Correction of errors of substance may be made only on the floor of the House with the permission of the Speaker. However, correction of typographical or grammatical errors which Members suggest for the Bound Volumes which will be compiled at the end of the Meeting may be clearly marked in the Daily Report, and the copy containing the corrections must be received at the Editor's Office, Parliament House, not later than four clear days after the publication of the Daily Report.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

FRIDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER, 2019

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HON. MEMBERS, WE HAVE THE OFFICIAL REPORT OF FRIDAY, 19TH JULY, 2019.

Any corrections?

[NO CORRECTION WAS MADE TO THE OFFICIAL REPORT OF FRIDAY, 19TH JULY, 2019.]

MR SPEAKER: Hon Members, item numbered 3 – Business Statement.

Hon Chairman of the Business Committee.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

MAJORITY CHIEF WHIP (MR KWASI AMEYAW-CHEREMEH) ON BEHALF OF THE (Majesty Leader/Chairman of the Business Committee): Mr Speaker, by your kind indulgence, I would like to present the Business Statement for the ensuing week on behalf of the Hon Chairman of the Business Committee.

INTRODUCTION:

Mr Speaker, the Committee met yesterday, Thursday, 31st October, 2019 and arranged Business of the House for the Third Week ending Friday, 8th November, 2019.

Mr Speaker, you may read any available communication to the House.

Question(s)

Mr Speaker, the Business Committee has scheduled the following Ministers to respond to Questions asked of them during the week:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Question(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>i. Minister for Trade and Industry</td>
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<td>ii. Minister for Agriculture</td>
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<td>iii. Minister for Communications</td>
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<td>iv. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice</td>
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<td>v. Minister for Education</td>
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<td>vi. Minister for Health</td>
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<td>vii. Minister for Roads and Highways</td>
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Total number of Questions: 12

Mr Speaker, in all, seven (7) Ministers are expected to attend upon the House to respond to twelve (12) Questions during the week.

Statements

Mr Speaker, pursuant to Order 70(2), Ministers of State may be permitted to make Statements of Government policy. Statements duly admitted by Mr Speaker may be made in the House by Hon Members, in accordance with Order 72.

Bills, Papers and Reports

Mr Speaker, Bills may be presented to the House for First
Reading in accordance with Order 120. However, those of urgent nature may be taken through the various stages in one day in accordance with Order 119.

Pursuant to Order 75, Papers for presentation to the House may be placed on the Order Paper for laying. Committee Reports may also be presented to the House for consideration.

Motions and Resolutions

Mr Speaker, Motions may be debated and their consequential Resolutions, if any, taken during the week.

Committees with Referrals

Mr Speaker, the Business Committee takes this opportunity to once again urge Committees with referrals to kindly identify those that are critical to the respective sponsors of those businesses and thereby expedite action on them. Committees are further entreated to present their reports on those completed businesses for consideration by the House before the introduction of the Budget in the second week of November 2019.

The foregoing recommendation, if complied with, would avail the House enough space to transact on all businesses related to the Budget before adjournment sine die.

The Business Committee commends the Standing Orders Committee for commencing work in earnest on the review of the Standing Orders. The Committee is implored to endeavour to speedily round up its work and to present a report for determination by the House as soon as practicable.

Joint Caucus Meeting

Mr Speaker, a Joint Caucus meeting is proposed to be held on Thursday, 7th November, 2019 after adjournment. Urgent pertinent matters would be discussed. In this regard, all Hon Members are encouraged to avail themselves at the meeting.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 160(2) and subject to Standing Order 53, the Committee submits to this honourable House the order in which the Business of the House shall be taken during the week under consideration.

Tuesday, 5th November, 2019

Questions —

*642. Mr Frank Annor-Dompreh (Nsawam-Adoagyiri): To ask the Minister for Trade and Industry what plans are underway to revive the Nsawam Astek Company Limited to give job opportunities to the youth of the area.

Statements

Presentation of Papers —

(a) Annual Report of the National Pensions Regulatory Authority (NPRA) for the year 2018.

(b) Annual Report of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) for the year 2014.

Motions —

Second Reading of Bills —

Corporate Insolvency Bill, 2019.

Consideration Stage of Bills —


Committee sittings

Wednesday, 6th November, 2019

Questions —

*643. Mr Ekow Hayford (Mfantseman): To ask the Minister for Agriculture what plans are in place to re-active the Mankesim Irrigation Project which has been abandoned since 2008.

*644. Mrs Angela Ofori Alorwu-Tay (Afadzato South): To ask the Minister for Communications when the following communities in the Afadzato South District will be provided with mobile telephone network connectivity: (i) Liati Soba (ii) Liati Wote (iii) Tafi Agome (iv) Goviefe Todzi (v) Leklebi Agbesia (vi) Xorse Kope (vii) Salami Kope (viii) Adzigbo Kope.

Statements

Presentation of Papers —

Group (acting as implementing entity of the Forest Investment Programme under the Strategic Climate Fund) for an amount of seven million United States dollars (US$7,000,000.00) being additional financing for Enhancing Natural Forest and Agroforest Landscapes Project (FIP-ENFAL).

(b) Report of the Finance Committee on the Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, Import NHIL/GETFund Levy, AU Levy, ECOWAS Levy, EXIM Levy, Special Import Levy amounting to the Ghana cedi equivalent of five million, nine hundred and eighty-three thousand, five hundred and forty dollars ninety-seven cents (US$5,983,540.97) on the purchase of equipment and materials for the completion of the University of Ghana Medical Hospital – Phase 2 under a turnkey project involving expansion works at the University of Ghana Medical Centre.

Consideration Stage of Bills —


(Continuation of debates)

Committee sittings —

Thursday, 7th November, 2019

Questions —

*632. Mr Mohammed Abdul-Aziz (Mion): To ask the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the status of the investigation of the complaint made by H. E. the President against Mr Kwesi Nyantakyi, the former President of the Ghana Football Association (GFA).

*645. Ms Francisca Oteng Mensah (Kwabre East): To ask the Minister for Education how many of the ‘E-Block schools’ have been completed from 2017 to date.

Statements

Motions —

(a) Adoption of the Report of the Finance Committee on the Loan Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and the International Development Association of the World Bank Group (acting as implementing entity of the Forest Investment Programme under the Strategic Climate Fund) for an amount of seven million United States dollars (US$7,000,000.00) being additional financing for Enhancing Natural Forest and Agroforest Landscapes Project (FIP-ENFAL).

(b) That the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2019 be now read a second time.

(Moved on Monday, 29th July, 2019 by the Hon Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Ms Gloria Akuffo. Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Mr Ben Abdallah Banda presented the Report on the Bill.)

Decision to be taken pursuant to Standing Order 110(a)

Consideration Stage of Bills —

Narcotics Control Commission Bill, 2019. (Continuation of debate)

Committee sittings.

Friday, 8th November, 2019

Questions —

*650. Mr Kwadwo Nyanpon Aboagye (Biakoye): To ask the Minister for Roads and Highways what the Ministry is doing about the following deplorable roads in the Odododiodioo Constituency: (i) Agbogbloshie road (ii) Galloway road (iii) J. O. Ocquaye road (iv) Okaitei Nettey road (v) Amamomo close.

*651. Mr Edwin Nii Lantey Vanderpuye (Odododiodioo): To ask the Minister for Roads and Highways when the Teshie Link, that is the road from Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Centre to Spintex Road will be completed.

*652. Mr Fuseini Issah (Okaikwei North): To ask the Minister for Roads and Highways when Logistic Support Services Limited, the contractor who was
 volunteered contract number DUR/HO/GRF/(E)/PM/PART/OKN/2015/01 to construct selected roads in Okaikwei North, will commence work.

*653. Mr Fuseini Issah (Okaikwei North): To ask the Minister for Roads and Highways when additional footbridges will be constructed on the N1 stretch from Apenkwa to Lapaz to avert the number of pedestrian accidents.

*654. Mr Andrew Dari Chiwitey (Sawla/Tuna/Kalba): To ask the Minister for Roads and Highways what is the status of the construction of the Tuna – Kalba road, which was awarded on contract in 2016.

*648. Mr Ekow Hayford (Mfantseman): To ask the Minister for Health when the Mfantseman Health Centre, which has a very large catchment area in terms of number of patients, will be upgraded to a polyclinic.

*649. Dr Clement A. Apaak (Builsa South): To ask the Minister for Health whether funding has been secured to upgrade the Fumbisi Health Centre to a district hospital.

Statements

Motions —

Adoption of the Report of the Finance Committee on the Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, Import NHIL/GETFund Levy, AU Levy, ECOWAS Levy, EXIM Levy, Special Import Levy amounting to the Ghana cedi equivalent of five million, nine hundred eighty-three thousand, five hundred and forty dollars ninety-seven cents (US$5,983,540.97) on the purchase of equipment and materials for the completion of the University of Ghana Medical Hospital – Phase 2 under a turnkey project involving expansion works at the University of Ghana Medical Centre.

Consequential Resolution

Consideration Stage of Bills

Narcotics Control Commission Bill, 2019. (Continuation)

Committee sittings.

10.36 a.m.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Majority Chief Whip.

Mr Andrew D. Chiwitey –– rose

Mr Speaker: Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Chiwitey: Mr Speaker, I was scheduled to ask Question 654 today. I was on a Committee programme in the Ashanti Region, Bono Region and Ahafo Region. I had to pick a flight from Kumasi to ask this Question, only to realise this morning that my Question has been rescheduled to next week Friday.

Mr Speaker, is it not fair for Hon Members to be informed about the rescheduling of their Questions to save us from all these inconveniences? I would want the Hon Leaders of the House to say something about it because it inconveniences us and wastes resources. It comes with a lot of negatives.

Mr Speaker: Hon Members, just for your information, there is a Cabinet retreat that often happens in this country for good reason. We are advised to accommodate the Hon Ministers.

Yes, any comments?

Mr Kwame Governs Agbodza: Mr Speaker, we thank the Hon Majority Chief Whip for presenting the Business Statement. Based on what happened at the beginning of the week, where some of our Hon Colleagues who are Ministers were scheduled to be here but could not come for one reason or the other due to communication gap, may I encourage the Hon Leader to ensure that our Hon Colleague Ministers, who have been scheduled to be here next week, are duly informed so that Hon Members whose Questions have been listed would get the opportunity to ask them?

Mr Speaker, I also would want to take the opportunity to ask Hon Colleagues to pay attention to what the Hon Majority Chief Whip said in terms of a joint caucus meeting. I believe Hon Members have significant concerns, and we can only address them when we avail ourselves at these meetings. So colleague Hon Members should take note and avail themselves for the joint caucus meetings as well.

Mr Afenyo-Markin –– rose––

Mr Alexander K. Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I have gone through the Business Statement ably read by the Hon Majority Chief Whip. I had an indication earlier in the week, that the Electoral Commission would be programmed to brief us in respect of their preparation towards the District Assembly elections.
Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, going through the programme for the ensuing week, it appears that is missing. I am just pointing that out for same to be addressed.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, you have a directive for the Business Committee to ensure that a commitment made by the Hon Minister for Trade and Industry in respect of the value chain effect of the pharmaceutical companies that had a dispensation on some 47 drugs was actualised, so that the printing firms — Assembly Press, Graphic Communication Group Limited and others in Ghana that have the capacity — could also benefit from the value chain in respect of the labels. This is because we have had this dispensation given to our pharmaceutical companies to enable them produce locally; yet, the labels come from overseas. The Assembly Press is doing well.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, again, that is not captured here. I would plead that same be —

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, now you are going the full gamut of whatever is possible to be discussed in the Chamber. If you feel strongly about this particular labelling matter, just make a Statement, then we follow it up and make appropriate recommendations.

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I take a cue; but just for the records?

Mr Speaker: Take the cue and do not add “but”.

Any other matter?

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, yes. The last matter, which I would strongly appeal to the Business Committee to consider incorporating same in the agenda for the ensuing week, is a possible invitation to the Hon Minister for the Interior to come —

Mr Speaker: I have discussed it with the Hon Majority Chief Whip already.

Mr Speaker: Please, if you had been here and heard some of my rulings last week, you would not pursue this pathway. Please adopt parliamentary procedure; Questions, Statements or whatever, and bring it to the Floor.

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect —

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, that is the end of the matter.

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, very well.

Mr Speaker: Any other comment?

Hon Members who feel strongly that a particular issue should be brought to the attention of the House should kindly adopt our established practices. Otherwise, it would be a conversation time, and any Hon Member might raise any matter from A to Z, no matter what.

You may ask a Question; make a Statement or you may write to me, the Leadership or the Business Committee. All these are available to us. If you write and they do not respond, then you are entitled to say that what you wrote about and expected to appear did not, so you seek an explanation.

10.46 a.m.

Then we proceed from there, please.

Hon Members, any other?

Yes, Hon Majority Chief Whip, you may continue.

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, do you want to comment on the Business Statement? You are caught by effluxion of time.

An Hon Member — rose —

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, what was really discussed. If his issue was not sufficiently discussed, then probably the Business Committee could schedule the Electoral Commission to meet with the House.

His concern may be addressed at that forum. So, we would need to consult with the Committee to know what was really discussed. If his issue was not sufficiently discussed, then probably the Business Committee could schedule the Electoral Commission to meet with the House.

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, do you want to comment on the Business Statement? You are caught by effluxion of time.

