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**13<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2018**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**PAC BEGINS TO PROBE COUNCILS ON THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT OF 2016**

13/08/18: The Public Accounts Committee, chaired by the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas has on Monday 13th August 2018 started probing some of the Councils in the North and North-Western Regions, in view of the queries that had been raised in the Auditor General's Report of 2016.

In his opening remarks, Hon. Segepoh Thomas said that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was established by law to look into the revenue and expenditure patterns of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) for the purpose of attaining transparency and accountability in governance. He also encouraged the auditees to be relaxed and assured them that "the exercise is not a witch-hunt", but rather aimed at ensuring that resources that had been appropriated were utilized for their intended purposes, whilst speaking on the establishment, powers and duties of the said Committee.

For Kambia District Council, the Committee had directed that "its substantive Chief Administrator, Alhaji Alhaji Bangura who had proceeded on leave, including other officials should report to the Committee in Freetown on or before 23/08/18", to respond to audit queries. On the submission of receipts by the Finance Officer, subject to further scrutiny, the sum of Le 51,252,250 had been cleared, save for a difference of Le 13,000,000 in the bank and financial statements.

Officials of Port Loko District Council were also asked to go to Freetown, for failing to provide supporting documents for over Le 40,000,000.

In the light of the above, the Committee had pleaded with all the Councils "to present and submit all the relevant documents at the time of audit", otherwise the exercise would be deemed in "futility", adding that "documents submitted would be verified to determine its authenticity, with a view to avoid manufacturing of documents" such as receipts and delivery notes. The Committee also noted that "Sierra Leone has been in a circle since Independence and as such budgetary allocations over the years had not yielded the desired results".

For Tonkolili District Council, the Committee had summoned its former Chairman, the Finance Officer and other officials to Freetown on or before 23/08/18 "to account for a missing vehicle

with registration ADP-096 and the procurement of sewing machines without supporting documents".

The Committee is also with the view that Finance Officers in Councils are negligent in their duties, especially when they could not do basic and regular reconciliation among cash books, banks and financial statements.

The public hearings continue tomorrow and thereafter the Committee will proceed and do same to Councils in the South-Eastern Regions of the country.

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