

# Overview of Incidents of misconduct involving Parliamentarians across Africa: Lessons for Lawmakers

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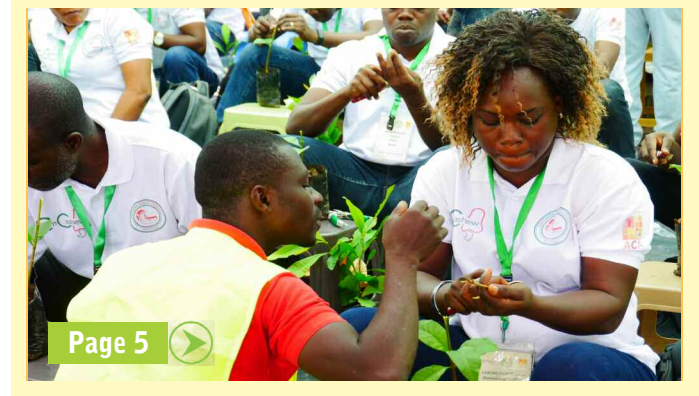


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Chairman Public Account Committee/Deputy Speaker of Parliament Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh

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## Finance

# Sierra Leone: Addressing The Importance Of Public Accounts Committee Public Hearings

By Lukulay Moses

It is imperative to underscore the significance of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) public hearings in ensuring transparent governance and effective oversight of public expenditure. The PAC plays a crucial role in scrutinizing government financial activities, holding officials accountable, and promoting good governance practices. The PAC's public hearings provide a platform for rigorous examination of government spending, ensuring that taxpayers' money is utilized judiciously and in accordance with the law.

These hearings offer a rare op-



Chairman Public Account Committee/Deputy Speaker of Parliament Honourable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh



**These hearings offer a rare opportunity for parliamentarians to interrogate officials on budgetary matters and financial management, shedding light on any discrepancies, irregularities, or mismanagement that may exist. Public scrutiny is a cornerstone of democracy, and the PAC public hearings serve as a mechanism through which citizens can hold their representatives and government officials accountable.**

portunity for parliamentarians to interrogate officials on budgetary matters and financial management, shedding light on any discrepancies, irregularities, or mismanagement that may exist. Public scrutiny is a cornerstone of democracy, and the PAC public hearings serve as a mechanism through which citizens can hold their representatives and government officials accountable. By providing a forum for open and transparent discussions on financial matters, these hearings foster public trust and confidence in the governance process.

Moreover, the findings and recommendations of the PAC hearings will help to improve government efficiency, identify areas for reform, and strengthen financial oversight mechanisms. By highlighting instances of waste, fraud, or inefficiency, the

PAC contributes to enhancing the overall effectiveness of public administration and ensuring that taxpayers' resources are spent responsibly.

It is essential that the PAC operates independently, free from political interference, and with adequate resources to carry out its mandate effectively.

Additionally, the media particularly the Parliamentary Press Gallery base in Parliament has a vital role to play in reporting on PAC proceedings, informing the public about government financial activities, and holding those in power to account.

As journalists covering the PAC public hearings, it is our responsibility to report accurately, objectively, \*not out of malice as captured in section 103 of the

1991 Constitution\* on the proceedings, we have a responsibility in ensuring that the public is well-informed about the issues at hand. By fostering transparency, accountability, and good governance through our coverage, we can contribute to building a stronger and more accountable democracy.

Conclusively the PAC public hearings are a critical component of our democracy, serving as a check on government power and a safeguard against financial mismanagement. As the Acting President of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, I urge all stakeholders to support the work of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), respect its independence, and recognize the vital role it plays in promoting accountability and transparency in the management of public funds.

# Leveraging Digitilization To Maximize Revenue Collection In Ghana

By Clement Akoloh

The immediate past Finance Minister, Dr. Mohammed Amin Adam, has urged his successor, Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, to leverage digitalization to achieve Ghana's projected 18% tax-to-GDP ratio by the end of 2025 instead of the initially targeted 2027.

Speaking in Parliament, Dr. Amin Adam highlighted that the previous administration had made significant strides in improving tax revenue, increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio from 13.8% in 2022 to 17% by the end of 2024. He argued that achieving an additional 1% increase within a year is realistic, given past performance and the existing digital tools for revenue collection.

"I want to invite the new Minister for Finance to continue to pursue these policies and measures to achieve the tax-to-GDP ratio of 18% this year and not 2027. Because that is possible and that can be done. If we have done it from 2022 to 2024 by

about 3.2 percentage points, then it should be possible for them to be able to achieve it if we have to do 1 percentage point this year," he stated.

Dr. Amin Adam credited digitalization initiatives for the significant revenue growth, particularly digital solutions such as the Ghana.gov payment platform, the Electronic Invoicing for VAT (E-VAT), and the Integrated Customs Management System (ICOMS). According to him, these digital platforms have enhanced both revenue collection and compliance, contributing to a sharp increase in tax revenue from GHS 75 billion in 2022 to GHS 154 billion in 2024.

### The Role of Digitalization in Tax Growth

The former minister emphasized that continued investment in digital tax collection systems would ensure sustained revenue growth. He outlined key measures needed to enhance tax compliance and efficiency, including:

Faceless Tax Assessment and Filing: Encouraging electronic filing to eliminate human inter-



**Dr. Amin Adam credited digitalization initiatives for the significant revenue growth, particularly digital solutions such as the Ghana.gov payment platform, the Electronic Invoicing for VAT (E-VAT), and the Integrated Customs Management System (ICOMS). According to him, these digital platforms have enhanced both revenue collection and compliance, contributing to a sharp increase in tax revenue from GHS 75 billion in 2022 to GHS 154 billion in 2024.**

ference and potential corruption. Digital Tax Records: Ensuring that businesses and individuals maintain accurate digital records for transparency.

Simplified Tax Audits: Using digital tools to streamline tax audits and improve compliance.

He also urged the new administration to prioritize the implementation of the I-Tax system, which is designed to automate tax processes and further boost revenue generation.

### Support for Local FINTECH Companies

Dr. Amin Adam further encouraged the government to support local financial technology (FINTECH) companies by sourcing digital solutions domestically rather than relying on foreign providers. He noted that Ghanaian FINTECH companies had played a crucial role in the country's tax digitalization efforts over the past three years and should be given more opportunities to develop and implement innovative tax solutions.

