



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



FIFTH ALLOTTED DAY: PARLIAMENT CONCLUDES PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Friday, 18/08/2023 concluded the debate on the Motion of Thanks to His Excellency the President, Dr. Julius Maada Bio's address he so graciously delivered on the Occasion of the State Opening of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone in the Chamber of Parliament on Thursday 3rd August 2023.

Contributing to the debate, Hon. Abdul Sulaiman Marray-Conteh thanked the President and noted that he was very precise in his speech relative to the 5 Big Changers and made reference to stability and progress. Feed Salone he said is very important because it deals with the food of the nation. He also said Sierra Leone is a sovereign State. "We must work to achieve our sovereignty," he stated and appealed to colleague MPs to use the speech as part of their working tool. He acknowledged Government effort with regards Free Quality Education and the effectiveness of public servants in the development of the State. He emphasized on performance management working track. The MP underscored the efficiency of data and centralized systems of websites. He underscored the need for peace and stability and advised all compatriots to stay away from what will distract the State. "We have to change the narrative and development the State," he concluded.

Hon. Musa Fofanah representing Kono District said the Big 5 Agenda is genuine for a change and went to predicate on the previous agenda, in light of the Mid-Term Development. According to the MP, the Big 5 changer is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal to address hunger. He acknowledged the rice production fields including the Toma-Bum Rice Project and other areas and heaped praises on the President for the initiatives. He assured the House that, the country will develop, if ministries collaborate and underscored research for productivity in the country.

He spoke positively about the government's rapid development in health, infrastructure, and emphasized on monitoring of programs. He calculated the number of roads that were constructed or rehabilitated, but expressed dismay over the bad construction of certain roads. He commended the Government for the construction of bridges and requested for robust monitoring in that direction. "Let us don't take the peace and stability we enjoy," he revealed and explained the past how the Vice President was removed, He advised the Opposition to come and serve the country.

The President of the Female Caucus, Hon. Neneh Lebbie predicated her debate on women-related matters. She appreciated the President on behalf of the Female Caucus and revealed that women voted for him overwhelmingly. She used the opportunity to thank President Bio for paying fees for girls through the Free Quality Education. She underscored women's participation in Governance and informed that

President Bio has set the stage for them. She assured Parliament that Female MPs would partner with others to move women's issues forward. She also commended the President for the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill. She spoke for women's empowerment in light of their participation in agricultural and mining activities. "Women need to be encouraged and have space to deliver," she maintained. Agriculture, she said is a very good cloister on the President's agenda and went on to recall the boom in rice productivity when Sierra Leone used to feed its people. "We want to make sure that agriculture is practiced by all of us" she underscored and spoke well of change in youths' attitudes to gain employment.

Hon. PC Paul Ngaba Saquee from Kono District thanked President Bio for his precise speech and also for outlining his five years vision and noted that the foundation is well laid. The Paramount Chief said the country is sadly polarized and used the opportunity to call for unity and national cohesion. He thanked the Speaker and Leadership of Parliament. He underscored their roles as PC-MPs, in light of engaging Opposition APC MPs through mediation and reconciliation for peace. Relating to the implementation of Feed Salone, the Hon.PC revealed that Paramount Chiefs are agents of development and appealed to the President to deeply involve the Paramount Chiefs in the Big 5 Changers. He used the opportunity to invite compatriots to the signing of contracts for the University of Kono slated for tomorrow. He disclosed that this is the first time a direct son of the Paramount Chief has been elected President and in light of that, they as Chiefs would support the development of the government.

The Deputy Leader of Government Business 2. Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina spoke on agriculture and recalled that, past governments had failed in that direction. He advanced positive reasons, in light of employing foreign farmers to invest in agriculture and utilize the youths for employment. He implored on the President to conduct on-the-spot checks to ensure service delivery of MDAs.

He expressed worry over the persistent absence of opposition in important State functions and decried the sacking of the Vice President in the past. He underscored the positive attributes of President Bio and used the opportunity to advise compatriots especially the media to preach peace. He referenced President Bio's clarion call to appeal to the Opposition, APC to come and serve the people in governance.

Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh looked at a very critical aspect, the Public Service, and highlighted professionalism and neutrality. He said the State should remove public servants from politics. "We must acknowledge that it is, politicians who are forcing the public servants to become politicians," he stated and advised the House that the issue of the country should come first. He categorically stated that, the State should not allow foreigners to lecture the government about democracy. "Democracy is in the hands of the People" he noted and denounced unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of the country.

Hon. Francis Amara Kai-Samba from Kenema said President Bio explained the essence of the speech. He highlighted the development realization of the President and reiterated that, the Big 5 Changers concerning Feed Salone is very paramount and noted that it must be achieved by all in the next five years. He said there was a missing gap in the middleman power. He informed the House that youths must be trained in job-driving markets, in light of human capital development. He said it is time for the youths to have the required training to be able to deliver in the future. He encouraged the government to strengthen the public sector to employ the youths. Public service he said has lot of challenges some of which are caused by politicians forcing public servants to verge into politics. He denounced the practice with reference. "If we have the required public service it would be good" he concluded and praised President Bio for the speech he so graciously delivered.

Hon. Margaret Johnson from Kailahun District thanked the President for a well-presented and precise speech delivered in the chamber of Parliament and went on to touch on President's Bio Big Five Changers Initiative for the country. On health-related issues, she said government should provide more health facilities in the country.

