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PARLIAMENT RATIFIES ILLEGAL AND UNREPORTED FISHING AGREEMENT

Parliament of Sierra Leone on Thursday 01st June 2017 debated and ratified the Agreement on “Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing” in the country to yield more revenue dividends for Government and to conform to international best practices.

Presenting the Agreement prior to ratification, Minister of State I, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Gibril Sesay said that the issue of illegal fishing in the country has posed serious threats to the effective conservation and management of our marine resources. He furthered that the trend of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing includes operating without authorization, harvesting protected species using outlawed fishing gears and violating quota limits. The Minister also noted that the Agreement will help to improve financial assistance on port state measures, including integrating national and regional monitoring, control and surveillance systems, established inspection procedures, and provide training for port officials and other authorities.

Contributing to the debate, Acting Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee in Parliament, Hon. Dauda Kallon said that through the conduct of illegal fishing in the country, the Government is losing needed revenue that should be used for improving the socio-economic livelihood of the people of Sierra Leone. He also said that “fishing companies are operating in an inappropriate environment”, whilst calling on MPs to “unconditionally ratify the Agreement with the view of conditioning the operations of fishing vessels and companies in the country”.

Adding her voice to the debate, Hon. Helen Kuyembeh said that the “Government has to put stronger measures in place to deter illegal fishing in the country”. She also spoke on the amount of funds that Government is losing through the fishing sector. She averred on the need for “Government to push more in advocating to get an EU License to allow our fish-catch to be exported to EU markets”.

Hon. Hassan Sesay urged for the qualitative improvement of our fishing sector in order to meet international standards, whilst speaking on the amount of huge funds that Government is losing through illegal fishing.

Hon. Ibrahim Ben Kargbo said that the greatest challenge of the fishing sector “is a matter of implementation”, whilst Hon. Umar Paran Tarawally urged “Parliament to amend certain portions of its Standing Orders to allow MPs to review and add to international agreements before approval”.

Both the Acting Minority Leader of the House, Hon. Sidi Tunis and the Majority Leader of Parliament, Hon. Leonard Fofanah supported the ratification of the Agreement respectively.

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