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PRESS RELEASE
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PAOLO CONTEH CONVINCES PARLIAMENT OF NEED FOR PASSPORT PRICE INCREASE

The Minister of Internal Affairs, Rtd. Major Paolo Conteh, has briefed Parliament on the proposed increase in price of a passport from Le 500,000.00 to Le750, 000.00.

The Minister said among other things, that the proposed increase is due to the depreciation of the Leone as against the US Dollar. He said that the proposed increase should have come into effect on the 01st November 2016, but that they were waiting on the position of Parliament to effect the increase. He said further that the cost for an application for a passport is now Le10, 000.00 which was previously sold at Le5, 000.00. He also called on the Government saying “our main focus is to embark on sound and workable economic policies that will drive the Dollar downwards”, whilst assuring MPs that such “decrease in the Dollars will have a corresponding effect on the price of a passport”. He referred to the situation as “a reality we have to face and that if we continue to subsidize our services, we will never develop as a country”.

Reacting, MPs on both sides of the aisle saw the need for the increase in the price of passport to Le750, 000.00 due to the prevailing economic reality in the country, particularly noting the continued depreciation of the Leone as against the Dollar, and called on the Minister of Finance to fix the economy and reverse the trend of the current economic malaise. They said that \$100 was previously equivalent to Le500, 000.00, but is now Le750, 000.00. MPs also decried the Minister for not informing Parliament earlier on the need for such an increase, except when invited by Parliament. They also expressed similar sentiments that with excessive and continued subsidies, this “country will never develop”. They also clarified that the issue at-hand is not about the imposition of tax upwardly, but an increase in price, which is not determined by Parliament, but is being driven by the forces of demand and supply. They also called on Sierra Leoneans to exercise their civic duties, such as the payment of tax, loyalty to the State and to avoid being over-reliant on the provision of free services by the State. They called for the decentralization of access to the passport to Sierra Leoneans living in remote areas, and its validity from 5 to 10 years, the previous practice.