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**PRESS RELEASE
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PARLIAMENT ADOPTS RECOMMENDATIONS TO SALVAGE WATER CRISIS IN FREETOWN

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 07th June 2016 debated and adopted the recommendations contained in the report on the Freetown water crisis and presentation made by Guma Valley Water Company on encroachment on the water catchment areas in the Western Area, dated 17th May, 2016. The Committee on Water Resources is chaired by Hon. Sualiho Monyaba Koroma.

The following recommendations were carried by the House:

- I. “To synchronize the efforts of the Committee set up by His Excellency the President to investigate and demarcate all encroachment areas, Parliament should support the work of the Committee by presenting the document of their investigation for approval by the whole House before any demolition;
- II. As a collaborative effort, the Ministry of Lands should not sign any survey plans for areas close to Guma water sources and all on-going constructions should be stopped forthwith;
- III. To encourage Donor Partners, Government should take the lead to create an enabling environment for investment in the water sector;
- IV. That the Ministry of Water Resources and the Management of Guma should work with Donor Partners to identify funding gaps for intervention; and
- V. That the respective debtors comply with their obligations immediately”.

In opening the debate, Chairman for the Committee on Water Resources in Parliament, Hon. Sualiho M. Koroma thanked His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, for the provision of Le 3 Billion to Guma Valley Water Company, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, to implement their emergency response plan to cushion the effects of the water crisis on residents in Freetown and its environs. He also spoke about a pregnant woman collecting dirty water and its impact on the unborn baby, school-going children fetching water late at night, resulting in social problems like teenage pregnancy and poor performance in school; deforestation and construction of buildings around the water catchment areas to be stopped and buildings demolished; the

need to overhaul the water infrastructure in Freetown, and to review the water tariff, with MDAs owing Guma over Le 15 Billion.

Whilst rounding the debate, Hon. Sualiho M. Koroma thanked the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, SBB Dumbuya for playing a pivotal role in one of the meetings with MDAs on the management of the Freetown water crisis. He also thanked UNICEF, ADB, DFID, IDB, World Bank and others for their interventions in the water sector, and called for investment to fix the distribution lines in order for water to reach the intended beneficiaries. He also spoke on the de-politicization of the demolition process, of which this report is going to form an integral component of a Cabinet Conclusion that will be ratified by Parliament, before the demolition of structures take place around the water sources or catchment areas. He also said that they were going to engage the Sierra Leone Bar Association, regarding lawyers that are promoting land-grabbing in the country, and intimated a Water Management Bill that is yet to be brought to Parliament.

MPs spoke passionately as water is life, and institutional failures by the Ministries of Lands and Works have resulted in encroachment, deforestation, and destruction of the water catchment areas. MPs called for the demolition of those structures, and to name and shame MDAs owing Guma over Le 15 Billion. Parliament has also called on MDAs to submit their utility receipts and expressed concern over non-existent forest rangers who were recruited to guard and preserve the forest areas, poor water management which may result in desertification, with a population of 2.4 Million that has outweighed the 300,000 people for whom Guma was originally established. They called on NRA and MoFED to enforce the payment of tax and for MPs to sensitize their constituents on the need to pay for water. They also praised the US Embassy's harvesting of rain for use in the dry season, and that we exploit all our water sources into a usable commodity. Citing water related issues as apolitical; the Minority Leader called for a water-mix by means of alternative sources and likened it to energy-mix. MPs also spoke on landslide, soil erosion, poor filth management that result in flooding, and the possible ban on plastic bags that are not bio-degradable.