"I want to encourage them also to come out with a local content policy that would guide the utilization of local FINTECH companies rather than sourcing these solutions from abroad," he said.

### A Call for Continued Digitalization

The former finance minister remarked that President John Dramani Mahama's recent comments at the Africa Prosperity Dialogue, where he acknowledged the crucial role of digitalization in Africa's economic transformation aligns with his proposal. Dr. Amin Adam, however, credited Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia for championing Ghana's digital transformation in recent years.

As the new administration takes over, the debate over Ghana's tax-to-GDP ratio and the pace of its economic reforms is expected to continue. Dr. Amin Adam's call signals the importance of maintaining digital reforms to sustain revenue growth and economic stability.



Former Finance Minister, Dr. Mohammed Amin Adam

## Diplomatic And Bilateral Relations

# Sierra Leone Speaker Of Parliament Addresses The Meeting Of The Speakers Of Parliaments Of Atlantic African States

Aminaash Nyande Brima  
Information Attaché

The Honorable Speaker of the House of Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas, addressed a high-level meeting of Speakers of Parliaments from Atlantic African States in Rabat, Morocco, on Thursday, 6th February 2025.

The initiative of the Atlantic African States, along with the broader African Atlantic collective, focuses on enhancing collaboration among nations along the Atlantic coast. These efforts aim to tackle common challenges, promote sustain-



Honorable Speaker of the House of Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas

**Sierra Leone's participation in the event is expected to further strengthen bilateral relations between Sierra Leone, Morocco, and other African nations, reinforcing parliamentary ties and fostering mutual interests. It also underscores Sierra Leone's commitment to regional integration, security, and sustainable development within the African geopolitical space.**

able development, and strengthen political and economic ties.

This meeting, which began on Wednesday, 5th February, will conclude on Saturday, 8th February 2025, with the goal of fostering collaboration, sharing best practices, and addressing key issues affecting the African continent.

The objectives of the meeting are to strengthen inter-parliamentary dialogue in Atlantic Africa, support the Atlantic African States process, and establish the foundations of a parliamentary network dedicated to promoting sustainable collaboration among Member States.

The event brought together parliamentary leaders from across Africa to discuss critical issues related to the continent's governance, including regional integration, economic

development, and the strengthening of maritime security. The gathering also supports the Royal Atlantic Initiative, which aims to enhance cooperation among Atlantic African States, focusing on economic complementarities, sustainable resource management, and strategic investments.

Sierra Leone's participation in the event is expected to further strengthen bilateral relations between Sierra Leone, Morocco, and other African nations, reinforcing parliamentary ties and fostering mutual interests. It also underscores Sierra Leone's commitment to regional integration, security, and sustainable development within the African geopolitical space.

In his address, Speaker Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas highlighted that the government of Sierra Leone has been

reviewing and updating its mining laws to promote transparency, attract investment, and ensure local communities benefit from mining activities. These efforts reflect Sierra Leone's dedication to balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability and community welfare. He also noted that for the most current information on specific projects, local government releases or industry reports may provide further insight.

The Speaker emphasized that initiatives to improve infrastructure, including roads, are also underway to support mining activities. These improvements will enhance both domestic and international investment, demonstrating Sierra Leone's commitment to a united approach to common challenges and sustainable development across Atlantic African nations. He also stressed that ongoing engagement and dialogue between states will be essential for the success of these initiatives.

In his statement, the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Morocco, Hon. Rachid Talbi El Alami expressed his pleasure in welcoming the delegation, which comprises representatives from 23 African States along the Atlantic Ocean. He remarked that linking these countries will facilitate intra-continental exchanges, promote economic integration, and foster greater reliance on the capabilities and resources of the region. This, he believes, will deepen South-South cooperation, based on solidarity and shared profit, within the framework of global governance and market dynamics.

Other parliamentary leaders from African countries also shared their statements during the event.

# Food and Agriculture

## "INVESTING IN CASHEW: A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO COCOA FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN GHANA"



**The reelected government of President John Dramani Mahama has recognized agriculture as a pivotal tool for revitalizing Ghana's economy. The administration's commitment to leveraging agriculture is not only aimed at economic growth but also at addressing unemployment, particularly among vulnerable groups like women and the youth.**

The challenges facing Ghana's cocoa sector, compounded by its significant decline in production, call for urgent diversification of the country's agricultural portfolio. With cocoa production at its lowest in two decades (530,000 metric tonnes, as reported by COCOBOD), there is a pressing need for the government to explore alternative cash crops like cashew. This shift could enhance economic resilience and stabilize the agriculture sector.

The reelected government of President John Dramani Mahama has recognized agriculture as a pivotal tool for revitalizing Ghana's economy. The administration's commitment to leveraging agriculture is not only aimed at economic growth but also at addressing unemployment, particularly among vulnerable groups like women and the youth. By prioritizing the agricultural value chain, the government can create the needed jobs through targeted investments in agro-processing, export, and local value addition. Introducing alternative cash crops like cashew will not only increase export revenues but also reduce the risks associated with overreliance on cocoa.

The success of this vision will rely heavily on implementing comprehensive policies, fostering public-private partnerships, and providing

farmers with the necessary resources to thrive in a diversified agricultural landscape. With the proper support and execution, agriculture can indeed become the engine of Ghana's economic transformation under President Mahama's leadership.

### An overview of the Ghanaian cashew sector

Agriculture and its related sectors constitute Ghana's top revenue-generating sources. Apart from cocoa, the cashew industry is fast becoming equally significant because of its contribution to economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in the country. Initially introduced as an afforestation crop, cashew has developed over time to become a key economic crop, contributing about USD300 million to Ghana's earnings from the Non-Traditional Export category (GEPA, 2022).

The Raw Cashew Nuts (RCN) have become one of Ghana's major agricultural export commodities to various international markets, including Europe, the United States, and Asia. Coming from national production volumes of about 12,000 MT in 2005 (MoFA), Ghana can boast of a production volume of about 249,000MT as of 2024 (MoFA, 2024) with thirteen out of the sixteen regions producing cashew. Main production areas include the Bono, Bono East, Ashanti, Savannah, Oti, Volta, Upper West, North East, and Northern region.