Hon Members, the Business Statement as presented accordingly is adopted.
Hon Members, item listed 4, Statements. Hon Kwabena Mintah Akandoh has a Statement on attempted suicide and possible decriminalisation thereof.

Hon Dr Clement Apaak will read the Statement on his behalf.

STATEMENTS

The Call to Decriminalise Attempted Suicide in Ghana

Dr Clement Apaak (on behalf of Mr Kwabena Mintah Akandoh) (NDC — Juaboso): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting me the opportunity to read a Statement titled the Call to Decriminalise Attempted Suicide in Ghana, by Hon Kwabena Mintah Akandoh, Hon Ranking Member on the Committee for Health and Member of Parliament for Juaboso.

Mr Speaker, I am most grateful for the opportunity to make this very important Statement on the call to repeal section 57(2) of the Criminal and Other Offences Act of 1960 (Act 29) on criminalisation of attempted suicide.

Mr Speaker, suicide is the act of intentionally causing one’s own death; and suicide attempt is an attempt to intentionally cause one’s own death but which he survives.

In Ghana, studies have shown that suicidal behaviours are associated with mental disorders, poverty-related issues (example financial crisis, loss of jobs, et cetera), parental neglect, romantic crisis, alcoholism and drug abuse. As can be seen from the limited examples of the causes of suicide, they are mostly psychological than criminal in nature.

Mr Speaker, the worldwide suicide rate is estimated at 13.42 per 100,000 individuals. Therefore, averagely 123 suicide deaths are recorded in a day with men likely to be involved at a rate of 3.5 times more than women.

In Ghana, most of the suicide cases are not officially reported. The suicide rate of reported cases is 5.4 per 100,000 of the population. Also, about 1500 suicides are committed on a yearly basis. Such high fatalities are clear indications that suicidal behaviours can now be described as a public health problem for our country, and this calls for immediate attention of which decriminalisation of attempted suicide is a key priority.

Mr Speaker, section 57(2) of the Criminal and Other Offences Act of 1960 (Act 29) classifies attempted suicide as a misdemeanour. Thus:

“A person who attempts to commit suicide commits a misdemeanour”.

Act 29, however, does not prescribe the applicable sentence. Reference to the Criminal and Other Offences (procedure) Act of 1960 (Act 30) at section 296, however, shows that where an offence is described as a misdemeanour, and the offence creating provision does not stipulate the punishment, a person convicted of that offence is liable to a term of imprisonment not exceeding three (3) years. Section 297 of Act 30 gives the court the discretion to substitute a fine for a custodial sentence or to add a fine to a custodial sentence with some limitations.

Mr Speaker, our laws thus treat a person with suicidal tendencies as a criminal. This is part of the colonial realist with the introduction of English criminal jurisprudence that we have to deal with rather than live with.

Mr Speaker, our call for the decriminalisation of attempted suicide is neither an acceptance nor endorsement of a person’s desire to take his or her own life, but is grounded on scientific evidence and reason. An attempt to criminalise it cannot constitute a tool for effectively dealing with it. Attempted suicide or the ambivalent expression of the desire to commit suicide — “I want to die” — is actually a cry for help and neurotic expression of the need for help or feeling of desperation and helplessness.

Mr Speaker, criminalisation of attempted suicide encourages persons who have suicidal tendencies to take every measure to ensure that they do not fail. Also, criminalisation discourages suicidal persons from reporting suicidal crises early enough for help. It also encourages underreporting and leads to underestimation, which is not good for planning for suicide prevention. Criminalisation of suicide does not encourage the Government to commit funds for suicide research and preventive programmes to curb the rate in the country.

Mr Speaker, I would call on my fellow Members of Parliament to join hands with the centre for Suicide and Violence Research (CSVR), University of Ghana Mental Health Authority
Authority and Health Well-being International (HWI) to take the requisite steps to repeal the offence of attempted suicide from the criminal and other offences Act of 1960 (Act 29) (as amended).

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, we must endeavour to remove the stigma associated with attempted suicide, and make our system friendly for suicidal persons to receive mental health services, social support and compassion, rather than handcuffs or a jail cell.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make the Statement.

10:56 a.m.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Mr Joseph Osei-Owusu (NPP – Bekwai): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, looking round, it does not appear that this subject excites the interest of Hon Members. That truly is my view.

I have done 30 years in law practice now. Even during my younger days, I do not remember that I heard or saw somebody prosecuted for attempted suicide. There are some matters that should be allowed to lie.

I think that in everyday jurisprudence, it is not one of the things that any prosecutor is interested in. Ghanaians generally sympathise with people who attempt to commit suicide. Growing up, those people in the small communities actually helped. The victims are taken to informal counselors.

It would probably be ideal to facilitate and give such people formal counseling, as would be desired.

Frankly, however, where are the formal counselors?

I have heard Dr Joseph B. Asare complain often, but I also know that he is heavily overburdened with the psychiatric cases that are before him.

What I suggest we do is to pretend that it does not exist. This is because truly, that is how we have looked at it in the past few years. We should rather focus on more pressing things.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph Yieleh Chireh (NDC – Wa West): Mr Speaker, I would commend the Hon Member who made the Statement. What he has brought to us is a crime that the international community looks at every year.

The important thing is that suicide or attempted suicide is an offence in our law books. We have urged for its removal. It is not a constitutional provision, so it is easy for us to bring an amendment for its removal altogether.

Yesterday, we discussed a related matter of victims of drug abuse, who have become a liability to the public. Similarly, there may be other factors why people attempt to commit suicide, but many of them are related to the intake of drugs.

It is therefore, important that we amend our laws because even though it is rare that somebody would be prosecuted for attempted suicide, the police and the other security agencies that are aware that it could be punished are likely to act on it.

The moment a person attempts suicide, however, we know that the person may not be himself. There is, therefore, no way such a person could be prosecuted, imprisoned or anything like that.

Every year, Amnesty International holds symposia, workshops and seminars to call on the Ghana Government to remove this legislation from our books. I would therefore, support that call, so that we initiate action in that regard.

I believe that if there is anything at all that we could do as a Parliament, a Private Member’s Bill in this direction would be adequate. This is because it would require a deletion of that portion of the law, which would not involve extra expenditure.

Mr Speaker, we need to make sure that people who have become susceptible to suicide are taken as mental patients. It should be a condition that must be treated fairly, just like any other physical ailment, and should not be punished.

This must be the way it should go; we should remove it from our books, and look at it more humanely. We should rather see the person as a victim of a psychological condition, and not somebody who has committed a crime. One cannot commit a crime against himself, and that is why invariably, it is hardly prosecuted. We should not leave it to be the same in our books.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.
Mr Kwame Governs Agbodza (NDC — Adaklu): Mr Speaker, I thank our Hon Colleague who made the Statement.

Mr Speaker, I took note of the comment of the Hon First Deputy Speaker, who gave us some background as to whether we actually prosecute people who attempt suicide. His point explains why we should remove this provision from our law books.

Mr Speaker, we all are aware that suicide happens in this country. On 6th September, 2019 we were told that a medical student at the University of Ghana, Legon took his own life as reported by Joy FM. We have read about these things a couple of times as well. We are told that about 1,500 people unfortunately attempt suicide in our country.

Mr Speaker, they do not respond kindly to a situation and get to a point where they feel there is no hope, so they have to attempt suicide. They are pushed to that point.

Mr Speaker, they do not respond kindly to a situation and get to a point where they feel there is no hope, so they have to attempt suicide. They are pushed to that point.

Mr Speaker, it is good to know that the Statement said that decriminalising this offence is not an acceptance, that we agree that people should do this. We know that people are driven to the edge before they attempt suicide.

However, because this is a crime, people do not even find it easy to approach professionals to seek help. We have heard of situations where people who had marital issues had gotten to a point where they took their own lives. It also include people who had financial issues.

Sometimes I find it quite interesting when somebody who has financial issues and cannot pay his rent and thus deals with himself, by attempting suicide is fined as part of the remedy at the court. The person cannot find money to pay his rent but is being fined. If he cannot pay his rent how can he find money to pay for a court fine for attempted suicide?

Mr Speaker, we also know that people have certain medical conditions, and nothing could be done about that. Such a person could be going through excruciating pain or hardship. At this point, people could be driven to make the decision of committing suicide.

Mr Speaker, I feel that if we decriminalise it, the Government would be encouraged to look at the ways of supporting these people. This is because I believe, as the Hon First Deputy Speaker said, we do not even have the requisite number of trained personnel to counsel people.

I believe Parliament even needs an office to counsel Hon Members of Parliament in terms of certain levels of stress. We probably do not hear enough of situations where Hon Members of Parliament have committed suicide. I however, have no doubt that there could be somebody in this House who could have been driven to that point before, but could have been lucky to get help from somewhere.

There are many reasons why people would have that temptation to take their own lives, and I believe decriminalising this would give Government the opportunity to help, and also give the opportunity to people not to be shy of the need to approach professionals to seek help.

I believe this case is not different from that of the mental health situation. People feel that it is only people who walk naked on the streets that have mental problems. I know that one do not have to get there before one knows one has a mental problem. I think this is a very critical problem.

Now that we know that we do not even apply the law, we should remove it from our books, so that everybody would know that we are a compassionate society. When a person is driven to the edge of taking his life, there should be a system that could rescue him. The system could ensure that the person is not treated as a criminal, but a victim who needs support.

Mr Speaker, I think this is a very important Statement that we must all support. We should decriminalise suicide cases, and show that we are a truly compassionate society.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Member.

11.06 a.m.

Mr Alexander Roosevelt Hottordze (NDC — Central Tongu): Mr Speaker, it is a truism that suicide among the youth in Ghana, in particular, is on the ascendency. This was highlighted by the Mental Health Authority a few years ago. The Chief Executive Officer of the Mental Health Authority attributed it to lack of social support, but Prince Andrew Livingstone identified eight causes of suicide among the youth.

He identified stress as being one of the causes. According to him, when students get to school, their decision to make good grades and to meet standards
based on their parents’ demand makes them study so much and maybe burn the midnight oil and at the end of the day, they get stressed and end up committing suicide.

He also indicated that bullying and peer pressure in our second cycle schools in particular, is also a cause of increasing suicidal tendencies among the youth. When young ones enter secondary schools, name calling and other bullying activities makes them lose their sense of living and so some of them end up getting used to these kind of behaviours. It is a cause of suicide among the youth.

Mr Speaker, Livingstone also attributed the increasing rate of suicide among the youth to emotional neglect from parents. According to him, most of the parents are concerned about their own welfare to the neglect of their children, so they do not take time to look after the children and to study them and see whether they have suicidal behaviours or not. The parents leave the children and they end up getting these strange kind of behaviours.

Mr Speaker, Livingstone also attributed other causes to domestic issues about sexual orientation, sexual abuse, divorce and mental disorders among the youth.

In the area of mental disorders, depression, bi-polar disorders, schizophrenia and other disorders cause the brain to function differently, and this often leads to mental disorders. The Chief Executive of the Mental Health Authority has prescribed that there should be a very effective social support system in Ghana to create more counselling centres to advise the youth against some of these behaviours to minimise this kind of disorders among the youth in Ghana.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Collins Owusu Amankwah — rose —

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, you may make a contribution, but do not interrupt the person who is on his feet.

Mr Amankwah: Mr Speaker, respectfully, I wanted to seek clarification because this is a House of records, so when an Hon Member says that suicide is on the ascendancy, what statistics did he refer to? Has he done any research?

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, you do not have a contribution to make. Hon Afenyo-Markin, you may make your contribution.

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, this is a House of records, so when an Hon Member says that suicide is on the ascendancy, what statistics did he refer to? Has he done any research?

Mr Speaker: Mr Speaker, you have given me the chance.

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I have nothing to say at this moment.

Mr Speaker: Were you on your feet by accident?

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Very well, Mr Speaker, I take a cue.
Mr Speaker: When the Hon Member on his or her feet sits, you are estopped.

Mr Afenyo-Markin: Very well, I take a cue.

Mr Chireh: Mr Speaker, the Hon Member who last spoke on the Statement referred to Dr Osei, and he attributed the incident. In this House, an Hon Member from the Ashanti Region — I cannot remember the exact constituency — made a Statement on suicide cases among students. Suicide is on the ascendancy — [Interruption] It is not a shouting match.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Chireh: All I am saying is that the more people we have —

Mr Speaker: The Hon Yieleh Chireh is a senior Hon Colleague in this House and he knows by the rules of engagement that one has to research thoroughly if he wants to make a Statement on the Floor.

Mr Speaker, for an Hon Member to have made a Statement to the effect that suicide is on the ascendancy, we want to challenge him to prove his source. Here we are; the Hon Yieleh Chireh also made reference to the fact that —

Mr Speaker: Hon Member, do not say “we”; say “I” if you would want to. You are not speaking for anybody; speak for yourself.

Mr Amankwah: Mr Speaker, respectfully, I would want to read Standing Order 70 (2).

“A Minister of State may make an announcement or a statement of government policy. Any such announcement —”

Mr Speaker: The Standing Order does not apply, so go on.

Mr Amankwah: Mr Speaker, it is rather Standing Order 72.

With your permission, I quote:

[MR AMANKWAH]

“By the indulgence of the House and leave of Mr Speaker a Member may, at the time appointed for statements under Order 53 (Order of Business) explain a matter of personal nature or make a statement on a matter of urgent public importance. Any statement other than a personal statement may be commented upon by other Members for a limited duration of time not exceeding one hour. The terms of any such proposed statement shall first be submitted to Mr Speaker.”

