

Constitution Reform Forum **TT**

From maximum leader to maximum participation

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MEDIA RELEASE

AMENDMENTS SHOW GOVERNMENT NOT SERIOUS ABOUT CONSTITUTION REFORM

Even though the Prime Minister has announced that the Retiring Allowances (Legislative Service) (Amendment) and Judges Salaries and Pensions (Amendment) Bills have been put on hold, the CRF maintains that there are two core issues in the initial decision that still need attention.

By unanimously voting in favour of these bills, members of the Lower House demonstrated that they can conveniently disregard the constitution and take a path that primarily serves their own self-interest. If it is that Cabinet initially proposed these amendments on the grounds that the Salaries Review Commission (SRC) has no jurisdiction over the pensions of members of the judiciary and parliament, such a position strongly suggests that the Executive arm sees nothing wrong in promoting their suspect interpretation of the letter of the constitution even if it means undermining the spirit of the constitution. What is the point of establishing so-called independent bodies and giving them constitutional powers to act in their own right, when the government can simply exploit perceived loopholes to erode those powers?

The CRF is also wondering whether the government is seriously committed to constitution reform and in particular the reform of the parliament. During the year-long series of consultations that the government's Constitution Reform Commission (CRC) held throughout the country, citizens' voices were loud and clear that Parliament was largely dysfunctional and that the role of the MP needed to be articulated more clearly. It seems logical therefore that the priority should be to address these deep-seated problems, in order to get a firmer basis for dealing with remuneration matters.

Now that the Prime Minister has put the legislative process on hold, the CRF is hoping that good sense would prevail and more importantly that Parliament would take an ethical approach to dealing with this matter.

Signed



Olabisi Kuboni
Chair

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