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PRESS RELEASE

DAY ONE: DEBATE COMMENCES ON 2018 BUDGET

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Wednesday 01st November 2017, commenced debate on the Bill entitled: “The Appropriation Act, 2018”. The House also agreed that the number of days for debating the Budget be reduced to three days as per its rules and procedures.

The Act aims at the authorization of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2018 and for other related matters.

Opening the debate, Chairman for the Finance Committee, the Deputy Majority Leader of the House, said among other things, that the entire Budget should be argued with facts and figures, cognizant of the Budget profile and its statement of economic policies. He also spoke on increase in employment due to tax returns on the Pay As You Earn (PAYE), whilst noting the same for GST because of growth in the business sector. Relating to expenditure, having spoken earlier on revenue mobilization, he said that Government was going to spend more on wages and salaries, including pensions and gratuities. He furthered that a huge allocation has been provided to the decentralization and devolution process, noting the creation of two new districts and the North-Western Region. He also said that Le 15.3 Billion has been allocated to Parliament for the conduct of oversight and the addition of 20-Seats on the current ones. Citing the cushioning of budget deficit in US, he suggested that the “benefits of MPs, including salaries should be slashed down to save the economy”.

Adding his voice to the ensuing debate, Hon. Mohamed Tholley said that “if the Government cannot give what it does not have, then let the Government go out”, whilst decrying huge Government expenditure on rice importation in the country annually. He referred to the Budget as being “unfriendly to the people of Sierra Leone” and condemned the school feeding programme as a struggle for children. He later admonished the Government that an attempt on fuel increase will be “counter-productive”.

Responding, Hon. Patricia Browne acclaimed the Government for increasing budgetary allocations across all the Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the country, with the view of continuing leadership in governance. She also said that Parliament has been sacrificing over the years by flying economy instead of business class as opposed to their counter-parts in the sub-region. She furthered by commending the Commissioner General of NRA, Haja Kallah Kamara on effective revenue mobilization for the development of the country, whilst speaking on the huge touristic potentials of Sierra Leone.

Other MPs spoke to the Bill and the debate continues tomorrow.

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