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PRESS RELEASE

SECOND ALLOTTED DAY: DEBATE CONTINUES ON THE PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH

As the debate on the Presidential Speech entered its second day on Tuesday 29th May 2018, the Deputy Chief Whip of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Alusine Kanneh of SLPP commended President Bio and described him as “a man of integrity”. He also applauded President Bio for mentioning issues that are related to disability, and the need for the improvement of education in the country. Recalling former APC MPs like Hon. Alhassan Kamara and Hon. Amadu Fofanah who could not come to Parliament because of laws relating to dual citizenship, he commended President Bio for his intention to look into those laws, cognizant of our brothers and sisters who had gone to seek greener pastures overseas and are also contributing to national development, through remittances. He also talked on the construction of a health post in his constituency in Kenema District, with assistance from Norway. He decried APC for the incidences of violence meted on SLPP during their reign in governance.

Responding, Hon. Rugiatu R. Kanu of the APC profoundly thanked President Bio for his developmental aspirations that are embedded in the “New Direction”. Speaking on free education, she said it was initiated by late President Kabbah and continued by former President Koroma of SLPP and APC respectively. She also called on the Government to ensure that teaching and learning materials reached the intended beneficiaries, whilst applauding the past government for “cleaning the pay roll of teachers and removing teachers with fake certificates”. To succeed in the implementation of the free education initiative, she encouraged the Ministries of Education to utilize community structures, the approval and recruitment of trained and qualified teachers, the need to review and improve the conditions of service for teachers, to reduce overcrowding in schools, and continue with training for current and new teachers in order to improve their skills. Explaining her passion for women and girls, she appealed for the removal of barriers to allow women to access loans, to review the Education Act of 2004 in line with the input of development partner like UNICEF, with the aim of improving access for the education and development of the girl-child.

Also, Hon. Alpha Amadu Bah of APC thanked President Bio for the Speech he delivered in Parliament, with the aim of critically examining the document in respect of his programmes and policies. Speaking on land related challenges like congestion, he appealed to President Bio not to remove the EPA from the Office of the President and place it under the supervision of the Ministry of Lands, on the grounds that the needed time, expertise and the expected results will

be defeated, whilst calling for a comprehensive assessment and re-examination of the EPA before it could be taken to the Ministry of Lands, if at all. He also decried the allocation of lands in the right-of-way, including bridges, and blamed President Bio for mentioning the construction of roads in the Southern part of the country, without talking about the Hill Side Bypass Road connecting the Eastern part of Freetown, aimed at reducing traffic congestion, time management, and the promotion of trade and other activities.

Hon. Mustapha Sellu in his submission described President Bio as “disciplined, focused and a man of fortitude”, whilst speaking on the huge potentials of revenue generation in the marine sector to the tune of “100 Million USD” per annum. Sadly, he said the past regime did not pay much attention to it. Also, he remarked that under the “New Direction”, the marine sector will attract huge funds for Government and create jobs for our youthful population. Recalling former President Koroma who “promised to lay his life for the youth”, he said the “New Direction” is aimed at improving the skills and techniques of our youth to enable them gain access to jobs. He also called for the review of the Mines Act with the view to benefit both the landowners and the affected communities.

Contributing, Hon. Sahr Charles of C4C thanked and called on President Bio to put his words into action. Speaking on the importance of agriculture, he decried the past successive governments of both SLPP and APC for their unfulfilled promises, in respect of food security. For agriculture to succeed, he appealed for the removal of politics, saying the “soil test for ADDAX was taken from Kono, but the project was diverted and implemented in Bombali”. Speaking on the review of the Mines Act of 2009, he said mining communities have not benefited from their God given endowments, citing OCTEA in Kono that had failed in meeting her CSR.

Hon. Foday Mario Kamara of NGC said that they were very impressed with the Speech. He hoped for the successful implementation of the policies and programmes contained in the Presidential Speech, whilst lending his support to the TSA with a view to curbing leakages. He feared that the issue of late allocations will not affect revenue generating institutions by impacting on their performances negatively. He recalled that past governments had difficulties in implementing free education at primary and secondary schools because of late payment of school fee subsidies, which warranted other charges in schools borne by parents. He called for a blue-print document to be sent to Parliament with specifics for the implementation of the free education policy, whilst suggesting that it should have been implemented by phases. He also appealed to the Government to show sources of funding on the free education policy, without recourse to increasing the debt burden by taking loans from IMF and the World Bank.

Other MPs spoke to the motion.

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