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PRESS RELEASE
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PARLIAMENT ACCEPTS THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF PRESIDENT KOROMA

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on Thursday 25th May 2017 extensively debated and accepted the recommendations proposed by His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma on the Bill entitled: “The Finance Act, 2017”, with a proviso that the Minister of Finance and Economic Development be summoned after three months to provide detailed explanations on the performance of the said Act.

The House unanimously voted on the recommendations of President Koroma in respect of The Finance Act, 2017.

The Right Hon. Speaker of Parliament, SBB Dumbuya also reminded “the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in the Bar of the House, that he will be summoned after 90-Days or before on matters connected to the amendments they had agreed upon”.

Presenting the recommendations of the President prior to approval, acting Chairman of the Legislative Committee, Hon. Daniel Koroma edified the public that the action of President Koroma is in line with both the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and the Standing Orders of Parliament. Referring to the relevant provisions, he furthered that where the President had refused to sign a Bill passed by Parliament, he is bound by law to return it within 14-Days with an explanatory notes, subject to debate with a position to either agree or disagree with his comments.

Where Parliament disagrees on voting by two thirds majority, then the Speaker shall have cause to sign it and publish it in the gazette to become law. This precedent is yet to be seen in the Parliament of Sierra Leone.

The following recommendations have been approved by Parliament:

- I. The rate for juice and other beverages is 30%

- II. Tax duties on alcoholic content: \$4 per litre for less than 10% and \$10 per litre for more than 10% (percentage is on alcoholic content)
- III. Excise duty rate of 30% on cigarette and tobacco products and
- IV. Full implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) rates to replace Schedule 1 of the Customs Tariff rates currently in use

The import duty rate on wheat flour still stands at 20% to cushion tax effects on bread, our second staple food.

Contributing to the debate, Hon. Edward S. Jengo said that “the proposed amendments are aimed at promoting revenue loss and that Sierra Leone Brewery should not be protected because it cannot meet to the demand of the market”, saying that “it shares are owned by Dutch people”.

Hon. Bashiru Silikie also said that “the House should maintain her position by disagreeing with the President’s comments and passed it into law and signed by the Speaker”.

Hon. Chernor Bah, Deputy Speaker of Parliament said that “Parliament believes it had done the right thing”, whilst calling on MPs to agree with the President’s comments based on the advice of his experts, and that “the Minister of Finance and Economic Development should be summoned to Parliament three months after the proposed amendments had taken effects”.

Both the Acting Majority and Minority Leaders of the House shared similar sentiments.

Other MPs also spoke to the Bill.