With the advent of climate change and its effects on food security and livelihoods, cashew stands out as a climate mitigation measure. Studies conducted by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT, 2011) have revealed that the cashew tree is highly resistant to climate change effects and by 2050, its production would take over previously cocoa-dominant producing areas in the subregion as the climate might no longer be favourable for the latter.

Currently Ghana is one of the top ten (10) producers of the nut globally, and rubs shoulders with globally known quality RCN producers like Benin and Guinea Bissau.

The country has more than ten (10) operational cashew processing facilities in the country that are in-



Cashew Apple processing

involved in full processing and semi-processing of RCN and cashew apples for both the domestic and international markets. About one (1) million people are employed in the Ghanaian cashew sector, from input production through processing to trade and export.

The crop has assumed an important position as an export commodity in the country, thereby, attracting government attention and support to the sector. In view of this, the government of Ghana in 2016 initiated processes to establish a regulatory body to oversee the regulation and development of the sub-sector. In December 2019, the Tree Crops Development Authority (TCDA) bill was passed, thus Act 1010 by the Ghanaian Parliament and the Tree Crops Development Authority was inaugurated in September 2020 to regulate and develop the cashew sub-sector, alongside other tree crops.

Other efforts to support the sector include the provision of improved planting materials under the Planting for Export and Rural Development (PERD) programme. Under this government initiative, cashew seedlings were distributed to farmers to expand area under cultivation in order to boost production quantity and quality.

Despite these efforts, more remains to be done if the country stands to benefit from the extensive potential that this sector possesses.

### Opportunities in the Cashew Value Chain for Women & Youth

A survey conducted by the Directorate of Crop Services, MoFA (DCS/MoFA) in 2023 revealed that the average age of the Ghanaian cashew farmer is currently 51 years and a considerable number of cashew trees in main producing areas are ageing – placing the average tree age at 16 years. This is indicative of an ageing farmer population and an approaching decline in current production volumes and productivity.

Also, studies have shown an increase in the spate of rural-urban migration by youth to seek greener pastures. A publication on [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com) suggests that Ghana's urban population reached about 19 million in 2021, being around 58% of the country's total population, as opposed to some 13.8 million living in the rural areas.

Also, the youth struggle to secure financing and the necessary support in their entrepreneurial pursuits. Additionally, Ghana's female population is increasing steadily, a development which requires the government to critically think about mapping out strategies to create gainful employment opportunities for this group.

The cashew value chain offers good prospects to Ghana's budding youth and female population, as it is replete with easily accessible opportunities which require considerably low capital and yet offer significantly profitable businesses for women and youth.

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# Food and Agriculture

## "INVESTING IN CASHEW: A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO COCOA FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN GHANA"



**The cashew value chain offers countless employment opportunities, especially for women and youth right from agro-input production through to retail marketing of finished products.**

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Moreover, investing in the development of this chain will foster inclusivity, make the industry advanced, diversified, and appealing to both young people and women. It would ultimately contribute to broader economic development and national poverty reduction efforts.

**Some opportunities to explore include:**

### 1. Job Creation for women and youth

The cashew value chain offers countless employment opportunities, especially for women and youth right from agro-input production through to retail marketing of finished products. Reports by the Directorate of Crop Services, Ministry of Food &

Agriculture (DCS/MoFA) reveal that female grafters have higher success rates than male grafters. Grafting is a technique used to reproduce high yielding varieties/clones of plants. This method is used in the production of high yielding cashew seedlings, and this has increased production quantity and quality for farmers over the period. Research stations and nurseries employ grafters and pay an average of 60 pesewas per successful seedling grafted, in 2023. Research by DCS/MoFA has shown that a female grafter grafts a minimum of 200 and a maximum of about 400 seedlings per day with 85% to 90% success rate. So far, persons employed in this area fall within the age bracket of 18 and 50 years and are mostly women, as they are preferred by nursery operators and research stations due to their efficiency and effectiveness.

Service provision to cashew producers as regards pruning, pest and disease control, plantation establishment and maintenance are areas that the youth could also be trained to do. These are areas in which skilled hands are in high demand in the sector. Building capacities of women and youth on grafting, cashew plantation establishment, implementing good agricultural practices, harvest and post-harvest practices and old plantation rehabilitation, among other things, would provide them with jobs and income, all year round.

Diversification of cashew plantation presents another opportunity for revenue generation. Aside intercropping with food crops, women and youth can earn significantly

from beekeeping on cashew farms. One beehive can produce six gallons of honey per season thereby serving as a considerable revenue generation venture for women and youth. Aside earning about GHS300 per gallon of honey (as at 2024), research has proven that cashew plantations with beehives produce twice more than those without them. Further, the pollination activity of the bees aids the trees in producing more and better-quality cashews. Considering that this can be done on already established farms and the relatively lower use of physical strength, this is an ideal area that has the potential to employ more women and youth to earn decent income.

**2. Domestic value addition:** At least 7 out of 10 jobs in the cashew processing segment are held by women and youth. These two groups dominate the processing chain right from RCN steaming through deshelling to kernel roasting, sorting, and packaging. Providing tax holidays and facilitating access to finance and other operational requirements for processing units in the country would enable people earn better income from working in this area. Cashew roasting and cashew apple processing are relatively lower start-up capital and easier divisions for women and youth to engage in. The cashew apple can be processed into juice, jam, candies, ethanol for industrial purposes, wine, gin, and brandy, among other things. If provided with the right support, women and youth can adequately explore the potential of the crop.