So Mr Speaker, there is no debate. The Hon Member just wants to provoke debate and create controversy. We would want to subject the Hon Member to show prove of the statistics that shows that suicide is on the ascendancy.

Mr Speaker, this is a serious House and the Hon Member is a senior Hon Colleague. Students are sitting in the gallery. [Laughter] I am surprised that the Hon Member wants to pollute their minds.

Mr Speaker, respectfully, I would like to appeal to the Hon Member that with all humility, he should withdraw and apologise. —[Hear! Hear!]—

Mr Chireh: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity.

For the guidance of us all, the Standing Order that the Hon Member quoted — it is somebody who made his Statement. Is the Hon Member saying that the Hon Member who
Mr Speaker, the issue I raised was that it was not about figures. So, unless people have figures here and have statistical information, can we not contribute? Is that what the Hon Member is saying? If that is so, we should write it into the Standing Orders, not when the Hon Member takes it—instead of commenting, he is now chastising people for expressing their opinions and views. He is wrong and he must be told that the Standing Order he read was wrong.

Mr Speaker, not too long ago, you gave a conjunctive effect to Standing Orders 70(2) and 72. Mr Speaker, we were all here in this House.

Mr Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, I shall read Standing Order 70(2), which reads:

“A Minister of State may make an announcement or a statement of Government policy. Any such announcement or statement should be limited to facts which it is deemed necessary to make known to the House and should not be designed to provoke debate at this stage. Any Member may comment briefly subject to the same limitation.”

Mr Speaker, you have in a ruling, interpreted this together with Standing Order 72 to mean — Mr Speaker, let me use the appropriate Latin expression; mutatis mutandis to Standing Order 72. Mr Speaker, that was your ruling. Therefore all that we say — [Interruption] — Mr Speaker, I would like Dr Apaak to be quiet and respect my right; he is disturbing me.

Mr Speaker, all that my Hon Colleague Collins Owusu Amankwah is saying is that the Hon Member who made the comment should be mindful of the rules and your ruling. He should not provoke any debate; he should not raise issues that are outside the original Statement. That is the contention of Hon Owusu Amankwah and that is in accord of your ruling, Mr Speaker.

To say suicide among the youth is on the ascendancy is a serious matter. And today, we are being told that if it is one and it is not zero, it is an ‘ascendancy’. No source? The Hon Member is introducing a controversial matter when he was only to comment in accord with the Statement.

Mr Speaker, I would strongly urge my very respected senior, Hon Yieleh Chireh — Mr Speaker, we take a lot of inspiration from him; on this occasion and on this occasion alone, we think that he is about misleading us by endorsing someone who has breached the rules by and telling us that if it is even one, it is on the ascendancy. Really? What is the correlation? What is the metaphor he is trying to create? What is he telling us? When is zero to one an ascendancy?

Mr Speaker, I would like to distance myself from this statement from Hon Yieleh Chireh; I would not support him, and our records should reflect that those of us to your right support him, and our records should reflect that. Mr Speaker, my people seem to agree with me so I am speaking for them. We disagree; that is not the law, that is not the fact.

Mr Speaker, I know you enjoy debates; this debate must flow. Mr Speaker, you earlier ambushed me when I wanted to raise a matter of national interest but now, the debate has brought itself. Mr Speaker, the same thing they did yesterday when they tried to raise an issue about security services’ recruitment when they knew they were wrong. They were raising that in the media and today, they want to raise a similar debate, no!

Mr Speaker, this is a House of records, we need to correct them. So they should retract, withdraw and let us make progress.

I thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Hon Minority Leader?

Mr Haruna Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I did not have the opportunity to be in the Chamber as the Statement was made but for the record, I am not aware that there was a Statement from an Hon Minister as my Hon Colleague who just spoke said. There is no Statement. My Hon Colleague quoted Order 70(2); he should read Order 70(2). If he wants to quote the appropriate Order, he should quote Order 72, which is the mandate — [Interruption] —

Mr Speaker: Order! The Hon Minority Leader is on his feet; he may guide the House. You would never know.

Please, go on.
Mr Haruna Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, just to support, the Mental Health Authority is quoted by a news report, (MHA) by the Ghana News Agency and myjoyonline on 12th September, 2019 and I quote with your permission;

“The (MHA) has however, over the past year, observed the increased reportage on suicide in the media across the country.”

—[ Interruption ] —

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon Members, let us not engage in a shouting match; let us be intellectual in these matters. You all want a House of record, so let us buy that which would extract matters of record.

Hon Minority Leader, you may please go on.

Mr Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I was reporting, and I should get the caption right for the records — ‘Mental Health Authority Calls for Resources to Tackle Suicide Cases.’ And in that report, they hinted that there were increasing report of the case. If it does not happen, it would not be reported.

Ordinarily, he should withdraw the word “ambush”. Since when has Mr Speaker become a hunter? [Laughter]

Mr Speaker: Hon Members, the conjunctive ruling regarding Standing Order 70 (1) and 70 (2), refers to the fact that even though in Standing Order 72, there is no clear expression of the guidance of not provoking debate, when you are guided by Standing Order 70 (2), you see clearly the rules that should guide the engagement in the making of Statements. So, it is a fact that it affects both cases, whether it is by an Hon Minister — [Hear! Hear!]

No, it does not justify your stand. Whether a Statement is from an Hon Minister or a contribution to any other matter in the Statement by an Hon Member, it should not provoke debate. Nevertheless, we should be careful how we define the parameters of “not provoking debate” because this is essentially, a debating Chamber. So long as we contribute to these discussions, we come here to debate.

Maybe, the Standing Orders Committee should take note, that certain debates are provoked unnecessarily — we did not adjectivise it. The moment you discuss these matters, you are debating and that is the business of this House. So, we must be very careful.

You would notice that even though all matters of fact should under normal circumstances be justified or withdrawn, there are certain issues which those persons who may want a confirmation themselves are not sure of their facts, by way of saying that which the other member has said is wrong. So, you may just want substantiation and not that you are challenging it, because what has been said could very well be right, but maybe, you do not know.

Incidentally, that which I was going to say anyway, which I have written down, has in effect been substantiated by the contribution made by the Hon Minority Leader, by being just patient so that the debate could go on. He has made it clear that from the official source, we could see, that he said there are increased reports on this incidence and that is good enough guidance for us.

So in future, Hon Members can be guided this way. You make your own contribution, but you are a good Member to draw to the attention of the Hon Member who made the Statement that you would be very glad.

Could the Hon Member who just spoke make a substantiation of this, just for the records? Sometimes you could humbly admit that you might not be aware of the details, truth or otherwise. However, if it is to be substantiated, we would be glad. That is a more mature way of going about the debate which is actually common in the House of Commons for example.

There are times that you may draw attention to the fact that certain things need to be further substantiated for the records. It is not that you doubt the veracity thereof — that is a different position from saying that if you do not substantiate, then it is of no consequence. These are different matters and there is a style of debate. Thank you. [Hear! Hear!]

Any further contributions to the matter before us? Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Minority Leader, Mr Haruna Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to
Mr Speaker, you are a good academic. The best sociologically researched paper on suicide is that of Durkheim, 1897, when he sought to establish the relationship between social factors and suicide. In this writing, he described three types of suicides: anomic suicide, egoistic suicide and altruistic suicide. Therefore, in reading about it, we need to understand in each of these individual cases, what the motivation was to cause suicide. We also need to appreciate why under Ghanaian law, suicides have been criminalised.

I support its criminalisation because it is not normal or acceptable behaviour. We should not think that when we have depression or are distressed, the ultimate thing is to take our lives. The life cannot be recovered. If we do not criminalise it as a country, then we are saying that it is normal and good behaviour. It cannot be.

Any person who has researched deeply on suicides — the only type of suicide that we may want to say is behaviourally rewarding is the altruistic suicide, where the individual places societal values over his or her personal values. However, when it is egoistic and lawless, it can lead to suicide.

Mr Speaker, while I agree that we should resource the Mental Health Authority to deal with it — only a month ago, while I was preparing for Maghrib (6.00 p.m.) prayers around New Town, a gentleman came to greet me with his brother, Tunde. The next day, Tunde argued with his sister over Fanta, a carbonated drink. I think that he went to buy drinks and he had an argument with his sister. The next moment, he was found hanging on a rope in his room.

His colleague who came to greet me with him, came the next day and said: “Haruna, Tunde killed himself”. Yet, do we want to say that behaviour is right and acceptable? No. Therefore I disagree with the Hon Member who made the Statement that we should decriminalise it. Unacceptable behaviour must be punished and deterred. We do not want a society where we encourage young children to resort to killing themselves if they have problems. Which society develops that way?

I commend the Hon Member who made the Statement, but fundamentally, I disagree with him. There is a basis for our criminal law — Mr Speaker, you are a good Lawyer and the source of law is morality. That behaviour is immoral, therefore, if it is punished with legislation, you would say we should—

As a country, we should find out what is responsible for the recent reported cases of increases in suicide. What is it attributable to? Then we can as a country deal with it. But when we do not know the causes and ask that it should be decriminalised— It is not normal behaviour and those who studied Social Psychology like the doctor — If they look at the relationship or the social circumstances, the situational behaviour is what informs this kind of conduct.

So, I commend the Hon Member who made the Statement, but I disagree with him that it should be decriminalised, as I understand it from portions of the Statement.

What we need to do as a country is to look at unemployment. There are many people without jobs and in that distress they get hopeless. As they get hopeless, they throw up their hands in despair. These are potential candidates of suicide. As a country, we must look deep into how to find employment opportunities for people.

When the economic theorists come here, they talk about economic growth. In my view, the strongest measure of well-being is employment. When at the end of the month, you have electricity and water bills as well as children’s school fees to pay, and you need milo and bread for them to start life for the day, but you are not working and there is no income, that is a tragedy that can compel you.
[MR NYINDAM] care is not taken, the next day, such an individual does not exist any longer.

Yes, it is true that we must neither encourage nor let it look as if someone has every right to take away his or her life and for that matter, criminality is involved. We can only criminalise and begin to try those who have attempted, but failed at committing suicide; what about those who attempted and succeeded? What are we going to do to them? So, it is more of — [Interuption] — they have already punished themselves. Mr Speaker, I think that such individuals need more counselling than being tried.

So, I would want us to look at it as I believe this is a national issue. Although we may be talking about whether it has increased or decreased, if we look at reports today, it clearly tells us that a lot of people are trying to take their lives, and for that matter, it is increasing. So we should not just sweep it under the carpet and begin to say that — Mr Speaker, if we sweep it under the carpet, it is not going to help the nation.

We need a proper institution that will take up these matters and deal with them head-on. I think if we do that at the end of the day, we will be reducing the attempts at suicide.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I thank you for this opportunity.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon First Deputy Majority Whip.

That brings Statements time to an end.

At the Commencement of Public Business, item listed 5(a)(i) by the Hon Minister for Finance?

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, items listed 5(a)(i), (ii) and (iii) are not ready and the same applies to 5(b). If we could take item listed as 5(c) on the Order Paper. The Hon Chairman is here to lay the Paper.

Mr Speaker: Do you mean to say that it is not because of any absence, but it is just that they are not ready?

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, no, those items are not ready.

Mr Speaker: Are the items of 5(a) not available for us?

Alright. Item numbered 5(b) by the Hon Minister for Energy.

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, item numbered 5(b) is also not ready. If we could take item numbered 5(c)?

Mr Speaker: Item numbered 5(c)

(i) by the Hon Chairman of the Committee.

PAPERS

By the Chairman of the Committee —


Mr Speaker: Item numbered 6 – Motions.

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, item numbered 6 is not ready. If you look at the Order Paper, we have advertised a lot of Committee Sittings and today too, being a Friday, Hon Members will be preparing to go to their various constituencies.

So I would want us to — [Interuption] — the Hon First Deputy Speaker has indicated his readiness to take the item numbered 6.

Therefore I withdraw my first application. Could we please take the item numbered 6?

MOTIONS


1.0 Introduction

1.1 In accordance with article 14(2) of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Community Relating to the Pan-African Parliament
Pan-African Parliament – 2nd to 1 November, 2019

17th May, Midrand, S.A

1.0 Administration of Oath

Eighteen new Members, including Hon Mavis Nkansah Boadu from Ghana, took and subscribed to the Oath of Office in accordance with rules 9 and 20 (4) of the Rules of Procedure of the Pan-African Parliament.

2.0 Messages of Solidarity

The following dignitaries presented messages of solidarity at the official opening:

i. Hon (Dr) Bernadette Lahai. (Sierra Leone) former Member of the Bureau of the Pan-African Parliament.

ii. Rt Hon Richard Msowoya, Speaker of the Parliament of Malawi.

iii. Hon Albert Richard Royembo. Second Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Gabon, and

iv. Mr Valentin Tapsoba, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Regional Representative for Southern Africa.

2.1 The Session was officially opened by the President of PAP, H.E Roger Nkodo Dang. He welcomed Members to the Session and mentioned that the Session was taking place at a special time, when South Africa, the host country, was holding its sixth democratic elections after the abolition of the abhorrent system of Apartheid. He informed Members of the passing away of Honourable Bethel Nnaemeka Amadi, former President of the Pan-African Parliament and PAP’s Goodwill Ambassador. He paid tribute to him and the thousands of Africans who fell victims to the extreme climate change in the Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. H. E. Roger Nkodo Dang also paid tribute to the victims who lost their lives in the Ethiopian Airlines Plane crash.

