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19th November 2018

PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT CONCLUDES DEBATE ON THE 2019 BUDGET

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Monday 19th November 2018 on the fourth and final allotted day concluded debate on the 2019 Appropriation Act, aimed at providing for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2019 and for other related matters.

In light of that, the 2019 Appropriation Act in line with the relevant rules of the House has been committed to the Committee of Supply where the entire Membership of Parliament will be divided into six sub-committees for effective scrutiny of the various budgetary heads, subject to reporting and approval by the Whole House.

Contributing to the debate, Hon. Dr. Kandeh Yumkella, Leader of NGC recalled that for the past two decades “we had run as a country but ended up at the same point where we started”, whilst advancing reasons as to why we are not doing well in the rankings of human development indices. He also called on the Government to make the Budget more pro-poor by allocating more funds to the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children’s Affairs, maintaining fiscal discipline and increasing revenue mobilization. He observed that in spite of the rationalization measures “the APC had spent too much” and that in view of the SLPP inheriting a bad economy, “yet the 2019 Budget of SLPP is also poised to spend more”, whilst speaking on the need for fiscal consolidation to spend more on education, health and agriculture”. He called on Government to improve on agriculture, fisheries and tourism to attract more funds from those sectors, adding that “over taxing the private sector, high inflation and interest rates, political tensions devoid of peace, togetherness, and inclusiveness will scare investors away”. Speaking on fiscal consolidation, he expressed fears on “kleptocracy” which he considered “so deep and that the Government has a whole lot of job to do about controlling it”.

Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina, Leader of C4C described the Budget as “brave, brilliant, balanced, dependable, reliable, and smart”. Speaking on the budgetary estimates and subsequent implementation in light of reviewing the Local Government Act of 2004, the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and the Mines and Minerals Act of 2009, he continued that “the hue and cry on the 2019 Budget will become a fait accompli”. He acclaimed the Government for prudent financial expenditure, robust revenue mobilization by putting into effect the Treasury Single Account. However, he observed that the challenges to the implementation of the Budget are

that huge mining companies are paying pittance as tax to Government; the huge debts inherited by Government, and the preaching of toxic and divisive politics on ethnic and regional lines, and delayed grants. He lauded the idea of salary harmonization, but that “it will be difficult for commissions set up by Government because they are self-regulated”.

The Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Ibrahim Ben Kargbo said among other things that “the APC is holding the view that governance is continuity that should be characterized with honesty”. He commended the Government for the implementation of the Treasury Single Account, observing that the Budget did not take into account balance of trade and the failure to utilize stock exchange as innovative ways of paying for debts had been absolved by the country. That the APC will contribute Le 1.4 Billion for the free quality education that had been launched and implemented by Government, assuring continued cooperation with Government by calling for correction on the mistakes that had been identified, whilst speaking on the need for national reconciliation, peace and development of the country. He also said that “over taxation will drive investors away to Guinea and Liberia”.

Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Sahr Mathew Nyuma spoke on the need for approving the 2019 Budget so as to enable Government to execute its programmes and policies geared towards the development of the country. He also said that “revenue must be in conformity with expenditure”, citing why IMF withheld budgetary support in 2007 and 2017 the governments of SLPP and APC had failed to listen to prudent advice on expenditure. He said that “the SLPP inherited an abysmal economy and that is why it is currently suffering from the large effect”, adding that “poverty is roaring amongst Sierra Leoneans” the reason why Government has implemented the Treasury Single Account and the cutting down of expenditure, revealing plans on price norm devoid of sole-sourcing in light of procurement related issues.

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