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**PRESS RELEASE
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PARLIAMENT PASSES LAW FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday 16th June, 2016 passed into law with some amendments “The Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2016”. The Act aims to amend the Local Government Act, 2004 by providing for the postponement of local council elections, not more than the date on which Presidential and Parliamentary elections are to be conducted.

Presenting the Bill prior to passage into law, the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Maya Kaikai said among other things that the import and purport was to postpone the conduct of local council elections by amending Section 5 of the LGA, 2004, which provides that local council elections should be held after four years. He furthered that Section 8 regarding the Regulation for the conduct of elections for village headmen after every three years should also be postponed. He also noted that the “reasons for the postponement are due to the fact that NEC (National Electoral Commission) is yet to do the ward boundary delimitations for the conduct of local council elections and resource constraints”.

Whilst responding to concerns raised by MPs, Mr. Kaikai said that “Presidential and Parliamentary elections would be held in 2018”, and recalled that “President Koroma had notified NEC not to add a day for the conduct of the 2018 elections”.

Hon. Abu Bakarr Koroma, Chairman for the Committee on Local Government, whilst contributing to the debate, he described the Bill as “non-controversial”, and decried the absence of Mayors and Chairmen. He also referenced constitutional provision that relates to the “delimitation of wards and constituencies, 5 and 7 years respectively before the conduct of elections”. He also supported the amendment regarding the conduct of elections for village headmen.

Hon. Mustapha Braima briefly described the Bill as “non-controversial”, whilst he “feared that this amendment would not drag to the point of affecting the Presidential election”.

Hon. Claude Kamanda, Majority Whip of Parliament in his contribution did state that “the Bill is not seeking a permanent extension for councilors, whose tenure is four years, but that the amendment would come into force where NEC was unable to delimit the ward boundaries”.

Hon. Paramount Chief from Moyamba, Alie Kavura Kongomoh called on the Minister to “review the LGA, 2004, whilst saying that the chiefdom councils had been forgotten, and noted that in local governance, the first thing people should think is the chiefdom administration”.

Hon. Kemokoh Conteh also supported the Bill and noted that “ebola and resource constraints” also prevented NEC from delimiting the boundaries for the conduct of elections”.

Hon. Dr. Bu-Buakei Jabbi described the amendment as “risky”, and noted among other things the “it would give NEC open and blank tenure as to when to conduct local council elections”.

Hon. Sidie M. Tunis, Acting Minority Leader of Parliament, also described the “amendment as simple and important, whilst noting that local council elections could not be held because of difficult circumstances”. He however said that “he hoped that resource constraints will not affect the 2018 elections and also hoped that the Bill is not part of the plan to effect the much trumpeted more time campaign”. He also decried “the 2015 population and housing census, despite commendation from our development partners”.

Hon. Leonard Fofanah, Acting Majority Leader of Parliament also described the Bill as “non-controversial” whilst explaining the importance of local council administration in the country and noted it as a “breeding ground top politicians”. He also assured the P. C Kongomoh that chiefdom administration had not been neglected, citing their would-be role in the National Civil Registration Act. He also said that “NEC would not postpone the conduct of local council elections indefinitely”, whilst noting that “the conduct of elections are predicated by a number of players”. He ended by saying that “elections are won based on performance” and not otherwise.