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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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### **THIRD ALLOTTED DAY CONCLUDES DEBATE ON THE 2016 BUDGET**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 marked the end of the three allotted days of the debate on the 2016 Budget, being an act to authorize expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the services of Sierra Leone. The Chairman of the Finance Committee in Parliament, Hon. Hassan Sheriff as per the rules of procedure in the House committed the 2016 Appropriation Act to the Committee of Supply for proper scrutiny of budgetary heads and estimates allocated to the respective MDAs for the services and development of Sierra Leone.

Hon. Leonard Fofanah, Deputy Majority Leader described the phenomenal outbreak of ebola in the Mano River basin, West Africa as “deceptive” with changing behavior. He also said that the APC Government would rise from the ashes of ebola and deliver on its promise to the people of Sierra Leone. He argued that despite ebola, the recent flooding, and the closure of the iron ore mines, the country was able to manage its economy. He described the budget as totally “inclusive” and “comprehensive” and said that it would be implemented in line with the post-ebola recovery programmes. He also called on MPs and the general public to be patient with Government, as, God willing President Ernest Bai Koroma would deliver on his promise to this country. He advised the Minister of Finance to do a pre-legislative hearing on the Public Financial Management Bill to address issues and concerns raised by stakeholders, including extant provisions in the supreme law of Sierra Leone. He said that he was extremely pleased with the performance of Government in the education sector, and called on the Education Ministry to implore WAEC to use conference marking and issue stern warnings to examiners involved in examination malpractices. However, he called on MoFED to pay the Constituency Development Fund to MPs in the early part of each year to effectively undertake development.

Hon. Patrick Foyah referred to the theme of the 2016 budget as “strengthening resilience and building a diversified economy”. He said that when ebola struck in 2014, the iron ore mines collapsed and this was compounded by flooding. He called on Government to strengthen the fishing sector because it has huge potentials to contribute to the GDP of this country. He also observed that the country is losing over \$ 500 Million on poaching and poor hygiene on handling our fish for export. He also said that the Government has failed to sign the MOU on illegal and unregulated fishing in the country. He said that the Disaster Management Unit at ONS is small, without capacity and low budgetary allocation. He said that Agriculture, which should be improved, is hampered by poor feeder roads. He noticed that though MPs were supported during ebola; they are not included in the post-ebola recovery programmes. He then called for

the strengthening of oversight, and enumerated the functions of MPs that are doing so much to promote development but are without conditions of service.

Hon. Paramount Chief, Alie Kavura Kongomoh II in underscoring the importance of the debate said in Mende, the south eastern parlance, that “even when you are dancing on top of a rock, your detractors will cry, “do not raise dust on us”. He thanked the Government for the payment of salaries to chieftom functionaries and for delivering on its promise to the people of this country. He noted that decisions reached in Parliament are binding on the people of Sierra Leone. He furthered that the budget provided for the payment of salaries and arrears to local courts in the country and said that chieftom administration should be included in the administration of local government. He noted that “Paramount Chiefs are more political because they are elected for life”.

Hon. Alhassan Kamara said that had it not been for sound fiscal management by MoFED, the country would have been relegated to economic recession that would have warranted austerity measures during the ebola crisis. He referred the House to certain paragraphs in the 2016 budget when he said that despite being in the middle of the ebola fight, Government paid regular salaries on time, and made 15% increment on salaries for all public sector workers. He also praised Government for providing huge funds for the re-opening and fumigation of schools for more than one million school going children. Even at the peak of the ebola fight, he said the old road leading to his constituency was under construction and would soon be completed. He called on MDAs to be innovative in revenue mobilization instead of being heavily dependent on the national budget. He spoke on poor revenue generation by the 19-Councils, particularly Freetown City Council. He said that despite the huge budgetary allocations to the health sector, it is flooded with volunteers.

Hon. Sualiho Koroma said that the total amount of public debts owed by Sierra Leone is not stated in the 2016 budget and called on the Minister of Finance to clearly talk about the total public debts and interests owed by the Republic of Sierra Leone. He also said that Government is losing over 160 Billion Leones on tax incentives that is 8-times the budgetary allocations to certain MDAs. He said MoFED has failed to come with a bill to Parliament on reasons for tax incentives. He also said that Government has increased its spending on overseas travelling with little or no benefit to the country. On the same note, he recommended that a system be devised to get value for such travelling. He also said that robust measures should be put in place to improve the revenue base of Government by collecting property and business tax.

The Minority Leader of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai also congratulated MoFED for proffering solutions to the implementation of the budget; calling on Government to expand the education programmes by having more schools, quality teachers, conducive learning environment, and the provision of teaching and learning materials. She said ebola has exposed the weaknesses of the health sector and called on Government to pay greater attention to it, referencing Sierra Leoneans going to places like Ghana for better medical attention. She also lamented the absence of basic medical equipment to carry out a DNA test.

On Parliament, Dr. Lahai urged MoFED to consider putting together a document outlining the conditions of service for Parliament, during which she revealed that it is

only the Sierra Leone Parliament that does not create room for such conditions of service. She called on the Ministry of Finance to act fast and put modalities in place for Parliament to have conditions of service now.

Rounding up the debate, the Leader of the House, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, acknowledged the role played by Government and MoFED in the development of the country. He said the budget is “straight” and “simple” for every Sierra Leonean to understand, and later described it as a “naturalistic budget”, calling on MoFED institute a “Revenue, Expenditure and Development Department” in the Ministry in order to monitor the economy. The Leader also based his contribution on the need for “broadening the tax base”, and asked MoFED and NRA to do more in raising revenue for the development of the State.

Responding to the contributions made by MPs on the budget, the Minister of Finance, Dr. Kaifala Marah appreciated their views and concerns raised for the successful implementation of the 2016 budget for Sierra Leone. He assured MPs that all their concerns which came out during the course of the debate of the 2016 budget would be looked into and addressed in the best interest of the country.

Concluding the debate, the Chairman of Finance Committee in Parliament, Hon. Hassan Sheriff thanked MPs for doing justice to the 2016 budget debate, and promised to work with MoFED to address all the issues that have been highlighted during the debate.