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**Wednesday, 3 March 2021**

*Parliament met at 2.07 p.m. in Parliament House, Kampala.*

*PRAYERS*

*(The Deputy Speaker, Mr Jacob Oulanyah, in the Chair.)*

*The House was called to order.*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I welcome you to this sitting. Let me start by wishing you all a very happy new year; I did not have the opportunity to do that in this kind of sitting. Happy new year. I hope that this new year brings more blessings than it has done before and that is our prayer.

I had almost forgotten how this place looks like but somehow, it looks the same except that there is too much light; I can almost not see the faces of the honourable members but I guess it is because of the COVID-19 situation that we have to deal with.

A lot of things have changed, the rules of engagement have been altered a little bit to accommodate the COVID-19 situation that we now face.

I was called yesterday after 4.00 p.m. by my PPS that I needed to come to the House to preside. He asked me whether I was able and I said, yes, that is my duty as the Deputy Speaker; in the absence of the Speaker, I preside.

However, when the reasons for my coming to chair were stated to me, I felt like I was between a rock and a hard place because it is an emotionally difficult situation and it is in it that I am being asked to step in. There was a bit of discomfort in the way that it had come like they say, opportunities come but some come with so many compilations and this is one of them.

As I speak here, a highly emotional situation is happening in the House and family of the Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, the Speaker of this House. She lost her niece, Sheila Alitwala Kadaga who passed on on 28th february and as I speak, the process of burial is on-going.

It made me start thinking about what to do with the House; I should have been there but I have also been called to come here. It is one of those very difficult situations to balance.

However, I have been reading lately and I stumbled on one of the famous books in the Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 that says, *“…there is time for everything, a season for every activity under the heavens. A time to be born and a time to die….”*

Just like it has happened with Sheila, the Bible says a time to die will also come.

*“… a time to plant and a time to uproot; 3 A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh…”*

At this very moment, it is our time to weep because we have lost somebody very dear to the leader of this House and that means a lot to all of us.

*“…a time to mourn and a time to dance…” - w*e are in mourning because one of our own close to our leader has passed on –

*“…a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to search and a time to give up; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to mend; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.*

*What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also sent eternity to the human heart yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to the end.*

*I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live, that each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in their toil. That is the gift of God.”*

Those are the verses in the Bible I thought I would share with you this afternoon. As human beings, we all have situations that afflict us sometimes painfully. Sometimes they give us ease and sometimes cause us unease. Such a moment is like this one.

As you are aware, I have not been in this House for a bit of time and I come now at a time like this. I am a human being and one of the things that I still have is emotional intelligence. The spirit of *“Ubuntu”* - I am because we are, you are because I am. And we share in that spirit. Your pain is my pain; my joy is yours.

This is the power of human connection that binds all of us and if we apply it, we celebrate in our lives.

We cannot be like some people. I remember a General in South Korea whose wife was assassinated when he was standing at the podium speaking. She was shot as she stood by him. The bullet was meant to kill him but somehow it did not; it hit his wife. Park Chung-hee, who was the third president of South Korea, after his wife had been removed from the podium, continued with his speech. The wife died later.

He was a strong man but if your wife is shot right behind you and is being taken to hospital, a strong person, yes, would continue with the speech because the speech was that important. It was independence anniversary and the President thought he was doing the right thing by continuing with his speech but his wife died.

In modern times, they would judge him and say he lacked emotional intelligence; he did not portray to the country that at a moment of grief like this, you could at least act human.

From the moment I was asked to chair this House, there have been a lot of comments on social media and I have read some of them. The fundamental question they kept asking is, “What is he going to do in this situation?” My answer is simple; I will do what I have always done in situations like this. You will recall that when hon. Ronald Kibuule lost his twins, I sat in the Chamber and adjourned Parliament to enable us, all, go and stand with him. That is how I did it.

The situation is no different today that the Rt Hon. Speaker has lost a dear one and the burial is ongoing. I can only do what I have always done in situations like this. We will not be able to proceed with today’s sitting, in solidarity with the Speaker and the family that have lost a dear one. *(Applause)*

Those of you who can still make it to Kamuli and those of us who can still make it to Kamuli, I think this would be a moment for all of us to go there and stand with the family. I will, at this moment, ask all of us to stand for a moment of silence.

*(Members rose and observed a moment of silence.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I am doing this because even if it was the last chance or opportunity given to me to preside in the 10th Parliament - if this was the last opportunity, it is an opportunity I am willing to let go because it is not human for me to proceed with this business.

However, let me make a comment on what is on the Order Paper and we see how to proceed from there.