**3. Use of technology to enhance output:** The sector is replete with opportunities for tech-savvy youth

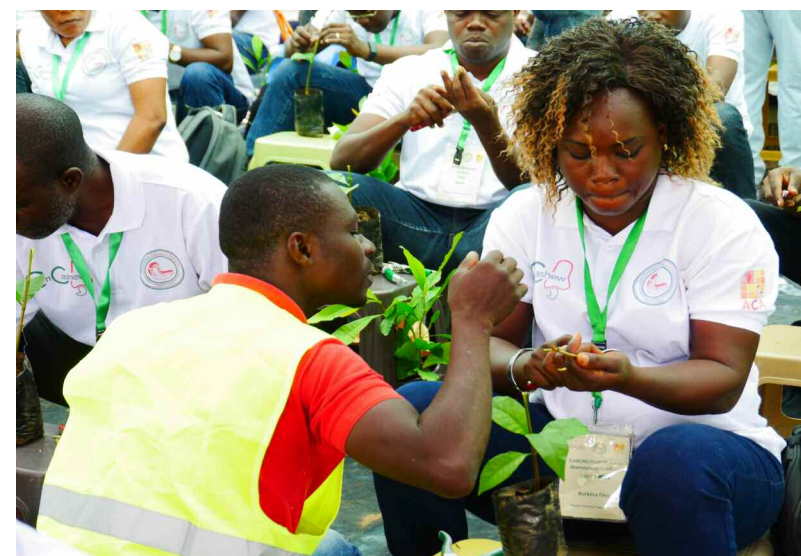
and AI-inclined individuals and companies. Some opportunities include investment in the supply or rental of cold chain logistics to cashew apple processors, to facilitate transportation of cashew apples over long distances at the right temperature to prevent easy fermentation of apples, for juice-producing companies like Blue Skies and Ekumfi Fruits and Juices. Others include the development of digital products like supply chain optimisation technologies, market intelligence portals, and crop management applications, among others. The design and operation of equipment for good plantation management, weed control, crop harvesting and food processing and preservation also present opportunities for youth employment in the sector.

**4. Equipment manufacturing:** The value chain offers prospects for manufacturers of farming and cashew processing equipment. Youth involved in this sector would, therefore, be able to key into these opportunities. Currently, most of the equipment used by sector actors are imported from Asia and Europe. Hence, actors incur substantial cost in the purchase and maintenance of machines, as well as the replacement of faulty parts. Various studies on the sector have also revealed that importing processing equipment, mainly from Vietnam and Italy, affects the profitability of local processors negatively. (World Bank, 2018; ACA, 2021). Also, Vietnam's domestically produced modern machinery has been found to be one of the main accounting factors for

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Grafting: young ladies



Grafting: women and youth

# Food and Agriculture

## "INVESTING IN CASHEW: A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO COCOA FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN GHANA"



Cashew apple processing



Mechanisation

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its low cashew processing cost, contributing to its attainment of number one global processor. Vietnam reduced the cost of machinery considerably when it eased its reliance on imported equipment from Italy, China, and India, and started partnering with local mechanical engineering enterprises to design machines for its processors. (Antech, 2020). Getting processing equipment options locally would, therefore, reduce operational cost for Ghanaian cashew processors considerably and provide job opportunities in the local manufacturing industry.

Tutors in in-country training institutions, private equipment manufacturers and some of the youth with an interest and a technical/ mechanical educational background should be supported by the Government of Ghana to receive training in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire's Cashew Technology Manufacturing Centre on cashew-specific processing equipment design, production, and maintenance. These beneficiaries would then serve as trainers to others in this area.

**5. Skills enhancement and Agribusiness advisory services:** Across Africa, one can observe an increased involvement of youth in agribusiness and its related sectors. A good percentage of these youth provide advisory services and some offer skills enhancement services as well as skilled personnel for hire for plantation management and other agriculture-related services. The cashew sector offers an interesting space for these kinds of services. Youth with agriculture or business

management expertise can build their capacities on cashew and offer skills enhancement sessions to others. This should enhance the sector's output, aid new product development, enhance product branding and thus, facilitate global market access and recognition for Ghanaian cashew products.

**Recommended Measures**

**A. Short to Medium Term Measures**

**1. Increase capacity building and enhance agricultural technology adoption through extension services**

The government should promote capacity building for women and youth on cashew production, climate-smart agricultural practices, the use of improved planting materials, and adoption of economic production models, as well as agricultural technology adoption through extension services and farmer field schools. By strengthening extension services, increasing the Agricultural Extension Agent (AEA) to farmer ratio, and providing the requisite resources for training sessions, the knowledge of women and youth and their adoption of more efficient production and harvest management technologies will be enhanced. The government should leverage on AEAs and partnership with other knowledge brokers like Development Partners and NGOs working in the cashew space to raise awareness on opportunities in the chain, promote agricultural technology adoption and encourage more active participation of these two groups in the sector.

Additionally, building the capacities of women and youth on cashew nut and by-product processing will aid in creating employment and providing

revenue for thousands. Courses have been developed on tree crops value chain management and are on offer in various technical universities and agricultural colleges. The government should introduce scholarships for women and young people, especially those living in rural areas, to enable them to gain the required knowledge and skills to work in the chain.

**2. Facilitation of access to finance**

Due to the request for collateral and other requirements by financial in-

stitutions from individuals, it is usually difficult for women and the youth to access finance for their businesses. The creation of a fund and the establishment of specialised financing programs for cashew farmers and processors, especially female and youth-owned enterprises, would go a long way to encourage them. This could be done in collaboration with financial institutions. Additionally, AEAs, financial institutions and other key stakeholders like Development Partners should be engaged to provide financial literacy training for small-scale businesses, sensitise them on and facilitate their access to available investment opportunities for both female and youth-owned businesses. Incentives could also be introduced by government for financial institutions that offer innovative products for these kinds of businesses to encourage investment in and provision of financing options for the target group.

**3. Facilitate access to market**

To further encourage engagement in this sector and enhance its revenue generation for individuals and the country, the government should fa-

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## Food and Agriculture

# "INVESTING IN CASHEW: A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO COCOA FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN GHANA"

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Facilitate access to regional and continental markets for cottage, micro and small businesses owned by women and youth through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement. Their capacities should be built on a diverse range of topics regarding meeting international market requirements as well as the provisions of the Agreement to enable them to take full advantage of this platform. This would ultimately increase Ghana's product visibility and share on the international market and also earn the country additional revenue. Additionally, introduction of certain incentives like subsidies for cashew nut and by-product processors would encourage the involvement of youth and women in the venture. The TCDA could also be tasked to further simplify export procedures for exporters of processed products. This would make this segment more attractive and profitable for the target group.

