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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT APPROVES DR. HARDING, JIBAO, JAWARD AND EIGHT OTHERS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 05th June 2018 debated and approved the Fifth Report of the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service, chaired by the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mohamed Sidie Tunis.

Congratulating the presidential nominees after approval, the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu on behalf of Parliament “extends his warmest congratulations and felicitations to the presidential nominees for their appointments to the various offices of State”. He also encouraged the nominees to live up to the expectations of the President, Parliament, and the People, whilst speaking on the need of discharging their duties with admiration and sobriety.

Clarifying the issues raised by Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara from Kambia on Dr. Harding and Mr. Swarray “on the grounds of President Bio reneging on his promise of de-politicizing NATCOM, and the PAC’s Report on the management of the Ebola funds”, Dr. Bundu dismissed the reasons advanced as unsubstantiated, cognizant that Mr. Swarray had not been affected by Section 76 (1d) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. By extension, Mr. Swarray has neither been convicted nor sentenced for an offence involving fraud or dishonesty by any competent court of law.

The following presidential nominees were approved by Parliament:

1. Dr. Samuel S. Jibao-Commissioner-General, National Revenue Authority
2. Dr. Prince Alex Harding-Chairman, National Telecommunication Commission
3. Mr. Andrew Jaia Kaikai-Chief Immigration Officer
4. Umaru Napoleon Koroma Esq.-Chairman, National Commission for Privatization
5. Brig. Gen. (Rtd) John A.O Jah-Tucker-National Security Coordinator, Office of National Security

6. Mohamed Fuaad Daboh-Director-General, National Social Security and Insurance Trust
7. Dr. Foday Moriba Jaward-Executive Chairman, Environmental Protection Agency
8. Mr. Mohamed Haji-Kella, Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
9. Mr. Ibrahim Brima Swarray-Chief Executive, National Public Procurement Authority
10. Mr. Joseph Simon Kapuwa-Director-General, Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
11. Mr. Ibrahim Turay-Deputy Minister of Marine Resources

Seconding the motion prior to approval, the Deputy Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma of SLPP described Dr. Harding as "a political chemist and the brain behind SLPP's victory as Chairman". That Dr. Harding unilaterally saw political materiality in President Bio since 2005, on the grounds of conducting and handing over power to a civilian regime in 1996 as a military Head of State. He referred to both Dr. Prince Harding and Bockarie Foh as "two powerful politicians who had won presidential elections for SLPP and APC respectively". He continued that the President is right to de-politicize NATCOM because it had been politicized by Mr. Momoh Konte, assuring Dr. Harding to dispense his duties without fear or favour. He spoke on the need for transparency and accountability on revenue mobilization, regular payments into the CRF, creation of strong institutions, and increment on pension payments. On procurement related issues, he called for transparency because most corrupt practices are hinging on bad procurement procedures being followed.

Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara of APC called on Parliament not to approve the appointments of both Dr. Harding and Mr. Swarray because the President had reneged on his promise to de-politicize NATCOM and that the other had been found culpable of flouting procurement rules by the PAC's Report on the audit of the management of the Ebola funds.

Hon. Shiaka Musa Sama, an Independent MP spoke on the need for upholding the national interest and recalled that "President Bio is the President of Sierra Leone and not SLPP". He referred to the nominees as qualified and competent to serve and more so with potentials to bring the "New Direction" into reality. He called on SLBC to extend its reach to rural communities, and encouraged NASSIT to provide affordable housing for the poor and average contributors, with local materials.

Hon. Mohamed Bangura of APC said that Dr. Prince Harding is the right man to serve as "Chairman of NATCOM", in recognition of the view that "in Sierra Leone, everybody is a politician". He also said that "politics is over and that SLPP should work with the opposition for the development of the country". He espoused that he had known Dr. Harding for the past ten years as a man of integrity, competence and maturity, whilst expressing admiration for his excellence in political victories he had championed.

Hon. Rebecca Y. Kamara of C4C spoke on effective revenue mobilization, the handling of poor petty traders at border crossing points by officers of NRA, whilst ignoring large mining companies that are not meeting their tax obligations. She also said that “the mobile operators are stealing too much from the subscribers, with the provision of poor service”, whilst saying that “our passports are in the hands of foreigners and it is causing us as a country so much trouble and embarrassment”. She said to intensify security, it should start at the chiefdom level before it graduates to the district, noting that the payment of surface rents is not enough to reclaim the lands that had been mined, thus a potential threat for environmental hazards.

The Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Ibrahim Ben Kargbo said that “Dr. Harding deserves the position he has been given”, and as a friend he congratulated and wished him success in office. He also acknowledged Dr. Harding for making both “Kabbah and Bio as Presidents of Sierra Leone”, respectively. He furthered that SLBC played a major role in ending the war in Sierra Leone, and recalled the merger of SLBS and UN Radio into SLBC, our national broadcaster which was commissioned by Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, former UN Secretary General. He referred to NRA as being pivotal to national development, noting that Mr. Umaru Napoleon Koroma is the Secretary General of SLPP and a descendant of Falaba District, newly created by law. He ended that “in his estimation the nominees were well chosen by President Bio” to enhance the realization of his development aspirations of the country.

Concluding, the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mohamed Sidie Tunis read a report by the then Deputy Minister of Justice, John Arrow Bockarie on the punishment of certain officials by MDAs, based on the recommendations of the PAC’s Report on the management of the Ebola funds, without recourse to his office as the principal adviser to the Government of Sierra Leone. In view of the above, he supported the “President’s intention of reviewing Section 119 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, aiming at strengthening the ACC to immediately initiate action on the Auditor General’s Report, without waiting on Parliament, citing the punishment of small boys while the big men are walking freely”. He regarded the nominees as “people with high integrity and professional standings”, saying that the success of President Bio is resting on their shoulders and that failure is not an option”. He called on “SLBC to remain as a public broadcaster and not to serve as a political mouthpiece”.

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