Item four is a statement by the Leader of the Opposition in response to the National Budget Framework Paper for Financial Year 2021/2022 – to 2025/2026. This is permissible but I think the circumstances under which it is being made is to participate in the broader budget process.

Ordinarily, the statement should have been presented earlier so that it would go onto the record at the time when the committees were handling debates and discussions on the Budget Framework Paper. That should have been one of the documents referred to in the course of that discussion so that when the Committee on Budget finally reports to Plenary, the views expressed in the response from the Leader of the Opposition would be captured.

However, be that as it may, the circumstances are difficult because as we stand now, time has passed, the Committee on Budget has reported and that report has already been forwarded to the President for consideration and other things that would guide the President, in terms of what the view of Parliament is, when he prepares to make the budgetary proposals, which would then be presented to Parliament by 1st April.

However, this is the practical situation we are faced with. All of the views of the Opposition have not been captured up to now on the record. That is why in item four, we found it appropriate to allow the Leader of the Opposition to give this statement, which will not attract debate but which we hope will find time to be referred to, while the President and Cabinet consider what will come, finally, in the ministerial policy statements and in the budgetary proposals that will be tabled before this House on 1st April.

That is the circumstance under which we will allow the Leader of the Opposition to proceed - although she will not be proceeding now but on another date that will be proper.

The timeframe should be the same like we give for responses to the ministerial policy statements. From the date of receipt of the ministerial policy statement, we give the Opposition 15 days to respond to those proposals that have come from the ministers so that the sectoral committees can consider them in the course of their discussions. I think that timeframe should also apply in the situation of this Budget Framework Paper.

In future, I think the Leader of the Opposition should be able to give this response 15 days after the statutory date given for laying of the Budget Framework Paper, which is the 31st of December of every year. However, we will allow this to happen.

Secondly, my own view of Bills that are contained in items seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12 and 13 – those five Bills, in the days I used to be active in drafting, would have been contained in one single Bill. That single Bill would have contained something we call “miscellaneous amendments” in which case you would only have chapters making references to the specific Bills that you are going to amend.

We are now going to spend five times the amount of time we would have spent if it was one Bill with components of the different Bills that are being proposed for amendment. It would have been smarter, in my opinion, to have one Bill that deals with the whole situation.

However, be that as it may, this is how I intend to proceed or how I propose we could proceed, when the time comes for us to proceed, with these Bills. We would receive the motion for each of the Bills at their own time. We would receive the speech from the Attorney-General on each of the Bills and I would propose the question for debate on each of them.

I would allow the sector committee – the Committee of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs – to present the report of the committee, in response to the motion for second reading of each of those Bills.

I am proposing that I shelve all the debates until the end of the fifth Bill and then we handle the debate together for the five Bills. Therefore, a Member rising to speak will speak on any of the five Bills or all of them and the time will be sufficient for us to deal with this because we will have saved enough time to do one debate rather than five different debates.

When we finish with that, we would then come back to handling the Bills one by one at committee stage, finish them and take decisions on each one of them. Even the motion for second reading of the Bill, we will process one by one and not all of them at the same time; in which case, then we go to the committee stage and of course, third reading of the Bill, one by one.

If we do this, we will save a lot of time instead of doing five Bills, giving it full attention five times. We would have sufficient time to debate all these Bills because they relate to the same subject of death and inheritance. That is what I would propose.

Finally, I was considering that in order for us to focus on the Bills, I know some of the statements are very urgent and some of them have to do with bananas, things with strange diseases that have come; we could do the Bills and finish with them.

There is the Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill, which has one clause, there is the Red Cross Bill, wherein the only contentious issue is in which ministry it should housed; should it be given to the Office of the Prime Minister, which is all encompassing because the Red Cross is essentially multi-sectoral? We might need to think about that.

Then the final proposal that I would like to ask you, members of Parliament, if you could agree with me, because of the challenge we have had this afternoon, I would request that tomorrow, we start early in the morning; if it is acceptable, so that we can make up for the time we have lost this afternoon when we stand from wherever we are but in solidarity with the Speaker who is bereaved and right now, burial is going on.

Therefore, if you agree, we could then come tomorrow at about 10.00 or 11.00 o’clock and we do two hours to 1.00 p.m. We then break for lunch and do another three hours in the afternoon. I am sure by that time, we would have reduced whatever business is on the Order Paper by far.

That is my communication and at this moment - yes, hon. Jonathan Odur, is there any matter regarding this communication?