The House observed a minute’s silence in honour of all the departed.

The President expressed his gratitude to all the invited special guests for having accepted the invitation to attend the Opening Ceremony of the Session. He thanked the Government and the People of South Africa for the continuous support to the Pan-African Parliament.

2.2 He mentioned that the theme for the Session was the same theme declared by the African Union for 2019 and that the issue was of paramount importance for Africa and its people because of all the ills inflicted on mankind. Faced with this scourge, Africa must strive to unite, rather than divide, so as to find solutions to the ills besetting the continent. Mr Roger implored Members to promote multilateralism, as it was the only thing that would be able to provide a common and unified answer to this problem faced by the continent. Members therefore must rally for intra-African solidarity that places the dignity of the citizens at the heart of its social project.

2.3 The issue of refugees, he said, could not be the preserve of African States, but rather a global one; where the cooperation of everyone was needed to seek lasting solutions. Members of PAP therefore needed to watch over the destinies of the continent and remember the need to continue with the African tradition of tolerance and peace. Members should also foster an Africa where values, peace and tolerance are the order of the day, and where living together as one must become a reality.

He concluded his remarks by appealing to all to ensure that Africa would remain standing and continue to process its wealth of raw materials for the well-being of its People.
5.0 Address by the Special Guest of Honour

5.1 The special guest of honour for the official opening was H.E. (Dr) Amal Abdullah Al-Qubaisi, President of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates. She expressed her sincere thanks and appreciation to the President of PAP for the invitation, which was a great honour and privilege to her and the People of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). She noted with satisfaction, the coordination and cooperation between the Federal National Council (FNC) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union African Group at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference (IPU) as well as the numerous Bilateral Agreements, Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) and Friendship Groups with most African Parliaments. She was hopeful that the UAE could foster that relationship and expand it to all the Members of the Pan-African Parliament.

5.2 She mentioned that the development potential of the strategic cooperation between the Federal National Council and Africa was obvious. For instance, the exports to the UAE from Africa had increased to about 10 per cent in the last five years and the non-oil trade exchange between the UAE and African Countries had amounted to US$38 Billion in 2016.

5.3 On trade, food, security, environment, energy and climate change, the special guest indicated that there was a great opportunity for cooperation. However, to unlock this potential, there was the need to work hard in making Africa safe, safe for its people, its investors and its neighbours. She intimated that, the UAE had been an investor in the security of Africa in the same way it had been an investor in its economy and political stability.

From Egypt to South Africa, the relationship had always been multidimensional and rooted in friendship, economic cooperation and shared security concerns. In terms of security and stability in Africa, be it antipiracy efforts in Somalia and Eritrea, political stability in Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, or counter-terrorism efforts in Mali and Libya or solid investments in infrastructure from South Africa to Mauritania, the UAE had been playing a substantial role in peacekeeping in the Continent.

5.4. On terrorism, she stated that, it could not be fought without policies that balance freedom of discourse with responsibility and without policies that establish tolerance as a main value in the communities.

Countering terrorist acts without addressing the radical discourse that feeds it is like extinguishing the tip of the flame. As the Chairperson of the IPU High Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism, she pledged to do her best to support the Group in efforts to reduce or eliminate terrorism in the world. She said the UAE’s support to this Advisory Group was part of its responsibility towards the collective safety and security of the African Region, and was hopeful that through cooperation with Members of the Pan-African Parliament, they would be able to work together to streamline policies and legislations to make the global action against radicalisation and terrorism more effective.

5.5 H.E. Al Qubaisi indicated that since the establishment of the UAE in 1971, the country had been committed to tolerance and peaceful co-existence. People from all over the world, from different religious creeds and cultural backgrounds had been welcomed to make the country their home, with several nationalities living harmoniously within its borders presently.

UAE’s philosophy of nationhood has created a bridge that crosses conflicts and encourages engagement between the different cultures that seek peace, development, cooperation and growth. Within this context, 2019 has been declared as “the year of tolerance” in UAE. This was marked by the historic visit of Pope Francis to the UAE in February, aimed at building bridges of peace, tolerance and human fraternity amongst people of different faiths.

5.6. Touching on the theme for the Session, she mentioned that the UAE accords high importance to the issue of refugees, who flee their country as a result of conflicts and unstable situations. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been supporting and assisting refugees in various countries of the world, especially after the exacerbation of the problem at the beginning of 2017, when the number of refugees in the World reached 22.5 million. She stated that the UAE and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) had signed a US$4 million Agreement to provide emergency responses to southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda, in line
with the pledge made by the UAE during the “Uganda Solidarity Conference on Refugees” held in Kampala in 2017. Concluding her address, she said she was hopeful that the discussion at the Session would be lively and interesting and wished Members a fruitful Session.

6.0 Activity Report of the Pan-African Parliament

6.1 The Report was presented by the President of the Pan-African Parliament and it covered activities undertaken by all organs and structures of the PAP, between October 2018 and April 2019. The President stated that, the PAP successfully held the First Ordinary Session of the Fifth Parliament in Kigali, Rwanda, from 18th October to 2nd November, 2018, in accordance with rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure of the PAP. The major issues deliberated at Plenary during the Session included the Activity Report of the PAP, presentations on Rwanda’s socio-economic transformation, peace and security in Africa, status of the fight against corruption in Africa, role and impact of the African Union election observation missions in view of the numerous cases of electoral disputes in Africa, and food and nutrition security systems in Africa.

6.2 The Report also captured the successful holding of meetings of Permanent Committees and Caucuses, both during the October, 2018 Ordinary Session and during the March, 2019 Committees Sittings. The Committees held a total of 29 meetings between 4th and 8th March, 2019. The Committees were also engaged in Workshops and received presentations on topics related to their respective mandates. This was to enable Members to understand the current situation of the vulnerable groups and make pertinent recommendations on necessary measures to generate sustainable solutions to the situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa.

6.3 The President informed Members that, following the decision taken in July, 2018 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments to reform the organs of the African Union, the PAP set up an ad hoc Committee to oversee the Parliament’s interactions on the institutional reform of the African Union.

In May 2018, the ad hoc Committee held an inception meeting which generated an initial PAP response with recommendations. These were submitted to the Reform Unit, which then included it in its final report submitted to the policy organs at the July, 2018 AU Summit.

6.4 On the ratification of PAP’s revised Protocol (Malabo Protocol), he mentioned that two more ratifications had been made, taking the total number of ratifications to 12. The countries are; Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Togo. He mentioned that, Members of the Bureau would be leading advocacy missions to the respective Regions to advocate for more ratifications. Also, letters to National Speakers calling for urgent action to sign and or ratify the Malabo Protocol would be given to Members of PAP from the Member States yet to sign and or ratify the Malabo Protocol.

6.5 The President informed Members that the PAP deployed Members and Staff to participate in AU Electoral Observer Missions in some African countries, namely: Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Comoros and Benin.

By observing those elections, the PAP was contributing to ensuring transparency and fairness in the conduct of elections in Africa and help build public confidence in the credibility of the electoral processes. The election observations also helped to promote and protect the civil and political rights of citizens and all stakeholders in elections, and could lead to the correction of errors or weak practices. Electoral observation Reports, which are generated from the missions, could assist the Member States and citizens to build trust in the democratic process and enhance the legitimacy of the governments that emerge from elections.

6.6 The Report indicated that, PAP in collaboration with the Open Society Foundation, Africa Regional Office in South Africa organised a meeting of leading political parties on 7th March, 2019 to discuss the challenges of electoral democracy in Africa and to propose solutions to address the challenges. The meeting was premised on the observation of the flaws in elections and democracies that threaten to reverse the gains made by Africa.

6.7 Members were also informed that on 4th March, 2019, the PAP with support from the UNHCR organised a workshop to address statelessness in Africa. While the workshop targeted Members of the Committees on Justice and Human Rights and Rules, Privileges and Discipline, Members of other committees were in attendance. Participants had the opportunity to deliberate on measures taken by African States in addressing the challenges of statelessness.
6.8 Reporting on key achievements, the President mentioned that PAP successfully organised statutory and non-statutory activities of all structures of PAP in a secure environment and in compliance with the PAP’s legal framework. PAP also participated effectively in the African Union institutional reform process and other AU workshops and events. PAP, again, was involved in the revision of AU Policy Documents such as Procurement Manual, Financial Manual and Travel Policy while finalising the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan of PAP.

6.9 The President informed the House that, despite these achievements, PAP faced numerous challenges including, high turnover of Members. This has an impact on securing effective participation of Members in the statutory and non-statutory activities, and on preserving the institutional memory and capacity of the Parliament.

He also mentioned that, the responsiveness of Members for participation in electoral observer missions had critically decreased and advised that Members renewed their commitment to respond on time to enable the PAP, and the African Union Commission (AUC) and Electoral Coordination Units make the necessary arrangements for their travel. He indicated that financial constraints of the PAP resulted in some Committees not being able to implement planned activities, such as missions of investigation, on-site visits, promotional missions, consultative meetings, amongst others. Another issue of concern was that of the disproportionate distribution of membership of Committees. Whereas some Committees have an excessive number of Members, others struggle to meet their quorum. It was therefore important that the Bureau considered this situation and consulted with other Bureaux for a suitable solution.

6.10 Concluding on the Activity Report, the President stated that, the PAP had made meritorious efforts to fulfil its strategic objectives through a wide range of activities, both statutory and non-statutory. He acknowledged the technical support and contributions received from all stakeholders, including AU Organs, institutions and civil society organisations, which made it possible to achieve the objectives. He expressed his gratitude to development partners for their generosity and fruitful partnership that had enabled the achievement of the objectives.

6.11 During the debate on the Report, it came out that two new members from Ivory Coast had been sworn in earlier in the day, bringing the total membership of Ivory Coast to seven, which was contrary to the Protocol. Some Members argued that the purported swearing in of the two new members was null and void and therefore they should not be allowed to sit in as members, but observers. The President explained that, Ivory Coast had established a Second Chamber which designated two Senators as Members of PAP. He said that, what had happened was due to break in communication between the two Houses of Ivory Coast, and stressed that the issue was an internal matter for the authorities in Ivory Coast, and therefore they should not be allowed members was null and void and purported swearing in of the two new members was null and void and therefore they should not be allowed to sit in as members, but observers. The President explained that, Ivory Coast had established a Second Chamber which designated two Senators as Members of PAP. He said that, what had happened was due to break in communication between the two Houses of Ivory Coast, and stressed that the issue was an internal matter for the authorities in Ivory Coast, and therefore they should not be allowed to break in communication between the two Houses of Ivory Coast, and stressed that the issue was an internal matter for the authorities in Ivory Coast, and therefore they should not be allowed to sit in as members, but observers.

7.0 Report on the African Governance Report

7.1 The presentation was made by Bishop Dinis Salomao Sengulane, Member of the Panel of Eminent Persons on the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). He stated that, the Report was commissioned by the AU and was supplementary or complementary to the voluntary APRM country self-assessment. The APRM country self-assessment focuses on democracy and political governance; economic governance as well as management and corporate governance and socio-economic development. He mentioned that, the African Governance Report (AGR) is aimed at covering all the fifty-five AU Member States rather than just the thirty-eight that had acceded to the APRM and seeks to provide regular, periodic, continuous (bi-annual) assessments of selected governance areas. It is also geared towards promoting the AU’s quest for universal accession to the APRM by the year 2023.

7.2 He indicated that the APRM has expanded its mandate to include new roles. Apart from facilitating the voluntary country assessments, it would also monitor the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The expanded roles, again, include contributing to the establishment of an early warning system for conflict prevention. The realisation of these responsibilities calls for strengthened cooperation and collaboration with other institutions to fulfil the mandate.

7.3 The African Governance Architecture (AGA) platform has therefore prioritised five governance assessment areas, which are:

i. Transformative leadership.

ii. Constitutionalism and the rule of law.

iii. Peace, security and governance.
7.4 He informed the House that, the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on the state of governance in Africa, welcomed the Africa Governance Report developed by the APRM and urged the Member States to consider the recommendations contained in the Report with a view to enhancing good governance and sharing best practices at both country and continental levels.

The Assembly also urged the Member States to develop national governance reports as a self-assessment tool for promoting good governance in line with the recommendations of the Report.

Lastly, the Assembly urged the APRM to seek enhanced cooperative and collaborative relationships amongst stakeholders, involving consultations and inclusiveness to ensure enhanced governance performance through collective or joint ownership of the AGR.

7.5 Concluding his presentations, he stated that, the APRM was working through National Governing Councils on the establishment of national governance monitoring and reporting frameworks. This would provide a basis for supporting the APRM Secretariat to execute the broader mandate of assessing all aspects of governance, including implementation of the AU Agenda 2063 and UN SDGs. The Eminent Member said that, the Member National Governance Report could be utilised as inputs into the bi-annual AU Governance Report. As minimum requirement, the national governance Reports would be expected to contribute to reporting on the five (5) selected thematic areas of governance assessment in the AGR. The AU Member States are however encouraged to make any other additions to national governance Reports, as the countries have their own sovereign priorities.

8.0 Report of the Delegation to the Conferences of the Parties (COP24)

8.1 The Report was presented by the Chairperson of the Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment on behalf of the Delegation. The 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place in Katowice, Poland, from 3rd to 14th December, 2018. An estimated 30,000 people participated in COP24 and the programme was packed with various side events, exhibitions, press conferences and discussions. He mentioned that Members of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), led by the First Vice-President participated in activities ranging from technical side events, bilateral meetings with various stakeholders and press conferences, among others. The Delegation also participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the African Day Programmes.

