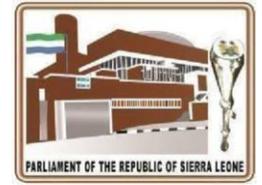




OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT
PARLIAMENT BUILDING
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL
FREETOWN

E-mail: sierraleoneparliament@hotmail.com/admin@parliament.gov.sl



21st DECEMBER, 2022

PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT RATIFIES DEVELOPMENTAL AGREEMENTS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Wednesday, 21/12/2022, ratified some important agreements for the transformation and development of Sierra Leone.

The following agreements were ratified by Parliament:

1. Agricultural Value Chain Development Project: Loan Agreement Between the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Republic of Sierra Leone
2. Freetown Wash and Aquatic Environment Revamping Project Loan Agreement Between the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Republic of Sierra Leone

3. Agreement Between the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital

4. Agreement Between the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments

5. Financing Agreement (Second Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Development Policy Financing), Between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the International Development Association and

6. Financing Agreement (Sierra Leone Digital Transformation Project), Between the Republican of Sierra Leone and the International Development Association.

Presenting the agreements for ratification, Sheku F. Bangura, the Deputy Minister of Finance, comprehensively explained the economic development of the agreements, in the light of enhancing the development of Sierra Leone. The Deputy Minister predicated the objectives and importance of the various agreements on economic growth, agricultural development, digital transformation, trade promotion, essential water supply and investment in Sierra Leone. While some of the agreements are soft loans, and others are grants.

Chairman of the Finance Committee, Hon. Francis Amara Kaisamba mentioned that the agreements are simple, non-controversial and are all gearing towards the development of the state. He also highlighted the importance of the various agreements, stating that agriculture is a necessity and that the challenge of water supply in Freetown is still a present reality.

For the other agreements between Sierra Leone and UAE, he elucidated that they have the tendency of opening up a floodgate to easy business transactions with the latter. He also spoke about the importance of the financing agreement on digitization.

Hon. Dr. Mark Mahmoud Kalokoh spoke about the OPEC loan agreements and proceeded in saying that any grant or loan that is supportive of agriculture, they as

opposition, would always support it for the benefit of the rural farmers and thus, urged the Ministry of Finance to pay keen attention on monitoring. He also alleged that there has been some malpractices on the implementation of some projects.

The MP seized the opportunity and used it to remind the House of a delay on the implementation of a particular water project in Kenema District, on the ground of lack of funding. He advised the Ministry of Finance to monitor and provide funding on time for the implementation of the projects that are stated in the various agreements.

He further spoke about effective tree planting and blamed the nation on the issue of deforestation. He asked the ministry to guarantee Parliament on the protection of the proposed tree planting project.

He opined to the House that the agreements were not controversial and asked all and sundry to consider the value for money as the next generation would repay the loan.

Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh stated that the loan portfolio of Sierra Leone keeps growing; nevertheless, he appreciated its prudent use and servicing, in the light of development and growth. The MP used the opportunity to make reference to countries that have positively used loans to transform themselves. He described the importance of some specific loans as laudable in pursuit of economic growth and informed his colleague MPs that the agreements are essential for the growth and development of Sierra Leone. The MP also highlighted the economic viability of commercial tree crops.

Hon. Conteh also revealed that the loan would also be used to address the challenges of feeder roads and thereby expanding the space for farmers to easily access the market. The repayment, he said, is very reasonable.

He also used the opportunity to inform the House on how his constituents deserve to benefit from the water project and that the implementation of such a project would in no slow way, garner huge support for the current government. He thanked the Government for the loan appreciation and servicing, in the light of economic management.

Hon. Musa Fofanah, Acting Leader of C4C in Parliament, related his debate to water project implementation in the national budget across the country. He furnished the House with the fact that Government is committed to salvaging water situation, in light of the agreements. He said that if the agreement could rehabilitate eight water plants, then that would most assuredly address the water problem in the country at a considerate level. He described the agreement to be crystal, simple and not critical and therefore advised for the proper monitoring and implementation of the water project.

Hon. Dr. Muniru Turay said that the agreements were good, but drew the attention of the Minister to address specific issues including value chain, farmers feed school and training for the needy. He asked the Minister to enhance collaboration and water mechanism and rehabilitation in the country.

Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Hassan Sesay said that the agreements were not controversial, particularly in the light of their importance. He said that the sectors mentioned in the agreements deserve support and they are prudent for economic growth. The Leader made reference to Ivory Coast for having infrastructure that is adding value to commercial crops. He recalled that over the years, the country has been heavily relying on importation, which has caused economic downturn, but through these agreements, the country would improve on exportation. He expatiated that whatever is in the interest of Sierra Leone, the opposition would always support it. He admonished the Deputy Minister to monitor implementation for the project to impact the lives of the people.

Hon. Bashiru Silikie, Acting Leader of Government Business, thanked all, including the opposition, for their various support and contributions. He patriotically spoke on the necessity of robust monitoring of project implementation in the country.

The Deputy Minister responded to all concerns and issues raised by MPs and made clarifications on them before the said agreements were ratified by Parliament.

In another development, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mohamed Lamin Tarawally has today 21/12/2022 laid on the Table of Parliament a Statutory Instrument relating to Public Elections (Petitions) Rules 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022) mainly for the purposes and conduct of next year's multi-tier elections on 24th June 2023.

Following its tabling in Parliament and in accordance with provisions of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991), the said Instrument will mature into law after a period of 21-Days or until otherwise annulled by two-thirds of votes cast by Members of Parliament. Two-thirds of 146 Members of Parliament is 98. Therefore, to effect annulment, you need to garner two-thirds of 146 (i.e 98) Members of Parliament to that effect.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Chernor R.M Bah has already given a notice of motion for the said Instrument to be debated by Parliament.

Parliamentary and Public Relations Department

Parliament of Sierra Leone

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