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**27<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FIRST ALLOTTED DAY: PARLIAMENT COMMENCES DEBATE ON THE PRESIDENTIAL  
ADDRESS**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2019 commenced debate on the Presidential Address which was delivered by President Bio on the occasion of the State Opening of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone on the 02<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 in the Chamber of Parliament.

It is a Motion of Thanks to President Julius Maada Bio for the Speech which he graciously delivered to Parliament on the occasion of the State Opening of the Second Session of the current Parliament moved by Hon. Sidie M. Tunis and seconded by Hon. Francis A. Kai-Samba.

In opening the debate, Hon. Francis Amara Kai-Samba of SLPP commended President Bio for cataloguing the programmes and activities his Government had undertaken in the past twelve months for the development of Sierra Leone. He referred to the economy the Government had inherited as “imbalanced and the worst economic crisis since independence with huge internal and external debts”. He considered those debts as “unsustainable, poor economic management which warranted the IMF to pull out of the country”. He also decried the past government for resorting to bank loans to enable it to pay salaries and wages.

He praised President Bio for the implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the ban on tax exemptions which have resulted in an upsurge in the economy and salaries are now paid without recourse to bank borrowings. He also spoke about the re-launch of the extended credit facility by IMF aimed at supporting the business of Government. On Agriculture, he said production should be boosted to attract foreign earnings through export, praised Government for the implementation of the Free Quality Education and appealed for Eastern Polytechnic to be transformed to a university, adding that a university of science had already been launched in Kono District. He also commended the Government for increasing the health budget from 6 to 11% of the country’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

Hon. Alusine Bash Kamara of APC thanked President Bio for the Speech he delivered in Parliament, adding the Minister of Health and Sanitation had listened to the cries of ordinary Sierra Leoneans by distributing ambulances to rural communities. He also commended the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education for creating more centers to take external

examinations. He referenced contradictory statements in light of eradicating the two-shift systems in schools. He also called on the Government to remove the Minister of Works because he had failed in his duties, adding that under the watch of this Government construction of roads in the Northern Region have suffered neglect. He also decried the Minister of Local Government for postponing the conduct of elections for Paramount Chiefs. He eulogized the current Speaker of Parliament, Dr. Abass Bundu for owning a big farm when he served as Minister of Agriculture in 1982.

Hon. Paul Sam of C4C thanked President Bio for the Address and spoke on the need for supporting Government for the development of the country. He commended the Government for separating the Ministry of Finance from Economic Planning and Development, and the erstwhile Minister of Economic Planning and Development for putting together a blue-print that will serve as the road map for development in the country. He also said that good roads are facilitating the movement of farm products to the market centers, whilst speaking on the friction between cattle rearers and crop farmers. He praised the initiative of providing access to loans for farmers. He called on the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education to increase the low school fee subsidies per child from Le 5,000 to Le 50,000 for the very success of the Free Quality Education. He also called on Government to speed up the process of re-starting the ore mines with a view of stabilizing the economy by boosting the exchange rate between the Leone and the Dollar.

The debate continues tomorrow and senior representatives from MDAs are required to attend Parliament throughout the Presidential Debate. The Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil of Service was summoned to Parliament and asked to communicate same.

Other MPs spoke to the motion.

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