8.2 The Report stated that, the key objective of the participation by PAP in the Conference was to carry the hopes, aspirations and concerns of the African people to the gathering. The participation was also to support the African common position through advocacy and other related activities and to contribute to the current climate change debate by offering the perspective of African Parliamentarians. The participation was again to advocate for adequate climate legislations in order to implement and enforce the Paris Agreement in African countries.

8.3 The Chairperson informed the House that, in order to achieve the above objectives, the Delegation organised a PAP Day to give Members the opportunity to engage with stakeholders, including the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), UN Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).

Apart from the PAP Day, the Delegation also organised its annual side event on the theme “Climate Finance and Status of Climate Legislation in Africa.” The main objective of the side event was to discuss the outstanding issues of climate finance, and further assess the status of climate legislation in Africa.

8.4 The Delegation also met with the leaders of the IPU Group. The meeting was jointly organised by the IPU and the Polish Parliament, and it was a follow-up to the highly successful parliamentary meeting held in Bonn, Germany, in November 2017. The meeting aimed at providing Members the opportunity to obtain first-hand information on the main issues and orientations of COP24, to enable them interact with experts and negotiators directly involved in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and to discuss and identify ways of ensuring implementation of the Paris Agreement.
8.5 The Delegation again attended the African Day. The main objective of the African Day at COP24 was to provide a platform and opportunity for Member States, development partners, the private sector, civil society and various key stakeholders to dialogue and discuss ways of supporting coordinated partnerships and approaches. The Day brought together African Heads of State and Governments, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Principals of Regional Institutions, a broad range of development partners; African Group of Negotiators (ANG) on Climate Change, scientists and experts, leaders in the private sector and financial institutions; civil society groups, the media, women and youth groups, and various other stakeholders.

8.6 The Delegation recommended that PAP should endeavour to have an Observer/Partner Status in COPs as this would allow for accreditation and direct registration as an independent organisation, and not just be accommodated under the AUC. It also recommended that Delegates selected to attend the Conference must be knowledgeable in the area of climate change, environment and related fields in order to be fully involved in crafting the PAP’s position at the Conference.

Finally, the Delegation recommended that the Committee on Agriculture should finalise the necessary arrangements to operationalise PAP’s Climate Desk, including Membership and the terms of reference for its operation.


9.1 The Report was presented by Ms Angela Martins, Head of the Cultural Division of the Department of Social Affairs of the AUC. She reported that, the Charter was adopted by the 6th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly held in Khartoum, the Sudan in January 2006. The Charter so far had been signed and ratified by thirteen (13) AU Member States. The main aim of the Instrument is to promote the arts, culture and heritage sectors on the continent and ensure that they play full part in the political, economic and social development of the continent in the rehabilitation and unification efforts of the African people.

9.2 She mentioned that the Specialised Technical Committee of the AUC on Youth, Culture and Sports (STC) issued a decision endorsing the following Member States as regional champions for the ratification of the Charter: Chad and Congo (Central Africa); Ethiopia (East Africa); Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Senegal (West Africa) and South Africa (Southern Africa). The STC also requested the champions to develop advocacy and awareness campaigns on the Charter in their respective regions. The Committee also developed a draft implementation guide for the Charter which was reviewed by a group made up of experts on culture and approved.

9.3 The Head of the Social Affairs Department stated that, despite the initiatives, ratifications of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance remained very low. The reasons may include, competing national agendas and priorities, long and complicated legal or law-making processes and constitutional procedures, which must be negotiated before an international treaty is finally approved or ratified. The reason may also be the lack of technical expertise at the line Ministries of Arts, Culture and Heritage to move forward and speed, the processes of ratification of the international conventions.

9.4 She observed that, though the Charter was adopted over a decade ago, it was yet to enter into force and that the request to the Sectorial Ministers in 2012 to fast-track the process by 2013 did not materialise. She appealed to the thirteen (13) Member States that had ratified the Charter and the other nineteen (19) signatories that had not done so to support the Commission in its efforts to secure the required number of ratifications so that the Charter could enter into force without further delay.

9.5 Concluding her presentation, she stated that the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance is a unique Continental Instrument that encapsulates all aspects of the arts, culture and the heritage sector. Its implementation would therefore foster cultural understanding among African people and enhance the preservation and conservation of African heritage sites. It would also help enhance creativity in the arts, culture and the economic sector and thus sustain the livelihood of its participants.

10.0 Report of the Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs on a Proposed Model Double Taxation Agreement (DTA)

10.1 The Chairperson of the Committee Informed Members that, the Committee in collaboration with
there are no prospects of reasonable agreements with countries where and trade partners. Often, the Tax in Africa do not have tax agreements in Africa do not have tax agreements.

10.2 The Report stated that countries in Africa do not have tax Agreements with their real or potential investors and trade partners. Often, the Tax Agreements are with countries where there are no prospects of reasonable levels of trade or flow of investments and worse still, some are with tax havens or low tax jurisdictions thus exposing them to the risk of tax avoidance by the treaty partner.

The African situation is compounded by old tax agreements dating back to the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Some of the tax agreements are outdated and they largely allocate more taxing rights to the Residence States (Developed Countries) at the expense of the Source States (Developing Countries). Based on the above, Africa needs appropriate Double Taxation Agreements (DTAs) to promote trade and investment between States in Africa and other Continents.

10.3 The Chairperson indicated that the suggested ATAF Model though not legally binding on African States, however, it provides best practice model for States when negotiating tax agreements with other countries, particularly developed countries with better negotiation capacity.

The use of this model would promote a consistent approach in Africa, thus leading to increased tax certainty and a better investment and trade environment. The model would also make DTA negotiations much easier in Africa, where the general framework and text could easily be agreed upon and the focus centred on issues such as rates of withholding taxes at source, permanent establishment definition, services taxation, exchange of information and a clear dispute resolution.

10.4 The ATAF’s Model, as indicated by the Report, had been modelled along the lines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations (UN) Model Tax Conventions. The unique feature of the ATAF Model DTA is that the provisions combine both the UN and OECD Models. Some of the variations in the ATAF’s Double Taxation Agreement Model include, a wider definition of permanent establishments to give Source States greater taxing rights of business profits to be consistent with the approach of African countries.

The wide definition covers amongst other things, activities connected to exploration or exploitation of natural resources and services provided by individuals. It also includes provisions on taxing rights for all services rendered for fees on technical services.

10.5 The Committee in its recommendation, appealed to all African States to adopt the model to be used for tax negotiations since it addresses otherwise blatant tax gaps observed in some countries in Africa. It also recommended that the Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs of PAP be made to lead the formulation of the proposed Draft African Model Double Taxation Agreement.

Finally, the Committee recommended that in the formulation of the model, departments of the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, national tax management institutions and civil society organisations must be meaningfully involved.


11.1 The Committee worked on two Audit Reports. The first was the Internal Audit Report on the Review of Risks in PAP and the second was the Report of the Board of External Auditors of the African Union on Factual Findings in Connection with the Operations of the Pan-African Parliament (2016 to 2018).

11.2 The Chairperson informed the House that in August, 2018, the African Union Commission (AUC) commissioned the Board of External Auditors (BoEA) to undertake an independent special audit of PAP arising from a decision of the Executive Council, (EX. CL/Dec. 1020 (XX111)), during its 33rd Ordinary Session in June, 2018, held
in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The terms of reference for the special audit were to:

i. Assess whether PAP was fulfilling its mandate economically, efficiently and effectively, in line with AU Rules and Regulations and identify responsibilities for non-compliance or non-performance.

ii. Identify and substantiate issues of governance, probity, accountability, transparency and integrity.

iii. Review the administration and the roles of management of the Office of the President versus the Office of the Clerk and identify weaknesses if any.

iv. Review the PAP recruitment process to assess whether it was in line with AU Rules and Regulations.

v. Review the competencies, experience and skills to assess whether the staff are fit for the respective jobs.

vi. Assess budget performance in accordance with planned programmes and results achieved during the period.

vii. Review the general financial management with a view to providing facts indicating there was no misappropriation of assets at PAP and, if there was identify the perpetrators.

viii. Conduct any other procedures that may be incidental to the above terms of reference.

11.3 The Report by the BoEA noted inconsistencies between Article 11 (4) of the AU Financial Rules and Regulations and Rule 4(g) of the PAP Rules of Procedure. Whereas the AU Rules & Regulations provides for the Executive Council to consider and present the Budget proposal to the Assembly for approval, the Rules of Procedure of the PAP states that PAP should examine, debate and make recommendations on the Budget before approval by the Assembly.

11.4 The Report also noted that PAP’s Medical Insurance for use by Members whilst in Midrand or on official assignments has been extended to cover Members in their countries. This, according to the Auditors, was in violation of Executive Council Decision 407, which limited coverage to periods when Members are engaged in PAP activities. This appears to be a waste of financial resources resulting from duplication in payment by Member States.

The Committee therefore tasked Management to undertake a comprehensive study of the cost of medical coverage for Members while in South Africa, and full coverage for all year round and in their various countries, with a view to determining which was more cost effective and would better serve the need of the Members.

11.5 The Report again noted that, there were inconsistencies between the AU Financial Rules and PAP Rules of Procedures. The former states that, the PAP Bureau is responsible for regulating the procedures relating to financial, organisational and administrative needs while on the other hand, the AUC makes financial allocations without consulting the Bureau.

The Committee therefore tasked Management to undertake a comprehensive study of the cost of medical coverage for Members while in South Africa, and full coverage for all year round and in their various countries, with a view to determining which was more cost effective and would better serve the need of the Members.

In the Committee’s view, it was not a matter of inconsistencies as such, but rather a confidence issue on the part of the AUC. This is further buttressed by the Report of the Internal Audit, which noted some structural differences between PAP and other AU organs. It therefore comes as no surprise that the AUC makes financial decisions for PAP without consulting PAP’s Bureau, thereby treating PAP as a lower organ of the AU.

11.6 The Audit on the risks inherent in PAP’s operations was conducted by the Internal Audit Office of PAP with a view to assessing whether PAP was effectively managing its risks in order to minimise their impact on the achievement of its organisational objectives. This was critical, given that at the time, PAP did not have a risk management framework in place.

The Audit observed that PAP did not follow appropriate channels in settling staff disciplinary cases, as noted in the dismissal of the Clerk to Parliament.

The Clerk was dismissed by the President via electronic mail, which was followed by a formal letter of termination on various grounds, including poor performance, irregular appointment to positions, involvement in election campaigns, conducting an unauthorised media interview and unauthorised travel.

The Disciplinary Board appointed, prior to the dismissal, did not handle the case and the Clerk did not have the opportunity to defend himself against the allegations before his dismissal.

11.7 From the analysis of the two Reports, the Committee noted some areas of convergence which pointed to the need for the management of PAP to take action on the risks and observations raised in the two Reports to ensure continuous improvement in the manner in which the Institution discharged its mandate.
The Committee recommended that the Rules, Privileges, and Discipline Committee and the AUC Legal Department should align the AU Financial Rules and Regulations with the PAP Rules of Procedures regarding the Budget process. The Bureau and Management should also follow up with the AUC on the yearly presentation of the AU’s Budget to PAP for debate before adoption by the Heads of State and Governments.

11.8 Concluding the Presentation, the Chairperson mentioned that on the balance of issues, it was clear from the Terms of Reference of the AUC Audit that the AUC had some reservations about the manner in which PAP was being managed. There was therefore the need for PAP to exercise due diligence in discharging its mandate and prove its capability in managing its own affairs within the dictates of the Rules and Regulations of the AU.

12.0 Report of the Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters on the 2019 Theme of the AU

12.1 The Report was presented by a Member of the Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters, on behalf of the Chairperson. He informed the House that the workshop was held for the PAP to contribute towards seeking durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa.

In attendance were Members of the underlisted Committees;

i. Education, Culture, Tourism and Human Resources;

ii. Cooperation, International Relations and Conflict Resolution;

iii. Justice and Human Rights;

iv. Rules, Privileges and Discipline.

12.2 Resource Persons for the Workshop included Officials from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Department of Social Affairs of the African Union Commission, New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the International Center for Girls and Women in Education Africa, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Parliament of Uganda, the Parliament of South Sudan, the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission and the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG).

12.3 The Keynote Address was delivered by the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Ambassador Samil Chergui, who stressed the importance of the theme selected for the workshop and why it was necessary to find lasting solutions to forced displacement in Africa.

He stated that, Africa hosts one-third of refugees and returnees, a problem caused by both man and natural disasters including inequalities in resource sharing and lack of good governance. He however noted that, a change was happening in Africa which denote the political maturity of some leaders. The latest peace agreement signed between the different rebel groups and the Central African Republican Government, the presidential elections won by the opposition in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar were efforts contributing to stability on the Continent.

12.4 The topics discussed included the following:

i. Current situation of migrants, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons;

ii. Policies and legal frameworks governing refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa;

iii. Access by migrants to social services;

iv. Lasting solution to forced displacement in Africa;

v. The role of the Pan-African Parliament in seeking lasting solutions to forced migrations in Africa.

