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COMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES ENGAGES WITH STAKEHOLDER ON WATER CRISIS

The Parliamentary Committee on Water Resources, chaired by Hon. Sualiho M. Koroma has on two successive days engaged with Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, and the Donor Community in Committee Room One in Parliament, to chart the way forward aimed at salvaging the current water crisis in Freetown.

The Chairman of the Committee on Water Resources, Hon. Sualiho M. Koroma in his opening remarks “thanked the donor community for their continued support and interventions to the water sector in Sierra Leone, and recalled the engagement they had with MDAs in respect of protecting the water catchment areas in Freetown”. He further informed the donor community that “the outcome of these engagements may result in a decision by Parliament, devoid of executive clearance to demolish the illegal structures around the water catchment areas”. He also called on partners “to intervene and cushion the current water crisis in Freetown in order to prevent another emergency”, whilst noting that the “water sector is highly under-financed”. He thanked the GoSL for the 100% support given to GUMA VALLEY WATER COMPANY, through the provision of Le 3 Billion to implement its emergency plan to salvage the water crisis in Freetown”.

The Minister of Water Resources, Momodu Maligie said that “over the years, he has received tremendous support for the water sector from the donor community, particularly UNICEF”. He also thanked ADB, DFID, UNDP, and UNICEF for their “support to the water sector” on behalf of President Koroma and the Government of Sierra Leone. He also spoke of an emergency remedial action through the use of water bowzers to salvage the water crisis in Freetown”. He also said that “there is a funding gap to do a water-point mapping even though UNICEF has committed to provide some funds”. He said also that “donors will like to see the implementation of strong laws that will protect the water catchment areas”. He also called on donors to “re-programme or re-direct funds depending on the exigencies of the current water crisis in Freetown”, and recalled DFID’s commitment to overhaul the existing facilities of GUMA with the view of salvaging the water crisis in Freetown”. He also assured the “donors that once he secures a cabinet conclusion and subsequent ratification by Parliament, illegal structures around the water catchment areas will be demolished without fear or favour”.

The General Manager for GVWC, Bankole Mansaray praised the representatives of the people for their “continued efforts to salvage the water crisis in Freetown”. He also said that “GUMA cannot meet the current demand for water because the current population

outweighs its supply capacity". He furthered by saying that "GUMA harvests water during the rains and uses it in the dries", whilst noting that as a result of daily monitoring of the water level, it has dropped "considerably". He also spoke on the use of "water bowzers and the urgent need to contain leakages on the running water pipes through public participation".

The Donors present were DFID, UNDP, and ADB. They spoke on water interventions such as the provision of chlorine, storage tanks, water supply to schools, clinics, the protection of the water catchment areas, and the three-town water project. They also noted concerns that are geared towards salvaging the current water crisis in Freetown.

Representatives from MoFED crave the indulgence for "political will" to salvage the water crisis by taking stringent actions against encroachers devoid of consideration for "votes". They also spoke about the "approval of Le 3 Billion by GoSL, despite grappling with its finances to GUMA with the view of fixing its old pipes and supply water to residents of Freetown".

During the course of the deliberations, MPs called on donors to assist them to oversee the management water sector, to lead the sensitization to their constituents, to review the laws governing the water sector, to ensure judicious use of donor funds, inter-ministerial coordination, and the need for demolition and reforestation of the water catchment areas.