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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PARLIAMENT APPROVES SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT 2018**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Friday 13th July 2018 debated and passed into law the Bill entitled “The Supplementary Appropriation Act 2018”, with a view to providing for the policies and programmes contained in the “New Direction” and for the services of Sierra Leone.

Parliament has accordingly approved the sum of Le 3.7 Trillion to President Bio spanning July to December 2018 to be charged and made payable from the Consolidated Revenue Fund with immediate effect.

Presenting the Bill, the Minister of Finance, Jacob Jusu Saffa said among other things that the Act is aimed at redirecting and repositioning Government’s prioritized policies and programmes as contained in the “New Direction”, with a view to improving revenue generation and prudent fiscal management in the country; initiating the process of procuring 50 school buses to be controlled by the municipal councils; subsidizing university application forms; providing free education starting from the next academic year in September 2018 for which not less than 21% of budgetary allocation is being appropriated; reducing tariffs on beer and wheat flour; increasing royalty on timber exports from \$1,500 to \$2,500 for 20-foot container; and strengthening parliamentary oversight by freeing it from dependence on incentives by MDAs.

Contributing to the debate, Chairman of Finance Committee, Hon. Francis Amara Kaisamba of SLPP appreciated the Supplementary Appropriation Act because it is in line with the priorities of President Bio’s Government, including the implementation of his flagship free education project from primary to secondary school.

Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina, Leader of C4C acclaimed the Act for reducing taxes and excise duties on alcohol and other products, which to a large extent will discourage smuggling in the country, and for the provision of funds to run Port Loko City Council, Falaba and Karene Districts, constituting the new North-Western Region. He also spoke of the need to synergize and consolidate existing laws for the payment of taxes and other forms of mining royalties to the councils to enhance development.

Hon. Alhaji Dr. Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella, Leader of NGC, also supported the Act especially as it seeks to improve upon revenue mobilization, the harmonization of the ECOWAS common

external tariff and the liberalization of the fuel trade. Speaking on the reduction of tariffs on alcohol, he asked the Minister of Finance to compensate the sorghum farmers, adding that MPs and councilors should support and monitor the free education initiative in respect of good meals and the provision of teaching and learning materials. On the diversification of the economy, Dr. Yumkella called for the repatriation of our diplomats in line with the Vienna Convention and lauded the Government for subsidizing the purchase of university application forms and for agreeing to strengthen parliamentary oversight in and out of the country.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Chernor R.M Bah described the Minister's presentation as "elaborate but very necessary", adding that he is known as an ardent supporter of education in the country. He also acclaimed the reduction of tariff on flour and encouraged the Minister of Finance to revisit the common external tariff on tobacco, fruit juices and others, and suggested that royalties from timber should be also paid into the Treasury Single Account, whilst calling for the availability and timely disbursement of funds relating to the free education policy, including the commencement of the procurement process, and the need to capacitate our civil servants, especially those who had retired on minimal pensions and are not owning even a house bearing their names.

The Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mohamed Sidie Tunis commended the Leaders of C4C, NGC and APC for endorsing the Supplementary Appropriation Act 2018. This he said is a demonstration of President Bio's commitment to the free education policy for nearly two million children in the country. He also said that funds relating to the free education initiative will be processed and paid in time, whilst emphasizing the need for regularizing the duty free waivers in the country. Recalling the commitment of the APC in 2017 to the IMF to remove fuel subsidy which will result in an increase in the price of fuel in the country, he said that in consonance with the principle of continuity in government, this promise was now being implemented by the New Direction government, whilst also being cognizant of the need for the mitigating factors like increasing the wages of civil servants from grades 1-6 and the payment of tuition fees.

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