njie explained that they expect citizens to use the revising courts as a peaceful means of resolving some of the disagreements around the registration of Non-Gambians rather than taking the law into their own hands. He added that the responsibility of announcing election results rests solely on the shoulders of the IEC as mandated by the Electoral Laws.

National Assembly member for Bundunka Kunda, Hon Sulayman Jammeh argued that more time should be allocated to candidates for the submission of documents by submitting their documents before the day of nominations so that candidates that need to provide missing documents will have sufficient time to do so. Applicants who are rejected should also have enough time to go to court.

Hon Musa Badjie of Talingding Kungjang opined that the IEC should do more to create equal preparation time for candidates because during the last Presidential Nominations some candidates were given more time to submit their applications than others. In his view, this was not fair.

Representing the Inter-Party Committee was Mr Dodou Jah of the Association for the Patriotic Reorientation and Construction who urged the IEC to look into the registration of voters in Banjul. In his view, the small number of registered voters in Banjul means that it's difficult for all the candidates to get the required number of signatures to qualify without duplications. This eventually leads to some candidates being disqualified.

The Gambia Ranks 6th in Africa's First Open Parliament Index



The Gambia's National Assembly was ranked sixth out of 13 West African Countries in the Africa Open Parliament Index (OPI) report published by the Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica). According to their website PNAfrica “is a convenor and connector of civil society parliamentary monitoring organizations and journalists towards promoting Open Parliaments across Africa”.

The OPI initiated by PNAfrica was “released for the first time in July 2022, the OPI is a biennial assessment of the level of openness of national parliaments in Africa, the PAP and Parliaments of the various Regional Economic Communities”.

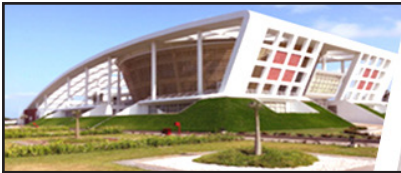
The Gambia scored a total of 45.03 points out of 100 beating Cote D'Ivoire [42.86] and coming just after Benin [45.32].

Coming in first place is Ghana which has the highest score of 63.03, while Cape Verde claimed second place with 61.86 points. In third and fourth place are Sierra Leone and Nigeria with 57.98 and 49.21 respectively.

However, two West African Countries namely; Mali and Guinea-Conakary have been exempted from the assessment because of the ongoing Coup which has suspended Parliament in these two countries.

The assessment includes scoring each country on Transparency, Civic Participation and Public Accountability. The results from the assessment highlights that the Gambia scored 22.85 out of 35 points on Transparency, 8.18 points out of 30 points on Public Accountability and 14 out of 35 points on Civic Participation.

When each category is considered individually the assessments places the Gambia in fourth place in the Transparency category beating Sierra Leone and coming after Benin. On the Public Accountability category, the Gambia was ranked 8th, coming after Senegal and outperforming Burkina Faso. On the Civic Participation category, the Gambia was ranked 9th place coming after Senegal and beating Burkina Faso.



Voice of the Nation

The Voice of the Nation is a regular column featuring engagements between Parliament and the citizenry. In this edition the National Assembly Staff were trained by WFD,

NYP held Parliamentary Sittings in Parliament and Gambia Participates engaged Parliamentarians on the Electoral Bill which was part of the Bills of the fifth legislature.



Group Photo (c) GPN

WFD Trains Parliamentary Staff

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) held a two-day training retreat for staff of the National Assembly starting on 19th August 2022 at Baobab Hotel in Bijilo. August is usually reserved for Parliament to go on recess, meaning that most Parliamentary Staff go on leave. This meant that a number of Parliamentary Staff decided to attend the session despite being on annual leave. At least twenty (20) Parliamentary Staff were in attendance for the training.

The opening session was moderated by the Deputy Clerk for Legal and Procedural Matters Mr Kalipha MM Mbye who introduced the WFD's Gambia Representative, Mr Madi Jobarteh to deliver the welcoming remarks. After welcoming all the delegates Mr Jobarteh highlighted the importance of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff. Mr Jobarteh highlighted that since the National Assembly gained its autonomy at the start of 2022 the National Assembly has created the National Assembly Inter-Departmental Research and Information Group (NAIDRIG) which can play an important role in building the capacity of Parliamentary Staff.

Continued on Page 7

NYP Speaker Ejects Youth NAM

Speaker of the National Youth Parliament (NYP), Hon Omar Cham ejected Serrekunda Youth Representative, Hon Abdou Bah from the National Assembly Chambers on 31st August 2022. This came after Hon Bah refused to withdraw his statement berating the NYP's Select Committee on their committee selection process.

During their three day long sitting, youth Parliamentarians debated motions addressing key thematic areas in national development, among which includes the;

- Need for the reassessment of the National Education Policies and Curriculums,
 - Youth irregular migration and unemployment in The Gambia
 - Illicit drugs and substance abuse among young people in the Gambia
- The debate of the motion came after the "consideration and adoption of Resolutions passed by the various Regional Parliaments" according to the National Assembly official website. Youth Speaker, Hon Cham, made reference to the NYP's Standing Order 61 subsection 2 (b) as he ordered the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove Hon Bah from the Chambers. Research conducted by GPN Reporters reveals that NYP Standing Order 61-2(b) reads that "it shall be the duty of the Ser-

Continued on Page 6



Hon Alagie Ceesay (c) GP



GP CEO Marr Nyang (c) GP

GP Engages NAMs on Electoral Bill

Gambia Participates (GP), a civil society organization that focuses on fiscal transparency and financial malpractices in The Gambia, conducted a stakeholder dialogue on Electoral Reforms with support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) on Friday 26th August 2022.

Among the stakeholders present were representatives from Political Parties, Civil Society, National Assembly Members, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the media. Voter registration, Reforms on internal party structures, Nomination, publication of election results and political campaigns were some of the topics discussed during the dialogue. Some of the more controversial points of the deliberation include voter buying, acquisition of voter cards and eligibility for voting during elections.

Delivering his opening statement, the Executive Director of Gambia Participates, Marr Nyang urged stakeholders to discuss the issues around elections in a bid to improve the country's newfound democracy. He noted that one of the objectives of the discussion was to promote the approval of the Electoral Reforms bill before the local government elec-

Continued on Page 7

CREATED BY



Publishers

This Newsletter is produced and written by Yusef Taylor and Edrissa Jallow of Gainako News, and Kebba AF Touray of Foroyaa Newspaper.
Graphic Design Saidou Jallow and printed by R&A Design.
Please send any feedback to yusef.taylor@gmail.com or +2207724140.

SUPPORTED BY