Also, Europe and North America are currently the main markets for high quality West African kernels. Whereas Vietnamese and Indian processors serve the same markets, they also have the Chinese markets to absorb kernels of lower quality, thus the broken kernels. West African processors, on the other hand lack markets to absorb broken kernels (Crandall, 2018). Taking advantage of the AfCFTA and supporting consumption drives through this avenue would help create a good market for broken cashew kernels, thus increasing profitability for these actors. This grade of kernels can be used extensively in the confectionary industry.

4. Introduction of Tax Holidays: As at 2021, only about 8.3% of the 1.7 million MT of RCNs harvested annually in West Africa was processed into cashew kernels (ACA Cashew

Barometer, 2021), thus exporting jobs, and losing opportunities to diversify government revenue. Aside poor infrastructure, including a lack of storage facilities to store produce that is bought during the major cashew season in-country and within the sub-region, other key challenges that domestic processors face include high electricity costs, unstable power supply and the lack of specific government support for the sector. This puts them at a disadvantage in comparison with their competitors in Asia, who benefit considerably from favourable domestic policies.

The introduction of tax holidays for domestic cashew processors, especially start-ups, female, and youth-led enterprises, for the first three to five years would allow them to find their footing, compete better on the international market, and make considerable profits. Considering the value addition potential of these enterprises and their contribution to sustainable development, these tax exemptions are worth granting.

5. Invest in cashew research: Government and stakeholders should establish partnerships with research institutions, to embark on essential scientific agricultural research, to improve cashew varieties, disease resistance, and integrated pest management. Other areas of interest such as new product development, food processing technologies, and other product enhancement measures to boost shelf life and increase market worthiness of products should be researched on to improve upon the sector's output. Research institutions should also be charged and provided with the necessary support to aid new product development with research and make this segment even more attractive to others. So far, this is an underfinanced area in Ghana which has immense potential for promoting the country's status in the cashew industry globally. Currently, Ghana's research on cashew

comes second only to Tanzania and work by the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) has resulted in the production and distribution of improved cashew planting materials in the subregion. Benin, Togo, and Sierra Leone have requested for and benefited from such planting materials. Through GIZ's partnership with CRIG/MOFA, learning exchanges on advanced cashew production technologies and cashew by-product processing have taken place between Ghana, Brazil, and Columbia. Making specific budgetary allocation to cashew research in government's annual budget will go a long way to make Ghana a leading producer of quality cashews globally, increase the country's revenues from the sector, and enhance its international status in the industry, among other benefits.

### B. Medium to Long term Measures

1. Implementation of gender-sensitive policies: A key challenge for women and youth in Ghana is getting access to land and resources for farming. To promote their access to land, credit, and other salient resources in the cashew sector, the government should introduce policies that are more supportive of these groups including providing incentives for communities that lease or sell land to women and youth for farming purposes. The land tenure system could also be reviewed to introduce clauses that facilitate women and youth's land ownership in Ghana.

The government should support and create targeted programmes, quota systems and other incentives to attract women and young entrepreneurs into the sector. Mentorship programs could also be established to provide them with guidance.

The proposal to allocate land banks to support female and youth-owned businesses, particularly in cashew production and processing, presents a transformative opportunity for economic growth and job creation in Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone. Facilitating access to land and mechanization for women and youth could significantly enhance their participation in cashew farming, a sector with immense potential for value addition and export growth.

Hon. Eric Opoku's vision, expressed during his vetting in Parliament, to make agriculture attractive to young Ghanaians, aligns well with this initiative. His proposal for a govern-

ment-led program to acquire and prepare land for farmers offers a practical solution to one of the most significant barriers to agricultural expansion—land accessibility. Strategically, part of these land parcels, particularly in key cashew-producing regions like Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo, and emerging areas such as Eastern and Volta, could be developed as industrial parks. These parks could serve as hubs for micro-businesses owned by women and youth, offering shared amenities to lower operational costs for start-ups. Such an approach would not only boost cashew production but also promote agro-processing and value addition, creating sustainable employment opportunities across the value chain. This bold step has the potential to revolutionize agriculture by integrating women and youth into the industry as key players, ensuring inclusivity and equity while accelerating economic development in the region.

### Conclusion

A documentary aired in 2023 sadly showed how some Techiman North constituency youth had resorted to sniffing glue due to unemployment, using cashew farms in the area, as hideouts for abusing drugs. Ironically, these farms could be their source of employment and income generation. With the rapid growth in population of vulnerable groups like women and youth in Ghana, and the resultant need for creation of employment and livelihood sustaining opportunities, the government needs to seriously consider exploring the viable opportunities that the cashew sector offers for sustainable employment and income generation.

Moreover, with the 3-5% annual growth in global demand for the nut, Ghana stands to benefit from the foreign revenue that accrues from the sector. Also, global kernel prices are at least three times higher than RCN prices. With the country's National Export Development Strategy aiming to move from a commodity-based export economy to a manufacturing, industrial export economy (GEPA, 2020), intentionally paying attention to the growth of this high-revenue-generating sector would rake in immeasurable results on micro and macro levels. These measures, among others, include the formulation and implementation of favourable policies for vulnerable groups and the sector, introduction of incentives for different actor groups, capacity building, investment in research and facilitating market and finance access.



Processing



Warehousing



# Features/Special Report

## Why Reverting to Rule 16(14) Violates the Executive Council's Directive on PAP's Suspended Rules

**D**iscover how reverting to Rule 16(14) from the PAP's suspended Rules defies the Executive Council's directive and undermines institutional governance.

In February 2024, the Executive Council issued Decision EX.CL/Dec.1242(XLIV) regarding the Pan-African Parliament's (PAP) suspended Rules of Procedure. The Decision explicitly states in paragraph 8(e) that:

"Any decision made based on the suspended revised Rules of Procedure of the PAP dated 4 November 2022, should be considered null and void."

The directive was a direct response to concerns that certain revisions—particularly pertaining to leadership tenure—were inconsistent with the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) Protocol and broader AU legal frameworks.

Despite this clear instruction, the Office of the Legal Counsel (OLC) submitted a Draft Rules of Procedure for the Pan-African Parliament where it reverted to Rule 16(14) that deals with the tenure for the President and Vice Presidents of PAP thereby invoking provisions from the suspended Rules of Procedure.

