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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

### **PARLIAMENT CONCLUDES DEBATE ON 2017 BUDGET**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 concluded a marathon debate on the 2017 Budget, which provides for the authorization of expenditure for the services of Sierra Leone. The Appropriation Act 2017 having gone through second reading is now committed to the Committee of Supply for the scrutiny of budgetary allocations, subject to the approval of Parliament. Therefore, all the MDAs are expected in Parliament through the Sub-Appropriation Committees to defend budgetary estimates, failing which their budgets will be withheld.

For his part on the ensuing debate, Hon. Ibrahim Ben Kargbo said that the budget is consistent with the policies and programmes of Government, whilst pointing to the challenges the austerity measures had, on the implementation of the Government's development programmes. He described the budget as an "austerity economic restructuring" aimed at tightening our fiscal and monetary policies which is not peculiar to Sierra Leone, noting without which the economy may run into serious difficulty. He called for the development of our stock exchange market which remains highly untapped. He also called for the strengthening of the economy through agro-based businesses.

Hon. Francis A. Kai-Samba recalled nine years ago, the start of the Agenda for Change, Agenda for Prosperity, Ebola and now Austerity, whilst citing the current economic reality in the country that is affecting all, such as the hike in fuel prices and other commodities. He furthered that the condition of roads in Kenema District is deplorable, noting the recent grading on the Blama-Hangha Road, excluding other major roads in the District. He called for equity in the service delivery index for all, devoid of lobbying and begging. He averred that electricity service should be extended to other areas in the country, whilst speaking on the challenges of the decentralization process in the country such as poor human resource, late transfer of funds and incomplete devolution to Councils. He also spoke on maternal deaths and accused the Government of having a bloated budget that should be cut down.

Hon. Hassan Sesay on his part described the budget as an honest one, cognizant of the current economic situation in the country. He recalled the economic boom that had been gravely affected by a drop on the prices of ore and when ebola struck, noting that austerity is not peculiar to Sierra Leone. He emphasized that the endemic problem of leakages which the Government is trying to curb is neither the making of APC nor SLPP and should therefore not be used by any to score cheap political points. For him, the budget is a paradigm shift from extractives to agricultural productivity and called for all Government officials to travel on economy class to save funds for the development of the country.

Hon. Gladys Gbappy-Brima said, as representatives of the people to whom power and sovereignty belong, it behooves MPs to "speak" people instead of party, describing it as an act of "lawlessness". She recalled President Koroma's speech where he pronounced that "elections are now over and it is now time for development". She said that both APC and SLPP are in governance together and cautioned that the budget if not reviewed, would either make or

unmake Government, as the people are grossly unhappy especially with hike in the prices of fuel and other goods and services in the country. She also opined that 65% of funds allocated to MDAs are yet to be received for service delivery and that for the past six months; Paramount Chiefs have not been paid. She called for the down-sizing of numerous commissions set up by Government which are not doing anything for nation building, whilst saying that a situation where “Government is blaming the opposition for incitement, amounts to failure in governance”.

Acting Minority Leader of the House, Hon. Ansumana J. KaiKai said among other things, the people of Sierra Leone would determine whether the next budget will break the camel’s back. He also said that in a year, inflation had galloped from 8.2% to 10.2%, whilst calling for the prudent management of our financial resources so as to achieve national objectives. He called for the withdrawal of the Le 63 Million CDF to MPs, referring to it as not serving the interests of MPs, but to be converted to meet the required allowances and opportunities for Members of Parliament. He furthered that our procurement laws should be amended to get rid of the “no objection notice” with the view of removing “bad name” from State House and other institutions.

In concluding the debate, Majority Leader of the House, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, referenced a BBC Media Action programme where the people of Kenema said that the deplorable condition of their roads is a result of internal politics; therefore the Government should not be blamed. He spoke on the importance of oversight and called for nationhood and collective sacrifice for the realization of the dreams and future of Sierra Leone. He applauded the sale of local produce at Masiaka and other places in the country, and blamed university graduates for not taking advantage of the four factors of production, but rather inciting demonstrations and other forms of violence on the social media. He decried civil servants for holding the country to ransom, whilst noting unpatriotic behavior by Sierra Leoneans, such as cliques and gangsterism.

Other MPs also contributed to the debate.

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