2.30

**MR JONATHAN ODUR (FDC, Erute County South, Lira)**: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am standing in for the Leader of the Opposition. I would like to welcome you on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition. Welcome back to the chair of this House. As members of the Opposition, we have also been wondering why you are not coming to the House. However, welcome back.

I would like to also say happy new year to you. We did not get the opportunity to say it to you and of course, I would like to thank you for your very brilliant and wise guidance this afternoon.

I want to continue to convey our condolences to the Rt hon. Speaker for the loss of her niece.

Mr Speaker, we missed three occasions to first of all congratulate you, upon your election as the member of Central Executive Committee as the Vice Chairperson NRM for Northern Uganda. I would like to congratulate you on that win. We also missed the opportunity to congratulate you for winning the flag for Omoro County, unopposed and subsequently, we missed the opportunity to congratulate you for being re-elected as the member of Parliament for Omoro County. *(Applause)* I wish now to congratulate you on behalf of the Opposition who are here and it is agreeable to us that we shall be here tomorrow by 10.00a.m.

On the guidance you gave us about the response by the Leader of the Opposition on the Budget Framework Paper, we thank you very much for that guidance and I think that as we come back to this Parliament, this would be the best way to proceed. We commit that our responses will come in time so that our views are captured by the Executive.

Otherwise, I would like to thank you very much for your very brilliant guidance to this House this afternoon and I wish you all the best.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, this matter is not subject to debate. Can we pause here and restart tomorrow? Can I have the Member for Yumbe, then I come to the Government Chief whip. Please, be brief, because there are Members who would like to travel at whatever stage they find the ceremonies.

2.33

**MR ALIONI ODRIA (Independent, Aringa South County, Yumbe):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity you have given me. First of all, I would like to thank the Almighty God that you are here with us today. I also want to thank the God-sent angel hon. Margret Baba Diri who raised a very important question yesterday about your whereabouts. We have missed you in this House for over a year. We were told that you are going to be seen and today, we are seeing you. I thank the Almighty God for that.

We the silent majority have been praying for you and we are still praying for you. I thank you for the guidance you have given this afternoon about the Bills. It is true that these Bills can be handled within a day or two but the way they have appeared On the Order paper, it could take us more than a week or even two weeks to have them handled. Thank you very much for that wise guidance.

We are going to consult our angel, hon. Baba Diri on how we can pray better to see that you with such brilliant and wise guidance continue to guide us in this House. Now, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you upon your return to this House. I beg to rest my case. Thank you very much.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that we keep to the subject and the person speaking last will be the Government Chief whip. Otherwise, the meaning of this adjournment would not be seen.

2.35

**THE GOVERNMENT CHIEF WHIP (Ms Ruth Nankabirwa):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to begin by apologising for coming in late although I knew that you are the one going to chair and your chairing the session means keeping time. However, I informed you, Sir, that today, there is a special Cabinet meeting at State House where ministers are considering the Budget. However, I asked for permission to come because both the leader of Government Business and his deputy are absent.

Secondly, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition who congratulated you and it is just proper that a voice comes from the Government side and the NRM caucus to sincerely congratulate and thank you for delivering the NRM victory in that region. You headed it and delivered it. We are indebted to you. *(Applause)*

Thirdly, I heard you giving us guidance and proposed that tomorrow, we begin in the morning. I hope that my colleagues in Cabinet will have finished processing the Budget so that I mobilise all of them to come and we begin at 11.00 a.m.

I end by bringing congratulations from Kiboga District. Although I did not make it, I know that we shall be around to see you help in spearheading legislation in this country. I would like to thank you, Sir. *(Applause)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, let me also take this time to congratulate those of you who won in the elections. Those who have not been successful, I still congratulate you. I say, “Congratulations” for one thing. Somebody said that great honour is given to those who rise and rise again but greater honour is given to those who fall and rise again. I am in that club. I lost the elections of 2006 but the loss never stopped me from coming back. I am here, two terms after I lost the elections. You never know what the future holds.

Therefore, losing is not an end in itself. Sometimes, when you make a phone call, you find that there is a temporary interference in the network. Treat this as one like that and it will open again and your call will go through.

I can only wish you the best in the forthcoming activities that you are going to engage in and opportunities you are going to have. Do your best and remain visible. You never know what the future holds. The future comes to those who are prepared for it. It will come for you, if you remain prepared.

Honourable members, in these circumstances and based on this communication, this House now stands adjourned to tomorrow at 11.00 O’clock.

*(The House rose at 2.39 p.m. and adjourned until Thursday, 4 March, 2021 at 11.00 a.m.)*