



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



COMMENTARY

LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS OF THE 1ST SESSION OF THE 6TH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC EMBRACES UNITY IN DIVERSITY

By Parliamentary and Public Relations Department (PPRD)

In alignment with the provision of Section 84 subsection (1) of Act No. 6 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, President Julius Maada Bio through Proclamation 2024 officially prorogued the First of the Sixth Parliament on Monday 5th August 2024 and pronounced the commencement of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone on Tuesday 6th August 2024 in the Chamber of Parliament, at Tower Hill, in Freetown during the State Opening of Parliament.

The First Session of the Sixth Parliament has been a beacon of progress, with Members enacting series of progressive legislations. The purposes and intents of this article are to highlight the significant gains made by the First Session of the Sixth Parliament through the passage of progressive Bills into Acts of Parliament, ratification of loans, grants and agreements for the development of the country.

The scope and limitation of this article span from August 3rd, 2023, to August 5th, 2024. Despite the diversification of political views in the House, the First Session of the Sixth Parliament saw a conglomeration of allied forces among Members of Parliament for a common goal of enacting progressive laws geared towards the amelioration of the socio-economic fabric of the nation to improve the livelihoods of the citizens.

Since its first sitting in July 2023, the First Session of the Sixth Parliament has been a hive of legislative activity, with over fifty-eight (58) Plenary sittings and the enactment of over seven (7) critical Bills and twelve (12) Statutory/Constitutional Instruments. The First Session of the Sixth Parliament also ratified approximately thirteen (13) Loans, Grants, and Agreements, Four (4) Protocols, Conventions, and Treaties, and approved over one hundred and fifty (150) Presidential Nominees, demonstrating a high level of productivity and commitment to the legislative process.

The First Session of the Sixth Parliament was marked by acts of unification and compassion among Members of Parliament notably in the enactment of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2024 with unanimity, a private member's Bill that was piloted by Hon. Mariama Munia Zombo and was later signed into law by President Julius Maada Bio. This Act is a testament to the leadership and compassion shown by the First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Her Excellency, Fatima Jabbe Maada Bio. This collaborative effort demonstrates the proactive role of the First Lady in the legislative process. The Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone assembled enacted the said Act on June 20, 2024, and gained Presidential Assent on July 2, 2024.

The long title of the Act reads as follows, "Being an Act to prohibit child marriage, to provide protection for the victim of child marriage, and to provide for other related matters." The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2024, in its entirety, prohibits child marriage and protects the victims of child marriage and provides for other related matters. With its specific provisions, this Act is designed to address the perennial menace of child marriage. It has been classified and perceived as one of the progressive laws enacted in the First Session of the Sixth Parliament.

Despite the civil commotion surrounding the expungement of the Jury System, the Criminal Procedure Act of 2024 is also one of the groundbreaking legislations enacted in the First Session of the Sixth Parliament. The new Act has repealed and replaced the Criminal Procedure Act of 1965. Efforts to review, repeal, and replace the 1965 Act started over 20 years ago.

On the Economic and Fiscal fronts, the First Session of the Sixth Parliament also enacted the National Monitoring and Evaluation Agency Act 2024, which makes explicit provisions for the establishment of the National Monitoring and Evaluation Agency to ensure greater accountability and transparency in the disbursement and use of Public Funds and provides for the promotion of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of programmes and projects. The Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism and Financing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Act 2024 is another fiscal policy legislation that makes provision for the transformation of the Financial Intelligence Agency responsible for the receipt, analysis, and dissemination of Financial Information and criminalization of money laundry, combating financing of terrorism and financing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

With a premeditated stance of promoting and empowering the labour force, the First Session of the Sixth Parliament, on the 28th of May 2024, debated and passed the Industrial Relations and Trade Union Act 2024 into law. The Act seeks to repeal the regulations of Wages and the Industrial Relations Act, 1971 (Act No.18 of 1971), and the Trade Union Act (Cap 221).

To boost the economy and create jobs, the Parliament of Sierra Leone, during its 58th plenary sittings on Friday, July 5th, 2024, debated and unanimously ratified an outstanding industrial zone agreement worth 55 million United States Dollars from Arise IIP for the economic development of the State. The agreement ratified by Parliament was titled 'The Dry Port Concession Agreement by and Between Sierra Leone Ports and Harbour Authority and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

The First Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone unanimously ratified a two-billion-dollar (2 Billion Dollars) concession agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Gento Group of Companies for the design, financing, construction, and operationalization of a seaport within the Dublin and Ricket Communities of Banana Island and a logistics Hub (Habour Terminal) at Kent in Sierra Leone. The First Session of the Sixth Parliament had ratified many progressive agreements and over seven bills, four of which had gained presidential assent. With the vibrant and dynamism in the current young leadership of the Sixth Parliament for both the Government Bench and the Opposition Bench, the nation is assured of unification among Members of Parliament in promoting the “the greatest good for the greatest number” syndrome in terms of debating and passing progressive laws for Sierra Leone in the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Following the resignation of the former Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Abass Bundu, his Deputy, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas was duly elected as Speaker of Parliament and Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh was also elected as Deputy Speaker of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, earliest May 2024, respectively.

Also, following the outcome of the ACC's investigation of the Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Paran Umar Tarawally's reinstatement was a testament of the confidence reposed in him by President Julius Maada Bio to continue to serve as the substantive Clerk of Parliament. Proclamation 2024 signed by President Julius Maada Bio was read by the Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Paran Umar Tarawally during the occasion of the State Opening of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, before President Julius Maada Bio proceeded with a delivery of a Presidential Address on the state of the nation which would be debated later for five allotted days by Hon. Members of Parliament.

Regarding the current composition of the House, the governing SLPP has 81 Seats, the main opposition has 54 Seats, plus 14 Paramount Chief Members of Parliament, totaling 149.

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