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PRESS RELEASE

27TH MARCH, 2017

DEPUTY SPEAKER DECLARES TWO DAYS PGA REGIONAL AFRICA WORKSHOP OPEN

The Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Chernor R.M Bah has on Monday 27th March 2017 on behalf of the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, officially declared open a two-day regional Africa workshop in Parliament, organized by Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) with the view of promoting, ratifying and implementing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).

Hon. Bah welcomed delegates to Sierra Leone, saying that the PGA had existed in the Parliament of Sierra Leone (PoSL) for over 15-years now. He recalled the cherished roles that had been played under the chairmanship of Hon. Ibrahim Sorie, Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai and President Koroma, who in 2011 received a PGA award as “defender of democracy”. He described the proliferation of weapons as a threat to humanity in spite of natural disasters. He furthered that the threat is not only limited to conventional weapons, but that when they fall in the wrong hands; terrorists will use biological and chemical weapons to further their murderous activities against defenseless people. He also said that Sierra Leone signed the Convention in 1972 and ratified it in 1976. He called on other countries to sign and ratify the Convention with the aim of reviewing their national laws to address existential threats relating to biological and chemical weapons.



Members of the High Table

Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, a member and former chair of PGA Sierra Leone Chapter said that the Convention is older than the current membership of the PGA. She averred that in Africa after the conduct of general elections, there is usually a high rate of attrition. She described the Convention as very important for conflict ridden areas, whilst calling for the creation of new institutions and domestication of the Convention regarding its text, capacity building and continued sensitization to be rolled out in their constituencies, with support from the UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone.

Sunil Saigal, UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone thanked the PoSL for hosting the workshop, whilst saying that without peace and democracy, including the observance and adherence to human rights, there will be no development. He expressed the commitment of the UN towards the ratification and implementation of the Convention, whilst noting that Sierra Leone continues to maintain peace, democracy and human rights to uphold its growth and development.

A total of 27-Delegates are in attendance including 10 from Sierra Leone and 17 from Nigeria, Somalia, Chad, Liberia, Namibia and the Republic of Guinea.

The workshop holds from the 27-28 March 2017, with the adoption of the Freetown Communiqué.