12.5 Panellists agreed that the causes of forced displacement in Africa were economic, social and cultural in nature. They indicated that, migration was largely caused by the failure to respect human rights and democracy in the home countries of those migrant populations. The Workshop therefore recommended that African countries should silence the weapons before 2020, whilst empowering the youth socially and economically. Africa must also promote dialogue on peace, enhance conflict prevention measures and promote good governance as a way of preventing forced displacement in Africa.

13.0 Report of the Joint Committee on Health, Labour Social Affairs and Gender, Family, Youth and Persons with Disabilities on the Africa Union’s 2019 Theme “Year of Refugees, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”
13.1 The Report was presented by the Chairperson of the Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs. He explained that the Workshop was held in Tunisia, because Tunisia was one of the countries located in the northern part of the Continent facing the Mediterranean where African migrants to Europe use as a transit point.

For more than a decade, migration flow from Africa to Europe had reached uncontrollable proportions, as migrants continue to stream into the coasts of these countries. Tunisia had not been spared this phenomenon, especially since the advent of the Arab Spring experienced by most of those countries.

13.2 The Workshop was opened by H.E. Abdelfattah Mourou, First Vice-President of the Assembly of Representatives of Tunisia. He emphasised the role of the Pan-African Parliament in promoting the aspirations of the People of Africa, and said, through the Permanent Committees, PAP must establish structures for the socioeconomic development of the Continent. These structures should contribute to the emancipation of young people, who risk their lives daily crossing the Mediterranean.

Discussion at the Workshop was designed to strengthen collaboration among the Members, the Executive and Civil Society, for the implementation of the Legal Instruments that grant refugees and displaced persons the same rights as the citizens of the host country. These rights include education, health and employment.

13.3 The Representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) defined each concept according to the United Nations Convention. The UN defines refugees as people who have fled their country because they are being persecuted for their political opinion or because of the socio-economic situation of their country of origin. Migrants and displaced persons voluntarily leave their country of origin in search of a better life. The lack of social justice, lack of transparency in elections and poor governance of most states could be considered as key factors in the forced displacement of populations.

13.4 Addressing the issue of the protection of rights of refugees, the Dean of the African community in Tunisia informed Members that in 2011 a decree was promulgated in Tunisia, laying down the modalities for the stay of irregular migrants. Efforts, therefore are being made to improve on the living conditions of displaced persons in Tunisia. Despite the adoption of the Right to Dignity Act of 2014, which allows free movement (article 23), access to health care (article 32) and the right to justice for all persons within its territory, conditions have not improved as a result of the existence of conflicting laws. This does not always augur well for the well-being of refugees and therefore the need to harmonise these laws.

13.5 The Representative of the African Union Commission, on his part, stated that the Kampala Convention, which protects the rights of displaced persons is one of the legal instruments whose implementation should be effective, given the spate of internal conflicts across the Continent.

A model law serving as a roadmap has therefore been developed to assist Member States in integrating the Convention into their national laws. However, if conditions are not improved at the point of departure, it would not augur well for their return. This meant that refugees who have undergone socio-economic integration in the host country are not likely to willingly return home. He appealed to Members to work closely with civil society to stamp out this scourge. He highlighted the fundamental role of Members to solving the humanitarian crisis facing the Continent and that, in exercising their prerogatives, they should exercise oversight in the adoption of appropriate laws and control of government action, in an effort to mitigate political tensions and ensure an enabling environment for the development of the citizens.

14.0 Report of the Joint Committee on Justice & Human Privileges & Discipline and Cooperation & International Relations & Conflict Resolution on Statelessness and Citizenship in Africa

14.1 The workshop was hosted by the three Committees and was facilitated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The main objective of the workshop was to create a platform for an in-depth discussion on statelessness in Africa and to take stock of progress and constraints in relation to the implementation of the “I Belong Campaign”. The Workshop was also attended by representatives of the African Regional Economic Communities.

14.2 Mr Leonard Zulu, Deputy Regional Representative, UNCHR Regional Office for Southern Africa, made a presentation on the role of the UNHCR in addressing statelessness. He stated that, the UNHCR was mandated by the United Nations to
lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees, and together with governments work for the resolution of challenges encountered by refugees. As such, UNHCR’s primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees while striving to ensure that everyone could exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state.

UNHCR’s efforts are mandated by the Organisation’s Statute and guided by the 1951 UN Convention and its 1967 Protocol relating to Refugees.

He mentioned that UNHCR seeks to reduce situations of forced displacement by encouraging states and other institutions to create conditions that are conducive to the protection of human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In pursuit of the same objective, UNHCR seeks to consolidate the reintegration of returning refugees in their country of origin, thereby averting the recurrence of refugee-producing situations.

In 2014, UNHCR launched its global campaign to end statelessness within ten years, based on a Global Action Plan, which provides a blueprint of ten actions that need to be undertaken to resolve existing situations and prevent new cases of statelessness.

Ms Emmanuelle Mitte, Representative of Carol Batchelor, Special Advisor on Statelessness, UNHCR, briefing the Committee, said statelessness has a grave impact on the lives of individuals and on the harmony of communities. She noted that possession of nationality is essential for full participation in society and a prerequisite for the enjoyment of the full range of human rights. Tensions and conflicts may arise where groups of people are denied access to nationality and stateless populations are not afforded the minimum standards of treatment. She mentioned that statelessness is a vast problem that affects at least ten million people worldwide. In Africa, the scale of the problem is not yet defined because of the lack of statistics.

Dr Nelson Magbagbeola, ECOWAS Permanent Representative to the African Union (AU), stated that the ECOWAS Region had been involved in the struggle to end this phenomenon of statelessness since 1975 through the International Treaties and Protocols. These are the 1997 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Establishment, the 1982 Protocol relating to the Definition of a Community Citizen and the Ministerial Declaration on Eradicating Statelessness (Abidjan Declaration). The Ministerial Declaration led to the formulation of the Banjul Action Plan 2017-2024. The Plan has four main strategic objectives, which are;

i. Ensuring compliance with relevant legal, policy and institutional frameworks for eradicating statelessness;

ii. Strengthening data management systems for effective response to the challenge of statelessness;

iii. Advocacy and sensitisation of populations and stakeholders on guaranteed access to proof of nationality; and

iv. Establishing strategic and operational follow-up mechanisms.

He informed the meeting that since the adoption and implementation of the Action Plan, significant progress had been made. Some of the specific achievements associated with the Action Plan included the nomination of government focal points on issues relating to statelessness by 14 of the Member States. Twelve out of the 15 ECOWAS Member States are now party to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness.

The Committee recommended that AU Member States should be urged to find immediate solutions for stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, so they could obtain a nationality or confirm their nationality.

In that regard, the PAP should urge Member States to reform nationality laws to ensure that every child born or found on a state’s territory would acquire the nationality of that state, if the child would otherwise be stateless in line with article 6 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It also recommended to Regional Economic Communities that had not yet embarked on programmes to end statelessness to do so and to conduct regional research on the prevalence, causes and consequences of statelessness.

Report of the Joint Committee on Gender, Family, Youth and People with Disability, Health, Labour and Social Affairs and Rules, Privileges and Discipline on the Consultative Meetings on the Review of the Draft African Model Disability Law

Presenting the Report on behalf of the Joint Committee, the Chairperson of the Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs stated that the Continent adopted a 10 year (2010-2019) Plan of Action on Persons with Disabilities to ensure
that the rights of such people are promoted, protected and respected, for their total inclusion in all spheres of life. Given the slow implementation of that Continental Framework, the AU Member States adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa in January 2018 in Addis Ababa to expedite the recognition of their rights and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The Protocol paved the way for the development of the Draft African Model Disability Law that would consolidate best practices around the Continent. It would assist Member States to review their national legislations and ensure their effective implementation through a clear monitoring mechanism.

15.2 The Chairperson mentioned that in an effort to coordinate and harmonise national laws and policies relating to persons with disability, the Pan-African Parliament, as the representative of the African People, could not finalise the formulation process of a continental model law without engaging with the relevant targeted groups and key stakeholders. These included civil society organisations, representatives of Member States. AU Organs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and private institutions. The Consultative Meetings therefore were aimed at facilitating effective engagement with key stakeholders from the various African Regions on disability to ensure that the final model disability law would reflect the aspirations of the peoples of Africa.

15.3 The Meetings were held in Morocco and Kenya and were also attended by Members of the Pan-African Parliament from each Regional Caucus. Other participants were from the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Pan-African Federations of the Disabled (PAFD), civil society organisations working on disability, human rights Institutions, human rights activists, youth leaders, donors, academics and the media.

15.4 The highlights of the Model Law are as below:


ii. Gender equality approach which seeks to ensure responsiveness to the status of men, women and girls, the elderly, children and youth with disability.

iii. Obligations of State and non-State actors, including state organs and private sector institutions to underscore the need to mainstream disability issues in national sustainable development programmes.

iv. Establishment of implementation, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, including criminal provisions for violations of some of its core principles.

15.5 Participants at both Consultative Meetings raised the challenges related mainly to the lack of political will and the lack of proper structures to adequately address disability issues for total inclusion in programmes and activities of Member States. They observed among others that mainstreaming disability in policy development and programming had not been integrated as a human right issue, making it difficult to adequately address issues relating to its total inclusion in all sectors.

15.6 The Report recommendation recommended that technology should be used to facilitate access to information and employment opportunities. With technology, countries could build infrastructure and develop systems that could accommodate people with disability. For instance, the electoral system should incorporate braille to enable the blind to cast their votes and make their own choice as well as improving the banking system to enable them transact business on their own. It also recommended that reference be made to the Marrakech Treaty, which allows for copyright exemptions, to facilitate the availability of accessible versions of books and other copyrighted works for visually impaired persons.

Countries ratifying the Treaty would benefit from a domestic copyright exemption covering these activities and be allowed to import and export such materials.

15.7 The Committee finally recommended for legislative reforms for the establishment of structures that would encourage and facilitate coordinated actions and measures, develop inclusive education curricular and set disability mainstreaming targets for ministries and other government departments. Above all, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa should be ratified as it would serve as the baseline for enacting specific laws.

16.0 Report of the Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs on the
Pan-African Parliament’s Proposed Budget for the 2020 Financial Year

16.1 Presenting the Report, the Chairperson of the Committee, mentioned that the presentation was being made pursuant to rule 26(2) of the Rules of Procedure of the PAP. He stated that the Budget was informed by the AU Agenda 2063, but more specifically, by the PAP’s Strategic Plan for 2019-2022.

Funding therefore had been directed towards the achievement of strengthening the legislative functions of PAP. The proposed total budget for 2020 was US$20,798,521 compared to the total approved budget of US$18,510,115 for 2019, a proposed increase of 12 per cent over that of 2019.

The proposed budget was made up of Operations and Programmes. The Sum of US$12,405,995 was allocated for Operations whilst the Programme budget was US$8,392,526.

16.2 The Operational Budget consists of staff costs, missions, hospitality, maintenance and utilities. It also covers stationaries and other office supplies. It was expected that the full staff complement would be achieved, hence, the increase in the allocation for the cost on staff.

16.3 The Programme Budget of US$8,392,526 covers parliamentary activities mainly Sessions and Statutory Committee Meetings. A provision of US$880,000 was also proposed for non-statutory activities of the Committees. The figure was arrived at based on a budget of USD 80,000 for each of the 11 Committees. Included in the Programme Budget are three budget lines approved for the first time in 2019. These are regional parliamentary conference, ratification of AU legal instruments and for public hearings.

16.4 The Committee observed that for the second year running, the AU Budget had not been submitted to Parliament for deliberations. The Committee therefore appealed to the African Union Commission to submit the budget of the AU to Parliament for review before implementation. It also appealed to the Bureau to make judicious use of the amount approved by the AUC.

16.5 A provision of US$10,146,633 was made in that regard. The budget for Missions and Hospitality was made up of three sub categories, among them are; Missions to be embarked upon by the Members of the Bureau, Members of Parliament and staff of the Secretariat. The Missions are aimed at the campaign for the ratification of the revised Protocol.

16.6 The Presenter stated that South Africa’s experience was made by the Head of Research Information and Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC) of South Africa. He told Members that at the time South Africa got independence in 1994, trade was highly isolated and protective from global economy. The introduction of industrial policy was formalised in 2007 while the introduction of growth policy was done in 2010. Therefore the key objectives of IDC, among others, are to increase value addition, intensify industrial process moving towards knowledge-based economy, promote labour industrialisation and job creation, and lastly, to contribute to industrial development in Africa.

Areas of discussion included the following:

i. The experience of South Africa in industrial development;

ii. Status of implementation of United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) programmes on industrial development in Africa; and

iii. The role of academia in the development of the industrial sector in Africa.

17.0 Report of the Committee on Transport, Industry Communi-
clothing and footwear sectors lost the market share since 1994, other sectors such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, food and beverages, metals and fabricated metal products and motor vehicle parts and accessories continue to dominate the market with a noticeable trade surplus.

17.4 Mr Khaied El Mekwad, a representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Regional Office in South Africa, making a presentation stated that UNIDO is the lead UN Agency on the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III), and Africa is its largest constituency in terms of technical assistance. The UNIDO technical assistance had been aligned with African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the African Union’s Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA). He said UNIDO was creating industrial partnership programmes with African Countries, and that these Agreements capture strong government ownership, more defined priority areas, and public private partnerships. Some of these programmes, he said, are already being piloted in Kenya and Cameroon.

