

Sen. Olekina: On a Point of Order, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Lusaka): What is your Point of Order, Sen. Olekina?

Sen. Olekina: Mr. Speaker, Sir, is it order for the Senate Majority Leader to caution the Speaker all the time? Yes, I would like to request you to rule on the Point of Order, but cautioning the Speaker is not right.

Sen. Olekina: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a few remarks because of the time. Hon. Senators, if we do not critique the reports brought before us, we might end up handing over our airport to the Chinese because we will not pay our debts. It is imperative that as Senators we play our role here in protecting the interest of county governments. Where it is wrong, we raise concerns.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are unable to live within our limits in this country because of our desire to borrow. In most counties, businesses are collapsing. The amount of unpaid bills is worrisome.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these counties overestimate or overstate their collections. They either do that intentionally so that they can show that they have a lot in their budget or there is a lot of laziness in terms of collecting revenue from the counties. It is important that when we look at this Budget Policy Statement (BPS), we try and focus on how our county governments can improve on local revenue collections.

Earlier on, the nominated Senator alluded to our assets and liabilities. When you look at the Auditor General's Report or the Controller of Budget's Report, the amount of assets listed to generate revenue for counties is not what they end up getting. So, I want to reiterate that we must ensure that all the unpaid pending bills have been captured in the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). A lot of businessmen, youth, women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) who have been given contracts by county governments are not paid; when they go and claim their money, their details are not found in their systems.

It is important that when we look at the BPS as Senators, we must interrogate it and ask questions like: How is this going to benefit my constituents? Unless we do that, we are just going to be reduced to voting machines and rubberstamps.

So, I want to encourage the Majority Side that even though this Bill has been brought in the last minute and we must vote for it, it is imperative that we become patient by listening and interrogating the document. Otherwise, very soon in our lifetime, this country will be divided and sold to other countries so that we are able to pay our debts.

It saddens me when I hear that every year when a child is born; they come in owing this country, the Chinese mostly, over Kshs100, 000.

(Loud consultations)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I need your protection. The consultations are loud. It is interrupting me.

The Speaker (Hon. Lusaka): Proceed, hon. Senator. You are on the Floor and your time is almost over.

Sen. Olekina: I agree, my time is almost over, but the Members are busy consulting.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is even over.

Sen. Olekina: Thank you, Mr. Temporary Speaker, Sir. I arise to make my contribution to this Policy Paper on the Slum Upgrading and Prevention Policy. The reason why we are here is to support devolution. I have looked at the overall policy objective of this Sessional paper. I support it. However, there are questions that we ought to be asking ourselves on why we have these problems. I would also argue that this Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2016 is quite old. We may be debating it now for various reasons, but the best way to stop the influx of rural-urban migration is by fighting for the increase of the allocation that our counties receive so that we are able to stop a lot of people migrating to the city.

With the gap between the rich and the poor in this country widening on a daily basis, there is no way we are going to stop people from boarding buses with one-way tickets coming to settle in Nairobi. Slums are sprouting on a daily basis. Even if it were me, I would ask myself the same question of why there is free land somewhere yet I have nowhere to live.

Mr. Temporary Speaker, Sir, the thing that we ought to be talking about is, how do we stop the rural-urban migration? Many people come to the city believing that, that is where they will get jobs to support their people in the rural areas. The reason why we fought so hard for a Devolved Government System was so that we are able to curb the growth of slums in this country.

One of the things that we might do in line with this Policy Paper is to try and promote subsidised housing and giving tax incentives that can help us, as a country, to reach the overall objective of this paper.

In the United States of America (USA) where I lived, there were slums but they had a much better name and called them “projects”. The government there tends to recognise the needs of poor people to have better housing. If this policy is not implemented, it will be a big waste and an insult to the poor people.

The reason why this policy paper was thought out in the first place was to give poor people who cannot afford to pay high rents in Nairobi or stay at home without a job a way for them to have a good life. In this country, everyone wants to come to Nairobi. As such, it is imperative that they have access to the basic things such as clean water and proper sanitation systems.

As we think about how to improve this by providing basic necessities to our brothers and sisters who live in the slums, we should set up a proper legal framework that will recognise their needs and the importance of them being fully accorded with everything that they need in order to make a good living. As I support the adoption of this policy paper, I would like us to concentrate on the need to devolve more funds to the county governments. If we do not devolve more funds to county governments, then we may never solve this problem.

If you ask any Kenyan who lives in the slums of Nairobi where they would love to live, they will tell you that they would like to live back in their rural home. It should not just be that people end up back home in caskets. You should be given an opportunity to choose where you want to live and all services should be accorded to you. Very soon, Nairobi City will end up having more slums than it can manage. In fact, the amount of mushrooming apartments in middle income areas like Kileleshwa will make people leave

and go to other areas and that area converted into a “project slum area”, just to give it a fancy name.

Mr. Temporary Speaker, Sir, I fully support the adoption of this paper but we must ask ourselves what we will do to curb the rural-urban migration. In fact, with the devolved government system, I would have been happy to hear that more counties are setting up areas where they can invite people with brains. You might hate the slums of Nairobi but as my able nominated Senator representing people with special interest said, you will find that the best carpenters in this country live in the slums. It is important for them not just to come to my house to build for me a two hundred thousand shilling dining table and then they end up going back to slums where there are no services. They need basic housing that they can call home and enjoy all the services.

With those few remarks, I fully support but encourage the Ministry to consider giving heavy tax incentives to people who can build more affordable housing not only here in Nairobi but also in our 47 counties. If any developer says that they can build houses to be sold at Kshs1 million or Kshs1.5 million, then it would be imperative for the Ministry of Finance to come up with low mortgages as well that people can afford.

What happens in this country is a bit different from other countries although we are slowly getting into that system. In other countries, your access to credit is based on your ability to pay whatever you borrow. But in this country, the more money you have or rather your pay slip is what determines how much you can access in terms of credit facilities. The system of financing in this country makes it very difficult for anyone, even a Member of Parliament (MP), to use his or her own pay slip.

It might be very difficult for an MP to choose where to live. You will find that most MPs end up living in a place where they can only afford about Kshs20 million mortgage and they will also benefit from the same. So, any developer who comes up and promotes affordable housing, which is similar to slum upgrading, should be given heavy tax incentives. Our financial sector should also consider lowering the mortgage.

We get a lot of money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. We should come up with a system that encourages people who earn very little money to borrow at almost 1 per cent or even less than that to afford to live anywhere in this city.

Mr. Temporary Speaker, Sir, with those few remarks, I fully support the adoption of this belated Sessional Paper on National Slum Upgrading and Preventive Policy. I thank you.