On mental health, she said it stigmatizing and urged for more actions to be taken to address the situation. She went on to urge the Ministry of Social Welfare to review the Disability Act and also find measures to address the misuse of drugs. "The President had recruited over five thousand nurses and they are vital for the development of the health sector", she said. She recommended that an Accident Highway Hub should be established in case of a fatal accident along the road.

Hon. Umu Pyne from Moyamba District acknowledged the tremendous stride by the Government of President Bio in his first five years on women's representation and agriculture. On the Feed Salone program, she said the Ribbi Chiefdom in the Moyamba Chiefdom had already started the implementation through the support of NaCSA in the first five years of the President. The MP questioned the low level of support from the agriculture officers to farmers during the farming season. The MP promised to work with the President in achieving food self-sufficiency.

Hon. Fabbah Habib Keifa from Bo District expressed sincere thanks to the President for the development of the nation and went on to laud the Big Five Changer of the President's Initiative. "We are moving in the right direction", he said and went on to state that youths empowerment is necessary for permanent economic stability.

Hon. Benjamin Turay from Western Urban Area said the President has a zeal for development and described him as the President that cut across the nation when it comes to development. He went on to talk about infrastructural development, health, and education. "The Government is determined to transform the development of the State, more particularly the youth empowerment", he said and went on to advise the youths to refrain from harmful 'kush' drugs.

Hon. Jibirilla Surmoijueh from Bonthe District said the only way, the State can achieve development is by having peace and stability. He underscored reconciliation as prescribed by the President in his speech for the Opposition, APC to come to Parliament and serve. On the Feed Salone project, the MP said they need a model that is different from the substance farming methods. He pleaded for the revitalization of the old agriculture centers and the improvement of feeder roads linking farmers to markets." Let us embark on mechanized farming to feed Sierra Leone,".he said and went on to inform the House that courses in the university have to be redesigned to match up with international best practices on agricultural cultivation. On gender-related issues, the MP said the empowerment of women should be enhanced and to equate women for the five hundred thousand jobs that would soon be created.

Hon. Quintin Salia-Konneh from Kailahun District said Sierra Leone had faced numerous challenges, but the phenomenon worsened during the COVID-19 and the Ukraine-Russia war. He commended the President for driving the state safe and amidst political distractions and global issues. He strongly assured that the Government would overcome the challenges. The MP informed that the Speech of the President summarized all the development agenda of the country. Agriculture he said is contributing immensely to the GDP and noted that the country is endowed with fertile lands. The speech he noted showed that the President is very considerate. He highlighted some factors, in light of positive collaboration. For the youths, he said President Bio is well aware of the youth situation in the country, especially same regarding the dangerous 'kush' drugs.

Hon. Momodu Sahr Koutu from Kono thanked the President for his flagship program and recalled his apathetic statement to the Kono people. He informed that Kono District is the bread basket of Sierra Leone and their priority on agriculture must be considered. For the Feed Salone, the MP recommended the inclusivity of district chairmen, MPs, and others. He appealed to the Minister of Agriculture to support MPs, to help their people to work.

Rounding up the debate, Acting Leader of Opposition, Hon Mohamed Bangura said the precise speech of President Bio surprised all and that he anchored his speech on reconciliation. The Leader emphasized and underscored the reconciliation of the President with the Opposition. He commended two MPs who spoke patriotically in their contributions and decried others who were far from preaching peace. He noted that it was time to move on and forget about the past. The MP appealed to the Leadership to be holding meetings before discussing controversial matters or important state issues at the plenary. "I hate to see the Sixth Parliament in rancor" he went on to say, dialogue is the best. He suggested to the President to remove the travel ban against the APC members and justified that they may not run, because their properties and assets are in Court Avenue, secondly, he advised the President to withdraw matters relating to people who are behind bars for recent election-related issues and expressed that, President Bio has put the past behind and it was time to forge ahead. He also expressed concerns over the elections' results but informed that life should go on. He appealed to the President to have peace and reconciliation with the APC. He suggested that an independent person must head the Electoral Reform Commission and denounced Vice President for being head of same position on party affiliation. He

strongly told the House that the country should make use of the military and police in the State Farms and road maintenance. The Leader went on to appeal to others to remove the lens of political parties and develop the State.

Concluding the debate, the Majority Leader and Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma thanked all MPs for their contributions. He described President Bio as a popular democrat and peacemaker with profound reconciliation. He used the opportunity to commend the Acting Leader of the Opposition for being honest. He demonstrated a symbol of reconciliation by moving from his seat and come halfway through in the Well and give a handshake to the Acting Leader of the opposition in the Chamber during the debate through the lens of the Camera. He highlighted the good work of the Government especially in the 5th Parliament.

The Leader predominantly predicted his debate on reconciliation of President's Bio Speech. He informed that it was time to achieve peace and national reconciliation. He appealed to all compatriots to be sincere and trend on the rule of law. The Leader denounced those who use the political platform negatively to destroy the state. He appealed to all to reform from negativity and change the trajectory of the State for the interest of all. "It is only by good policy we can survive" he noted and informed that policies are geared towards changing the lives of the people. He lauded the efforts of the President, in light of agriculture and productivity. He used the opportunity to ask all compatriots to respect the institutions and use education and religion with honesty to achieve reconciliation. He trend on the principle of liberty and recalled how the country fought for independence in light of Reconciliation and exemplified that "let parliament lead the way for nation building" he concluded.

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