17.5 Prof. David Walwyn of the University of Pretoria, who represented the Academia said in his presentation that it was key to recognise that strong universities are highly collateral with strong industries and developments. Labour and human resource are critical to employment and development as people need education, knowledge, skills and technology learning. A strong industrial development therefore need to have strong networks some of which are built by the universities.

17.6 He mentioned that industrial development requires intensive capital, labour and other inputs. Where investments decline in these areas, there would be a corresponding decline in development. Industrial economies require strong institutions and innovations to allow the private sector to break-even the innovation paradox. Prof. Walwyn stated that economic growth contributes to positive tax revenue for countries and eventually to the socio-economic development of countries. He emphasised the importance of strong universities to do research, analyse and make policy studies and to get involved in policy processes for government and industries. He indicated that universities are largely linked to industries through new knowledge and development of human capital.

17.7 The Committee made the following findings:

i. Many countries in Africa are fragmented, isolated and very difficult to do business from or with other African countries even at policy levels;

ii. Transport cost and infrastructure in Africa are critical and expensive;

iii. Export from Africa to Europe is quite diverse, including manufacturing products, food and beverages;

iv. Trading and operating conditions are not favourable coupled with weak demand in the local markets, foreign competition, policy uncertainty and the high rising cost of doing business;

v. Growing inequality has economic costs as well as social costs which undermine the process of industrial development.

17.8 The Committee made the following recommendations:

i. African countries must harmonise their policies for ease of doing business and trade with other African countries by signing or entering into bilateral conventions/agreements;

ii. Member States should diversify their economies and invest in long-term development ventures;

iii. Member States must champion UNIDO programmes and sign UNIDO partnership programmes for industrial development.

18.0 Report of the Committee on Cooperation, International Relations and Conflict Resolution on a Workshop On Elections and Democracies in Africa

18.1 The Report was presented by the Chairperson of the Committee. Giving the background, he said the Continent had made some significant progress on the democratic bandwagon especially within the past one and half decades. That notwithstanding, the Continent still faces the challenges of the transition from authoritarian rule to embracing democracy. The number of countries that had conducted plural elections (even though not yet free and fair) have increased considerably since the
18.2 The objective of the workshop was to make recommendations to respective political parties for consideration for adoption at party decision-making process, and to develop a proposal for changes in the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) elections charters and observation guidelines.

18.3 The Workshop was also attended by Members of the Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters; Committee on Education, Culture, Tourism and Human Resource; Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline. The programme was facilitated by Dr Boniface Dulani, Afro Barometer and Ms Patricia Nyaundi from the Crisis Group.

18.4 Ms Nyaundi noted in her keynote address that, African Societies had varying forms of democracies, primarily intentioned to deliver inclusiveness and justice throughout its history. The advent of western style democracy improved some democracies, but also damaged many other thriving African democracies. Many elections in Africa are marred by unofficial groups, individuals, foreign interests and commercial companies who have undue influence in election processes in order to gain excessive influence in the governance of the country. She noted that many countries in Africa have constituencies exclusively mobilized based on ethnic prejudice, exclusion and victimization. Voting in those countries had therefore been reduced to tribal arithmetic, and in some countries, historical animosity among ethnicities manifested into ethnic cleansing and insurgence necessitating power sharing.

18.5 The Workshop outlined the following factors as the cause of pre/post election conflicts in Africa:

i. Enactment of divisive electoral laws aimed at favouring the incumbent in the election year and staffing of electoral bodies with cronies.

ii. Restraining of opposition parties’ activities and in some cases out rightly locking some out of elections altogether.

iii. Weak national and subnational election results review mechanisms. Some countries have no room to appeal against election results.

iv. Corruption.

18.6 The following challenges among others were identified by participants during the discussion:

i. Interests in the incumbent government by informal actors have significant power to influence electoral outcomes. (for example, private sector benefiting from incumbency, including procurement opportunities in the electoral process).

ii. Influence of foreign interests in elections and democracy in Africa.

iii. Unequal playing field between opposition and ruling parties in elections. For example; the use of state security, financial resources and public services to the detriment of the opposition parties.

18.7 The Workshop recommended that, the Pan-African Parliament should, in its oversight mandate, undertake its own independent electoral observer mission in all general elections in Member States. Political Parties should also continue to be the champions of the rule of law and strong advocates of the existing electoral conflicts resolution mechanisms.

The Report urged political parties to develop internal affirmative action policies that would ensure that women and youth are adequately included in the political processes. It also urged political parties to develop policies aimed at fostering inclusivity, especially in natural resources, public services, job opportunities and public contracts when governments are formed.

The Committee lastly recommended that, the AU Commission and RECs should urge Member States to strongly adhere to the principles of the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance as a way of eliminating exclusion and conflicts in electoral processes.

In his closing remarks, the Chairperson stated that, given the degree of flawed elections and the failure of the State, there is growing apathy towards the system. Political parties are losing their credibility and impact in the political system in varying degrees in nearly every African
country. This does not speak well or help in promoting sustainable democratic governance. Ethnic hegemony has penetrated the rank and file of the political parties in some African countries, and therefore, the sense of belonging and nationalism are absent. Political parties in some instances have not been able to bridge the gap of ethnic divide in the society. He appealed to political party leaders to carry out economic reforms that would serve the interests of the people and to avoid generating cynicism and apathy of the citizens in the political system.

19.0 Report of the Committee on Justice and Human Rights on the Workshop on the Rights and Protection of Persons with Albinism

19.1 The Vice Chairperson of the Committee on Justice and Human Rights presented the Report of the Committee on recent developments, trends and prevailing gaps on the continent on the rights and protection of persons with albinism. The workshop was hosted by the Disability Rights Unit of the Centre for Human Rights in collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism. Topics discussed at the workshop included; human rights interventions and the African regional plan on albinism.

19.2 Ms Perpetual Senkoro of Under the Same Sun, (a non-governmental organisation in Tanzania), briefing participants stated that, people with albinism are also victims of harmful social practices. Some people hold the belief that, body parts of persons with albinism are lucky charms or give unnatural powers. These beliefs have contributed to the abduction, mutilation and trafficking of body parts of persons with albinism. She said 29 countries had reported attacks against persons with albinism, including Malawi, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa and Mozambique. As a result of these social and physical threats, persons with albinism do not live normal lives. They are stigmatised and generally fear seeking employment because of the stigma attached to their condition.

19.3 The Vice President of the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi, Pamela Juma, giving an overview of the situation in Malawi, informed participants that, there are about 15,000 persons with albinism in Malawi. These people live in constant fear and danger from witchcraft. She said, since 2014, 164 cases have been lodged with the police in relation to threats and crimes directed at persons with albinism. In those reported cases, three of them were about the murder of persons with albinism, whilst 24 involved missing of persons with albinism. The rest have to do with human rights abuse of people with albinism. She stated that, Malawi has a national action plan intended to raise awareness about the plight of people with albinism and to clamp down on the killings.

Despite the existence of this Plan, the situation on the ground remains the same as there is evidence that people with albinism are not safe.

Also, important government officials have not yet understood the true extent of the crisis as they make public remarks that are not aligned with the objective of the Action Plan.

19.4 Ms Mwananyanda, the Deputy Regional Director of Amnesty International, South Africa submitted that, one of the initiatives that Amnesty International undertook was to send letters to the President of Malawi drawing the President’s attention to the seriousness of the matter. In addition, Amnesty International has been working with persons with albinism and communities to try and sensitise Malawians about the human rights of persons with albinism.

19.5 The Committee recommended that Member States should adopt and fully implement, directly or through national action plans, the Regional Action Plan on Albinism in Africa. The Regional Action Plan lays out specific measures for addressing attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism through prevention, protection, accountability as well as equality and non-discrimination measures. The Regional Action Plan should be annexed to the AU Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa in order to facilitate entrenchment and implementation.


20.1 The Chairperson of the Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs presented the Report on the PAP/WHO Dialogue on the Implementation of the AU Declaration on Universal Access to Immunisation in Africa held in Tunisia from 5th to 6th March, 2019. The aim of the Dialogue was to assist participants in the implementation of the declaration on immunisation which was adopted by the AU in January, 2017. The
Dialogue was facilitated by the World Health Organisation and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);

20.2 The Dialogue discussed country experiences from Tunisia and Guinea. It was noted during the discussions that since early 2019, Tunisia had immunised 92 per cent of children and the country did not depend on external financing for immunisation. It was reported that studies had shown that every dollar spent on child immunisation in Africa earned a US$41 return on the investment. The PAP delegation visited some Hospitals in Tunis to appreciate what the country was doing in immunisation.

20.3 On his part, the Minister for Health of the Republic of Tunisia mentioned that the Government’s strategy revolves around three objectives. These are health coverage with health insurance, universal access to immunisation and school health to protect and guarantee the health of young people and adolescents.

The Hon Minister informed the Meeting that the Constitution of Tunisia indicates that universal access to health care is for every citizen of Tunisia and it is the State’s responsibility to provide appropriate amenities to facilitate the work of stakeholders. He stated that Tunisia does not entirely depend on external funding for its health system; for example, the Country produces its own meningitis vaccine.

20.4 A Member of Parliament from Guinea informed the Meeting that as part of implementing the roadmap of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Universal Access to Immunisation, Guinea organised a national forum on Immunisation in October, 2017 in Conakry. The Forum brought together 420 participants to discuss the political and technical aspects of the issue, so as to strengthen the implementation of priority strategies for the revival of routine immunisation.

20.5 The deliberations of the forum led to the Conakry Declaration, in which participants made collective and individual commitments “to become champions of Immunisation, to maintain universal access to immunisation and to help the Country achieve its long-term health economic and social development goals”. The Conakry Declaration made recommendations on all aspects related to the promotion of immunisation and sustainable financing of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation.

21.0 Resolutions and Recommendations Adopted

The House adopted the following Resolutions:

21.1 Resolutions

i. Resolution on the proposal for a Double Taxation Agreement in Africa;

ii. Resolution on statelessness;

iii. Resolution on the theme of the conference; and

iv. Resolutions on albinism.

21.2 Recommendation

The House recommended to Member States to ratify and implement the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance.

22.0 Official Closing

22.1 The Session officially ended on Friday, 17th May, 2019. Major issues deliberated by the House during the Session included the Activity Report of PAP, presentation on the African Governance Report, presentation on the theme of the Session and presentation on access to universal immunisation and universal health care. Several other presentations were also made as captured in the Report. The Session also debated and adopted Reports from Permanent Committees.

22.2 Closing the Session, the President expressed his appreciation to the Special Guest of Honour and all Invited Guests for their contribution towards the success of the Session. He thanked Hon Members for their cooperation and continued support that keep the PAP going. He called on Members to rise above personal interest and build on the dialogue and harmony achieved during the Session. He expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the staff for their invaluable service rendered to the Pan-African Parliament. The President concluded by thanking the South African Government for the facilities availed to the Pan-African Parliament and congratulated the people of South Africa for the peaceful elections. The House was adjourned Sine Die.

Respectfully submitted.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

We would take a contribution each from both Sides and then the Hon Leaders.

Mr Samuel O. Ablakwa (NDC – North Tongu): Mr Speaker, I am most grateful for the opportunity to second this Motion.
Mr Speaker, I commend the Hon First Deputy Speaker, Mr Joseph Osei-Owusu, for the presentation of the Report by the representatives of the Parliament of Ghana. The Report is very comprehensive and it gives us great insight into what took place at the Second Ordinary Session of the Pan-African Parliament.

Mr Speaker, the leader of the delegation has raised a number of salient issues. One of those issues stresses on the lack of stability on our membership at the Pan-African Parliament and that it was a matter that came up for discussion. I believe that moving forward, we should encourage Leadership of the House to pay closer attention to the selection of our Hon Members who represent us at the Pan-African Parliament. This institution, as we know, is the legislative arm of the African Union and it is very important to the integrational efforts of the continent; it is the body that carries the hopes and aspirations of the people of the continent. So, we know that the challenges have largely been about ministerial reshuffles and when this happens, we have no choice but to take a second look at the membership.

In this recent case, Hon Yaw Afful has been appointed to serve as an Hon Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Aviation and this means that he had to relinquish his membership of the Pan-African Parliament. Mr Speaker, so I sometimes understand the challenge that the Leadership of the House faces because there could be a certain inevitability about these developments, but I believe that moving forward, we could fashion a way out to see how we could probably reduce the high attrition rate which has been pointed out.

Mr Speaker, the theme for the Second Ordinary Session; “2019, the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa” is what I intend to focus on.

Mr Speaker, the theme is timely and it is a matter I know that your good self has raised at a number of fora, either in this House or when some delegations have called upon you and I have been privileged to join you — where you have expressed concern about the wave of immigration where young Africans perish trying to seek greener pastures. We would not have this tragic situation if we build a continent of opportunities and create jobs and a vibrant economy for Africans and our young people to live in.

Mr Speaker, personally, I have travelled to Spain to see and talk to some of our young patriots who have survived, and they speak about very harrowing stories that sometimes, out of 20 people who began the journeys only about two or three would survive. So this is a matter that must engage our attention and that is why I would commend African leaders on the progress that has been made on the African Continental Free Trade Area which gives us a common market for the first time in the annals of our history.