Below, we explore why the OLC's move to revert to a three-year tenure—based on Rule 16(14) of the suspended Rules—constitutes a direct violation of the Executive Council's directive.

### 1. Background: The Suspended Rules of Procedure

In November 2022, the PAP introduced revisions to its Rules of Procedure aimed at clarifying institutional processes, including Rule

16(14) on leadership tenure. However, upon review, the Office of the Legal Counsel (OLC) in its opinion BC/OLC/23.18/13795.23 of 04 October 2023 found these Rules to be inconsistent with Article 12.3 of the Protocol and recommended their suspension. The specific provision at issue—Rule 16(14)—proposed a three-year leadership term that diverged from the Protocol's intended interpretation and other validly adopted AU legal instruments. The Executive Council in EX.CL/Dec.1242(XLIV) upheld the suspension.

Given the observed inconsistencies, the Executive Council decreed that any reliance on the suspended Rules—whether partial or wholesale—would be null and void. This meant that no decisions, interpretations, or actions could validly proceed from those suspended Rules.

### 2. The Executive Council Directive

Under Decision EX.CL/Dec.1242(XLIV), the Executive Council explicitly stated:

"Any decision made based on the suspended revised Rules of Procedure of the PAP dated 4 November 2022, should be considered null and void."

The instruction has two critical implications:

**1. Legal Invalidation:** All decisions that derive from or rely on the nullified provisions of the suspended Rules have no legal effect.

**2. Prohibition of Reliance:** Any institution or individual—particularly within the PAP—must refrain from referencing or implementing the suspended Rules in any capacity.

### 3. The OLC's Reversal and Its Legal Consequences

#### 3.1 The OLC's Resuscitation of Rule 16(14)

The OLC initially had an interpretation of Rule 16(14) which is consistent with Article 12.3 of the PAP Protocol and recognized the crucial need for geographical rotation and strict adherence to the Protocol's terms. Recently, however, the OLC reversed its opinion and reverted to Rule 16(14) of the suspended Rules of Procedure.

#### 3.2 Reliance on Suspended Rules of Procedure

By invoking Rule 16(14)—which itself is part of the suspended



Rules—the OLC's reversal effectively implements or endorses a provision that has no standing under the Executive Council's decision. This action raises two critical red flags:

**1. Direct Violation of the Executive Council Directive:** The OLC's shift in perspective uses and relies on Rule 16(14) which the Executive Council has explicitly suspended.

**2. Invalid Legal Source:** Since Rule 16(14) is contained in the disallowed Rules of Procedure, it cannot serve as a lawful basis for any official decision, policy, or interpretation within the PAP.

### 4. Why the OLC Action Violates the Executive Council Directive

#### 1. Contradiction of the "Null and Void" Clause:

The Executive Council's decision leaves no room for ambiguity: all decisions, policies, or interpretations stemming from the suspended Rules are considered void. By adopting the three-year tenure from Rule 16(14), the OLC has taken a step that directly contradicts this instruction.

#### 2. Failure to Base Decisions on Valid Instruments:

The PAP Protocol is a ratified AU legal instrument that should guide the legislative and procedural frameworks of the PAP. If the OLC had simply reinterpreted Article 12.3 of the Protocol without resorting to the suspended Rules, its new stance might be open for discussion. However, because it is instead relying on the invalid suspended Rules, the action undermines the AU's legal hierarchy and compliance standards.

#### 3. Undermining Institutional Clarity and Governance:

Allowing decisions predicated on suspended rules sets a troubling precedent for other AU organs. If one body can circumvent the Executive Council's directive, it threatens the institutional coherence and respect for due process and the rule of law under Article 3(g) and Article 4(m) of the Constitutive Act that the AU endeavors to uphold.

### 5. In Summary:

#### 1. Executive Council's Directive is Unambiguous:

The Council mandated that any reference to or reliance on the suspended 4 November 2022 Rules must be considered null and void.

#### 2. OLC's Interpretation Originates from a Suspended Provision:

By using Rule 16(14)—a provision from the suspended Rules—the OLC has anchored its new position on invalid grounds.

#### 3. Clear Violation of Decision EX.CL/Dec.1242(XLIV):

The action contravenes the express language of the Council, thereby lacking legal effect and breaching AU directives.

### 6. Conclusion

The crux of the matter lies in the source of the OLC's revised position on Article 12.3. Because the OLC explicitly invoked and re-introduced Rule 16(14) of the suspended Rules of Procedure, it has chosen a path that stands in direct conflict with the Executive Council's clear mandate. As a result:

**1. The Three-Year Tenure Provision is Void:** Any move to implement a three-year term based on the suspended Rules has no legal standing.

**2. Infringement of AU Authority:** By ignoring the Executive Council's directive, the OLC's action potentially undermines the legitimacy of future PAP decisions and opens the door to institutional disputes.

In light of these considerations, the OLC's shift in perspective regarding Article 12.3—grounded in Rule 16(14) of the suspended Rules—constitutes a violation of Decision EX.CL/Dec.1242(XLIV). Only by adhering strictly to the valid PAP Protocol and properly adopted AU legal instruments can the PAP maintain both its integrity and its alignment with broader AU principles of governance, legality, and regional equity.



**Under Decision EX.CL/Dec.1242(XLIV), the Executive Council explicitly stated: "Any decision made based on the suspended revised Rules of Procedure of the PAP dated 4 November 2022, should be considered null and void."**

## Elections

# Congratulatory Messages from H.E. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, President of the Pan-African Parliament, to the Newly Elected Leadership of the African Union Commission

Saturday, 15 February 2025 marked a significant moment for the African Union (AU) as Heads of State and Government elected a new Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC). On behalf of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), its Bureau, and its entire membership, the President of PAP, His Excellency Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, extended heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected office bearers. Below are the congratulatory messages in full:

## 1. Message to the New Chairperson of the African Union Commission

His Excellency, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf

On behalf of the Bureau, the entire membership of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to convey my hearty congratulations to His Excellency, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, the Government and people of the Republic of Djibouti, on his election as Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Saturday, 15th February 2025.

