



OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT  
PARLIAMENT BUILDING  
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL  
FREETOWN  
Tel: 232-076-615187  
E-mail: [admin@parliament.gov.sl](mailto:admin@parliament.gov.sl)



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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### **Parliament Dialogues Pre-enactment of the Criminal Procedure Bill 2015**

With the view of improving the existing criminal laws in the judicature of Sierra Leone, the Parliament of Sierra Leone on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015, at the New Administrative Building of the House engaged civil society organizations, lawyers, and officials of the Ministry of Justice on a pre-enactment dialogue forum on the proposed criminal procedure bill, 2015.

The dialogue forum was supported by the Justice Sector Coordination Office, and was funded by the Access to Security and Justice Programme. The proposed bill is aimed at replacing the Criminal Procedures Act of 1965 in order to match with international best practices in criminal procedures, and timely delivery in the administration of justice.

In his welcome address, the Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Ibrahim Sesay recognized the former Vice President and Attorney General, Solomon Ekuma Berewa, and expressed appreciation for the dialogue meeting with Members of Parliament, particularly those in the Legislative Committee. He furthered that such a forum would prepare MPs to pass good laws from an informed standpoints in consultations with the relevant stakeholders.

The Coordinator, Justice Sector Coordination Office in the Ministry of Justice, Dr. Henry Mbawa who chaired the programme, spoke on the need for the bill to be passed this year to enhance and strengthen the justice delivery system in the country.



*Members of the High Table*

Representing the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Lawyer Sulaiman Bah said among other things that the new bill would increase justice and human rights, procedures to obtain forensic evidence in critical cases, and that it would also transform the criminal procedures in line with international

standards. Mr. Bah also talked on the benefits that would be derived if enacted to support effective and efficient justice service delivery system in the country. He appreciated the donor partners for their support in trying to improve justice delivery in Sierra Leone.

Solomon Berewa made some clinical remarks that the proposed bill has some improvements than the existing one enacted 50 years ago, noting the abolition of the death penalty for life imprisonment, promote accountability in the administration of justice, sexual offences to be heard in secret among others. He also advised Lawyers to know “both criminal and civil procedures to fingertips so as to better and responsibly serve their clients”, and encouraged a battery of them to be present when the proposed bill would be debated in Parliament. However, he underscored that the bill be improved on the grounds that once a person has been acquitted, he should not be tried again in court as a consequence of which he had been acquitted. It is like the court negating its earlier decision.

The Director of Legislative Services in Parliament, Mr. Cyril F. King deliberated on the practices and procedures that are being followed before bills and statutory are passed in the House. Mr. Alieu Vandy of the Ministry of Justice did an explicit presentation on the draft bill.

Civil Society Representatives from the four regions of the country presented position papers and called on the Ministry of Justice to take into consideration the aspect of judicial case management, delay in court cases, long detentions without trials, and the development of guidelines to grant bail which should not be left discretionary as it is presently.

Members of Parliament in their contributions welcomed the initiative, and promised to see it through when the bill is before Parliament. However, they said a certified medical report from a Medical Doctor could be difficult to be obtained in the chiefdoms that are manned by Community Health Officers, especially for forensic evidence in rape cases.