Mr Speaker, the reality is that Africa now has the youngest population in the world. The African continent could boast of some 400 million young people who are below the age of 35 years. This is an opportunity and also a threat. So, the theme is a very important one, and as we speak, there is talk about the global immigration crises. Europe says they have had enough, right wing governments have closed their entry points and some of them would not have anything to do with immigrants largely from Africa. Clearly, we cannot blame them and as leaders we must fashion a way out to solve this voyage where young people die in the Mediterranean; some are swallowed by the high seas and others fall victims to terrorists and all the other harrowing experiences that we have come to know of.

Mr Speaker, personally, I have travelled to Spain to see and talk to some of our young patriots who have survived, and they speak about very harrowing stories that sometimes, out of 20 people who began the journeys only about two or three would survive. So this is a matter that must engage our attention and that is why I would commend African leaders on the progress that has been made on the African Continental Free Trade Area which gives us a common market for the first time in the annals of our history.

A few months ago, our own compatriots who are Ghanaians living in South Africa were affected. Fortunately on our part, no one died, but there were injuries. However, sadly, citizens of other African countries were killed. Waves of xenophobic attacks have led to some of us questioning whether South Africa should continue to host the Pan-African Parliament. It is a matter that I believe we should probe further. The African Union and all of us should...
[MR ABLAKWA]
tell South Africa and its Government to do more to protect African nationals living in South Africa. I think it is quite ironic and unfair, that the Pan-African Parliament would be hosted in South Africa and African nationals cannot be guaranteed safety and security to go about their duties to contribute to the South African economy because of those xenophobic attacks.

All of us know the role Ghana and other African nations played in fighting the apartheid Government and expressing solidarity with South Africans to ensure that apartheid was defeated. So it really comes as a shock, when after all these collective gains and successes that we have chalked as Blacks in fighting apartheid — The irony is that, apartheid is really about extreme violent discrimination; looking down on other people just because they do not look like one or have one’s skin colour and all of that.

After we have all condemned apartheid and succeeded in the fight against it, how tragic and ironic it is that South Africa would now visit the ills of apartheid on fellow blacks. That is why some of us continue to say that South Africa would now visit the gains made on the African Governance Project, the proposed model for double taxation in Africa, the implementation of the Charter for Cultural Renaissance, especially, in this year of return as we commemorate 400 years of the first Africans taken out of our shores.

Certainly, the Report by the Committee on Justice and Human Rights which spells out the privileges of stateless Africans — In touching on that matter, I wish to remind the House that the convention on the persons who are stateless is yet to be brought for ratification. As a country, we have signed to it, but this House has not ratified and domesticated it. I hope that following this Report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration would expedite action in that regard.

Mr Speaker, with these words, I commend the Hon First Deputy Speaker and the delegation that has represented us so far at the Pan-African Parliament for the great job they have been doing, lifting high the flag of Ghana and making sure that the dream of a continental union of Africa where we would come together under a common purpose and fight poverty, diseases, ignorance and ensure that the dreams of our founding fathers for a strong prosperous continental political union is achieved remains alive. I salute them and commend the Hon First Deputy Speaker for this Report.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to this Report.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Okudzeto Ablakwa. That is very elucidating.

Hon Ablakwa has seconded and made a useful contribution. I would have one contribution. Hon Minority Leader, then we come to Majority Leadership.

Question proposed.

Minority Leader (Mr Haruna Iddrisu): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Motion and in doing so commend the Hon First Deputy Speaker, the Leader of our delegation to the Pan-African Parliament. I have seen him in some instances managed to combine the role as he engages in some Parliamentary diplomacy against this statutory role and against his role in the Chamber.

Mr Speaker, advisedly, it is for a good reason that we have had to change our membership on the Pan-African Parliament. Even if that does not help our governance course, we have respected the rules and the practices. That is what is required of us as a country, that when one is an Hon Member of Parliament (MP), and he goes into the office of the Executive, mandatorily, he has to relinquish this role at that level. Probably, as a Parliament, we should think through how we constitute this delegation, going forward.

Mr Speaker, it is estimated, particularly, on the theme “2019, the year of the Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”. It is reported that there are 34,000 persons displaced globally in a day. It is also reported that there are 10 million stateless people across the globe, but we should look at the causes of refugees in Ghana. It is attributable to war, internal conflicts, drought, and more importantly, poor economies.

Mr Speaker, it is a positive thing in disguise. At least, today in Africa, we do not have refugees as a result of increased number of political asylum seekers. That has been a dividend of the democracy that no persons run or leave their countries because they are subjected to political torture or some
political danger. Even the numbers—What has contributed significantly to the refugee status in Africa has largely been the internal conflict in Sudan. Uganda and Ethiopia have been commended by the United Nations (UN) for maintaining an open-door policy. We have also done so as country, and Ghana needs to be recognised, from the days when we hosted Liberian refugees. Many times, when there are disturbances affecting our neighbouring countries, we give the needed assistance.

12.06 p.m.

Mr Speaker, again, the Pan-African Parliament is modelled on the EU model, which united 28 countries of Europe. Can we say the same thing of the AU? I would beg the issue. Even as we debate the Report, there are reports that Nigeria has closed its borders to its West African neighbours. That cannot be best practice, if we want to promote continental trade — if we want to promote African unity, and if we want to promote Pan-Africanism. It defeats the ideals of Nnamdi Azikiwe and company.

Mr Speaker, how do we, the poor economies integrate our economies as a continent? I am sure the Hon First — We would have to look at the matters. I have seen a paragraph on trade which is relative to migration.

Mr Speaker, even in this House, we must demand that the Immigration Service of Ghana gives us update of statistics of persons entering and leaving our country for good reason for us to anticipate matters of terrorists’ threats.

A number of Agreements have been laid before Parliament on visa waivers. We need to know how many of their citizens enter our country and how many of ours enter their country. We do not just grant a visa waiver when there are disproportionate entry in terms of the countries and we need to be very careful. I know that we have a migration policy.

Mr Speaker, our borders are still very porous. Again in Africa, we could see the cascading effect of the conflict in Libya and in Burkina Faso. This is an opportunity for us to call on the national security apparatus of Ghana to wake up, particularly on the borders in the northern part of Ghana; from Hamile through Paga and others. At all the towns that share borders with Burkina Faso, we need to be alert. The outcome of the conflict in Libya and the displaced persons are looking for opportunities somewhere. Some of them are not looking for opportunities; they are looking for trouble and they will be a source of trouble. We need to marshal our resources right to make sure that our country remains peaceful and we safeguard the security of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, I would conclude with paragraph 7.3 on page 9 of the Report. With your permission, I beg to quote:

“The African Governance Architecture (AGA) platform has therefore prioritised five governance assessment areas, which are:

i) Transformative leadership,

ii) Constitutionalism and the rule of law,

iii) Peace, security and governance;”

Mr Speaker, this is my conclusion,

“iv) The nexus of development and governance.”

Mr Speaker, because our economies are not doing well, because we do not respond to the aspirations of the people, there is some erosion of faith and public confidence in the elected by the electorate. It means that the dividend of democracy must manifest in economic development. It should not just be that there is rule of law and investment. What is the benefit of democracy to ordinary people?

Mr Speaker, with this, I commend the Leader of the delegation and our delegation.

Hon Ablakwa raised an important issue, but that is still a matter of debate. I have not seen a fundamental departure in the pursuit of foreign policies of the Government of Ghana in the last two decades; it remains same.

Mr Speaker, if you would recall, at the time your delegation was in Zanzibar for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the attacks happened in South African. As I listened to their Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs, she did not even want to use the word ‘xenophobic’; she said, African phobic in order to appreciate it. It means we must prepare to manage a refugee emergency if it happens.

I share the view of Hon Ablakwa that South Africa must reflect the values that it is the proud host of the Pan-African Parliament. It therefore must extend courtesies to all African citizens in South Africa and do same.
Mr Speaker, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Interior and National Security — as I have said, I am worried about our northern borders; between Paga and Hamile. I am worried about developments, particularly, in Burkina Faso and what the implication of the Libyan conflict may have on security situation in Ghana.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Minority Leader.

Yes, Majority Leadership?

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, I would cede the Leadership opportunity to my Senior Colleague, Hon Kobina Tahir Hammond.

Mr Speaker: Yes, Hon Member, you may.

Mr Kobina Tahir Hammond (NPP — Adansi Asokwa): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I have not really had the opportunity to peruse the document properly. It is a 35 page document, but it is the Hon First Deputy Speaker who headed the representation to the Ordinary Session of the Fifth Parliament on the date indicated.

Mr Speaker, when we were in secondary school sixth form, or our early years in the university, during the political science lectures, we were taught some of these principles of politics. As a professor of both law and political science, it was a prominent question that mostly reared its head, I think mostly at the advance Level stage. It was to this effect, was the United Nations (UN) a talking shop or it was worthy of its name? A lot of factors have conspired to create a very bad image for the UN. It was always thought that it was a talking shop; people went to the General Assembly and spoke their minds — they spoke about all sorts of things. Then ultimately, the veto powers vetoed everything and everything went downhill.

Mr Speaker, I think the concomitant reflection of that would have been whether the then Organisation of African Union (OAU) was worthy of anything, if not simply a replication of working and talking shop which we thought the UN had become.

Mr Speaker, it was on the basis of that or a review and introspect reflection of the procedures, the activities, and indeed, the effect of the organisation that led to its rebranding and indeed it being rechristened as the AU. Does it make the question moribund? Is it now the case that because it is called the AU, it is more effective than it used to be?

Mr Speaker, you would want to compare the AU in its current state to, even if not so closely, then approximately, institutions and structures like the EU. I used that as a classic example. I accept that the United Kingdom (UK) wants to leave the Union.

12:16 p.m.

Mr Speaker, for those who constitute the fabric of the AU, they would not complain that it is entirely a talking shop. If it were, then new countries like the newly independent former Soviet colonies would not struggle to become members of the organisation. I take cognisance of the fact that a country like Turkey, even though a member of NATO, has tried to become a member of the EU to no fruitful effect.

We sit back and ask the question of what the AU is really doing for its members? Does it make the question moribund? Is it now the case that because it is called the AU, it is more effective than it used to be?
Mr Speaker, we ask ourselves what we really see among ourselves. What are some of the tangible benefits, apart from the obvious fact that we belong to an organisation called the AU?

Mr Speaker, in the classic case of Ghana, what do we get? In the Report, there was a seminar on energy and others. When we look at Europe as it is now, they have all these trans-national and international pipelines that supply various countries with facilities for the production of electricity.

Mr Speaker, we heard that there was an effort to construct a big dam on one of the rivers in South Africa, with the hope that power would be produced. A gargantuan amount of power was expected to be produced by that particular country for the purpose of distribution among the rest of Africa. However, nothing has become of it.

We have institutions like the African Court of Human Rights. I am sure some of our Hon Colleagues are hearing some of these names for the first time. We do not really see the impact of the organisation on our nation.

Mr Speaker, it is that bad. My Hon Colleagues who spoke before me talked about specific instances that pertain in Nigeria and South Africa. It is appalling and rather disgusting to think about the case of South Africa for example.

Mr Speaker, we all lived through the era of the apartheid and knew what happened. Decades after the apartheid, we should look at what is happening. The worse of it now is that it is no more a matter of white on black; it now seems to be black on black. This is because our brothers in South Africa would now not tolerate the presence of their own continental brothers in their country. We sit back and ask why it is so.

Mr Speaker, with respect to trade, we see nothing. We rather trade more with the European countries. In Ghana, we trade more with Britain and the others than our own continental colleagues; and we ask ourselves why.

It is documented and everybody seems to know about it. Even though I am not the greatest fan of Kwame Nkrumah, I think one of the things that he said during those days of Pan-Africanism was that ‘the independence of Ghana itself was nothing else, unless it was linked up with the total liberation of Africa’.

Africa is liberated and so we should come together to do things for the sake of our destiny; for the good of all of us. South Africa would now not let any of their continental brothers enter their country, and they are even killing them now.

Mr Speaker, three miles away to the east — Nigeria — Mr Speaker, it is not showing any leadership. I understand that a few people cried in Kumasi that they disturbed them and did not allow them to trade. That is infinitesimal on the scale of what is being talked about.

Mr Speaker, we might also want to put ourselves in their shoes and ask ourselves if it is justified because the claim is that we are taking over their jobs. However, that is what all this business about continental organisation is about. The fact that we have decided we are one continent, one people with one destiny, that is the reason we all have come together.

It is also the danger involved in the movement that we talk about. However, the flip side of it is also the danger involved in the movement that we talk about.

As appropriately described by my Hon Colleagues, there is a situation where we are almost close to pressing the panic button about terrorism in our country. We know what goes on in Mali and Burkina Faso — we hear it everyday and every month; and we are worried. Does that allow for the free movement of human beings?

One would think that they are part of the continental Africa, so if this whole institution is about the freedom of movement of human beings and goods, then we should encourage our brothers. We are, however, stuck and afraid and we are unable to encourage the free movement up there.

Yesterday, at some discussion, I heard of the efforts that are being put in place by the National Security to
Mr Speaker, I would want to thank Hon Members who contributed on the Report.

I would want it to be on record that this Report covers the period before the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. This was in May, and the homophobic attacks occurred sometime in September. That is why this Report says nothing about it. In the subsequent Report we would discuss what the Pan-African Parliament’s decision and discussions on those incidents were, and the conclusions they have come to.

Mr Speaker, otherwise, I thank Hon Members for the support.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon First Deputy Speaker.

Question put and Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The House was accordingly adjourned at 12.27 p.m. till Tuesday, 5th November, 2019 at 10.00 in the forenoon.