His Excellency, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf's election by a two-thirds majority of the vote after a gruelling seven rounds of voting attests to the fact that the confidence reposed in him by African Heads of State and Government was a carefully considered meritorious decision not based on whim.

The Pan-African Parliament has no doubt that His Excellency, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf will live up to the expectations of the Heads of State and Government that put their faith in him, as well as an expectant African citizenry aspiring for a stronger, inclusive and more effective Commission that facilitates the attainment of "an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global affairs."

The Pan-African Parliament stands ready to support and work with His Excellency, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf during his tenure and ensure that the voice and interests of the people of Africa find expression in the decisions, programmes and policies of the Union.

**Congratulations! Felicitations! Parabens! Felicidades! Hongera! Tahaniina!**  
H.E. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira  
President of the  
Pan-African Parliament

## 2. Message to the New Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission

Her Excellency, Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi

On behalf of the Bureau, the entire membership of the Pan-African Parliament, and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to express our sincere congratulations to Her Excellency, Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi, the Government and people of the Republic of Algeria, on her election as Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Saturday, 15th February 2025.

The election of Her Excellency, Ambassador Haddadi, after six rounds of a tightly contested vote, demonstrated the maturation of democracy on the continent and the confidence that African leaders have in her able leadership.

The Pan-African Parliament has every confidence that Her Excellency, Ambassador Haddadi, will leverage the ongoing African Union Reforms to spearhead the transformative of the administrative arm of the Commission into an efficient, harmonized and well-coordinated structure that drives the effective implementation and attainment of the broader objectives of the Union.

The Pan-African Parliament affirms its commitment to working with Her Excellency, Ambassador Haddadi during her tenure.

**Congratulations! Felicitations! Parabens! Felicidades! Hongera! Tahaniina!**  
H.E. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira  
President of the  
Pan-African Parliament

## A New Chapter for the African Union

The elections of His Excellency Mahamoud Ali Youssouf as Chairperson and Her Excellency Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi as Deputy Chairperson is expected to herald a new chapter in the African Union's quest for pan-African integration, peace, and prosperity. Both leaders assume these pivotal roles at a time when the African Union is undertaking significant reforms aimed at enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and cooperation across the continent.

The Pan-African Parliament, as the legislative consultative body of the AU, has promised to support the new AUC leadership in advancing the AU's Agenda 2063. By fostering solidarity among member states, upholding democratic values, and championing the aspirations of African citizens, PAP has pledged to work in tandem with the Commission to build a continent that is truly self-reliant and influential on the global stage.

## Conclusion

The historic elections on 15 February 2025 once again highlighted the African Union's commitment to democratic processes and the pursuit of capable leadership. Through these messages, H.E. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, President of the Pan-African Parliament, reiterated PAP's readiness to collaborate closely with the new Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission. This spirit of cooperation and shared vision will pave the way for an Africa that is united, peaceful, and prosperous, driven by its people and strongly positioned in global affairs.

Youssof succeeds Moussa Faki Mahamat of Chad, following an intense series of voting rounds held on Saturday, February 15.

## Multi-Round Voting Results

The election was marked by multiple rounds of voting, reflecting the tight race between the three main contenders:

### 1. First Round

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 18 votes
- **Raila Odinga (Kenya):** 20 votes
- **Richard Randriamandrato (Madagascar):** 10 votes

*No candidate achieved the required two-thirds majority, leading to a second round.*

### 2. Second Round

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 19 votes
- **Raila Odinga (Kenya):** 22 votes
- **Richard Randriamandrato (Madagascar):** 7 votes

*Still no candidate reached the two-thirds threshold, prompting a third round.*

### 3. Third Round

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 23 votes
- **Raila Odinga (Kenya):** 20 votes
- **Richard Randriamandrato (Madagascar):** 5 votes

*Randriamandrato trailed, but no one secured the two-thirds majority, leading to a fourth round.*

### 4. Fourth Round (Raila vs. Youssouf)

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 25 votes
- **Raila Odinga (Kenya):** 21 votes

*No two-thirds majority once again, proceeding to a fifth round.*

### 5. Fifth Round

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 26 votes
- **Raila Odinga (Kenya):** 21 votes

*Still short of the two-thirds majority, leading to a sixth round.*

### 6. Sixth Round

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 26 votes
- **Raila Odinga (Kenya):** 22 votes



Son Excellence, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf

*Raila Odinga was eliminated going into the seventh round, leaving Youssouf as the sole candidate.*

## 7. Seventh Round

- **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Djibouti):** 33 votes

*Mahmoud Ali Youssouf was declared the new AUC Chairperson after securing the clear majority.*

## Significance of the Election

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission is a pivotal figure in shaping the continent's political, economic, and socio-cultural agenda. As the head of the AU's executive branch, the Chairperson works closely with member states to implement strategic initiatives in areas such as:

- **Peace and Security** – Addressing conflicts, terrorism, and regional instability.
- **Economic Integration** – Promoting intra-African trade and bolstering the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- **Infrastructure Development** – Enhancing road, rail, and technological linkages across the continent.
- **Social Affairs** – Driving efforts in health, education, and youth empowerment.

## About Mahamoud Ali Youssouf

Hailing from Djibouti, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf has served as the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation since 2005. Known for his diplomatic acumen, Youssouf has played a critical role in regional peacemaking efforts, economic partnerships, and forging stronger ties between African nations and the international community.

## Looking Ahead

As the new leader of the African Union Commission, Youssouf is expected to build on his predecessor's accomplishments while introducing fresh perspectives on regional integration, conflict resolution, and sustainable development. The African continent faces evolving challenges and opportunities,

and Youssouf's longstanding diplomatic experience will be instrumental in guiding the AU's executive arm.

## Key Priorities for the New AUC Chairperson

**1. Strengthening Continental Unity: Youssouf plans to foster deeper collaboration** among AU member states, enhancing cooperation on issues such as border security, the environment, and public health.

**2. Driving Economic Growth:** Building on the AfCFTA, the new Chairperson aims to **accelerate industrialization, boost intra-African trade**, and attract foreign investment, positioning Africa as a global economic player.

