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PRESS RELEASE
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PARLIAMENT DEBATES THE PROCUREMENT BILL, 2015

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has concluded the second reading, after an intense debate on the 30th June, 2015, and ratified a motion that was moved and seconded respectively by the Majority and Minority Leaders of Parliament; that the bill entitled "The Procurement Act, 2015" be sent to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny. The proposed law is intended to streamline the procurement processes and procedures, with the paramount view of getting value for money.

Hon. Patrick L. M Kargbo explained the procurement process dating back to the colonial era with Crown Agents that was later changed to the Central Tender Board. He also talked about massive corruption and wastage of government's resources; thus the need for The Procurement Act, 2004 to curb those excesses. He ended by saying that the proposed amendment seeks sound procurement and fiscal management regimes aimed at the development of the country.

Hon. Paramount Chief, Victor B.S Kebbie told the House that MPs should not be seen to pass laws hastily because of the technicalities involved. He also said that had it not been for the poor economy, MPs should be assigned with consultants or researchers as in other jurisdictions to do their job effectively and efficiently; and argued that the bill be committed to the Legislative Committee, or be discussed with their constituents before taking further action on the said bill.

Hon. Umar Paran Tarawally described the bill as a good one, and said it should be strengthened further, whilst pointing to some of the omissions such as no provision for Deputy Executive Officer who may act in the absence of the substantive. He also said that MoFED has created a Procurement Directorate that is not provided for in law, whilst alluding to the procurement of second-hand vehicles in the AG's report on the management of ebola funds, and called on the House not to give the power of duty waivers to the Authority.

Hon. Ajibola Manly-Spain also described the bill as a good one, but that it has some contradictory provisions dealing with government's assets as we have Assets Commission performing the same function.

For Hon. Alhaji Seray Dumbuya, 80% of the country's revenue is being spent on procurement. He called on the House to commit the bill to the Legislative Committee for further edification.

Hon. Komba Koedoyoma said that before 2004, there were no regulations guiding the procurement process, citing the colonial days and the Central Tender Board, thus the need for the Procurement Act, 2004. He also said that NPPA has trained MDAs on the procurement process to cut down on leakages as a lot of government's resources are being spent on procurement. He also described the bill as a good one, and spoke about the need of tidying up the loose ends; before he called on the House to commit the said bill to the Legislative Committee.

According to Hon. Frederick S. Sourie, the intention of the bill is to repeal the old one which does not prosecute, but imposes small fines. He furthered that there is need for a repeal, whilst noting inadequacies which failed to specify the method of appointment of the Chief Executive Officer, layout etc. He also called for the bill to be committed to the Legislative Committee.

Hon. Paramount Chief, Kanagbaro Sanka III said that apart from salaries, government is spending a lot on procurement. He noted that NPPA does not have the means of verifying the recommendations of Procurement Officers in MDAs, who divulge relevant information to bad contractors without any strong form of punishment. He also said that our economy is doing fine on the books, but in reality the funds are not used for their intended purposes. He also said that non-performing contractors under-bid to get contracts, and later come up with variations to triple the original price. To this end, ACC and NPPA should collaborate and get rid of fake and briefcase contractors. He called for the bill to be strengthened to get value for money, and government to deal directly with manufacturers with the aim of reducing poverty and enhancing development.

Opposition Leader, Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai observed that the bill had gone through the pre-legislative stage successfully, and that the plenary is aimed at giving much publicity to what transpired at that stage of the said bill, where experts and consultants discuss the import of the bill to MPs with adequate information and clarifications for the debate. She called on suppliers and bidders to submit their opinions on the implementation of the bill so far. She also said that the Chief Executive Officer is appointed by the President subject to the approval of Parliament, whilst noting gender disaggregation in its composition. She noted that the Act had come into force since 2004, the reason for the amendment based on lessons learnt, as government is losing 60% of its revenue on procurement. She also emphasized that a situation of emergency is not a justification for flouting minimum procurement rules. She also said that the bill should be committed to the Legislative Committee, and called on MPs to inform their constituents when the bill would have been passed into law. She concluded that procurement plans be presented by MDAs before the passage of their budgetary allocations, and that deliberate miss-procurement and non-declaration of interests should be seriously penalized.

Majority Leader, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu thanked and addressed the Minority Leader as Her Excellency, the Vice President of the Pan African Parliament, whilst saying that 60% of government's revenue is being spent on procurement. He said that goods are cheap outside, but once government wants to procure, the prices are being inflated, whilst noting that some donations are under-cover sales that are passed through low ranking officials. He also noted that Procurement Officers and contractors have largely failed to contribute to this bill. He said that it behooves politicians to pass good laws because they would be blamed at the end of the day, whilst underscoring that politicians are neither civil servants, nor vote controllers. He said that they should have taken the bill to their constituents, but that the country is in a hurry, and that time and tide wait for no man; and urged Sierra Leoneans to compete and stop complaining. He promised that the bill will be passed with stringent measures, whilst he predicated his submission according to the rules of procedures of Parliament that to discuss the merits and demerits of the bill will in no way inhibit the work of the Legislative Committee.

The presiding Speaker, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Chornor R.M Bah succinctly put the motion and it was carried by the House.