**3. Promoting Peace and Stability:** With ongoing conflicts in various regions, Youssouf's leadership will focus on **mediation, conflict prevention**, and building robust peacekeeping frameworks.

**4. Championing Gender Equality and Youth Empowerment:** Recognizing the continent's youthful demographics, the new Commission head is committed to creating **opportunities for women and young people** in leadership and entrepreneurship.

**About the African Union (AU)**  
Established in 2002, the African Union is composed of **55 member states** working toward **greater unity, solidarity, and cooperation** among African countries. The Union's Commission, headed by a Chairperson, serves as its administrative and executive branch, responsible for day-to-day management and strategic decision-making.

As the 38th AU Summit continues, African leaders and international observers anticipate a **new era of leadership** under Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, with hopes for **unprecedented growth, stability, and integration** across the continent.

Features/Special Report

# Overview of Incidents of misconduct involving Parliamentarians across Africa: **Lessons for Lawmakers**

**I**ncidents of misconduct involving members of Parliament across Africa have been reported in various countries, reflecting challenges in governance and accountability. Here is an overview of notable cases:

**Pan-African Parliament (PAP):**

**Leadership Disputes and Allegations of Misconduct:** The PAP has faced internal conflicts, including allegations of corruption and misconduct among its leadership. For instance, disputes arose over the legitimacy of certain officials, leading to calls for adherence to internal mechanisms for addressing such issues. Rule 8(2) of the PAP Rules of Procedure provides for the removal of any member through a motion supported by a two-thirds majority.

**South Africa:**

**Travelgate Scandal:** In the early 2000s, several members of the South African Parliament were implicated in the "Travelgate" scandal, where MPs were found guilty of misusing parliamentary travel vouchers for personal gain. Notably, Hlonitshwa Mildred Mpaka, an ANC representative, was convicted of defrauding Parliament of service benefits worth R75,000 and subsequently resigned in 2005.

**Judicial Misconduct and Impeachment:** South Africa has also grappled with issues related to judicial misconduct. For example, a judge was impeached for gross misconduct by the previous parliament on 24 February 2024. The Judicial Service Commission found him guilty, leading to his suspension and eventual impeachment.

**Kenya:**

Impeachment Proceedings Against

**Deputy President:** Kenya's Deputy President, Rigathi Gachagua, faced impeachment proceedings over allegations of corruption, including the acquisition of properties through illicit means. Central to these proceedings was the Treetops lodge, a historic site tied to Queen Elizabeth II, which Gachagua allegedly acquired through corrupt means. Gachagua, who amassed properties worth over \$40 million during his tenure despite a previous net worth of about \$6 million, faced charges of undermining the government, corruption, and ethnically divisive politics.

**Liberia:**

**Parliamentary Corruption and Public Unrest:** In Liberia, allegations of corruption within the parliament have led to significant public unrest. The removal of the parliament speaker, accused of corruption, sparked anti-government protests. Amid these tensions, the parliament building in Monrovia caught fire, though the cause remains under investigation.

**Tunisia:**

**Electoral Authority Controversy:** Tunisia's parliament passed a law stripping courts of their power over the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), whose members are appointed by President Kais Saied. This move has been criticized as undermining judicial oversight and consolidating power, leading to concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

These incidents underscore the ongoing challenges in ensuring ethical conduct and accountability among parliamentary members across the African continent. A very recent case in point is the chaos that erupted at the ministerial vetting

process in the Parliament of Ghana barely a month after a new administration was sworn into office.

Ghana's lawmakers and citizens can draw important lessons from the chaotic incidents that marred the ministerial vetting on January 30 and 31 at the Appointments Committee sittings. These lessons are essential for strengthening democratic institutions and preventing similar occurrences in the future.

**Lessons for Lawmakers and Citizens**  
*Accountability and Consequences Matter*

Every action taken in the political space has consequences, both immediate and long-term. MPs must recognize that their conduct affects public trust in governance. Citizens, on the other hand, should demand accountability and discipline from their representatives.

**The Role of Parliament in Upholding Integrity**

Legislative misconduct erodes public confidence in Parliament's ability to provide effective oversight. When MPs engage in disruptive behavior, they weaken the institution they serve, making it harder to hold the executive accountable.

**Respect for Parliamentary Procedures**

The vetting process is a crucial aspect of democratic governance, meant to ensure transparency and competence in ministerial appointments. Disruptions undermine its credibility and effectiveness. Both lawmakers and citizens must advocate for adherence to parliamentary rules and procedures.

**Public Perception and Democracy's Survival**

As Stapenhurst and Pelizzo (2004) argue, misconduct by legislators threatens public trust in democracy. Transparency International has also highlighted how corruption and misconduct fuel negative public perceptions of elected officials. If such issues persist, democracy itself is at risk.

**Strengthening Ghana's Democratic Institutions**  
*Strict Adherence to the Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians*

Ghana's Parliament adopted a Code of Conduct in 2013, in line with international best practices such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). MPs must be held to this standard to ensure integrity, honesty, and responsibility in public office.

**Enhanced Parliamentary Ethics and Discipline Mechanisms**

Stronger internal disciplinary measures should be enforced against MPs who engage in misconduct. The Privileges Committee should be proactive in addressing breaches of parliamentary decorum.

**Greater Civil Society Oversight and Public Engagement**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens must actively monitor parliamentary proceedings and demand ethical conduct from MPs. Public interest groups should continue advocating for transparency and accountability in legislative affairs.

**Strengthening Institutional Independence**

Ensuring that parliamentary committees, including the Appointments Committee, operate independently and free from partisan influence is crucial. The Speaker of Parliament and leadership must enforce neutrality in critical vetting processes.

**Political Party Discipline and Ethical Training**

Political parties must take responsibility for educating their MPs on responsible conduct in Parliament. Regular training and orientation programs on parliamentary ethics should be institutionalized.

**Media's Role in Promoting Parliamentary Accountability**

The media must continue to expose parliamentary misconduct while educating the public on the importance of legislative integrity. Responsible journalism can shape public discourse and encourage better behavior from MPs.

By learning from this incident and implementing reforms, Ghana can strengthen its parliamentary democracy and uphold the principles of accountability, transparency, and good governance.



# THE ANCHOR

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