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PRESS RELEASE

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPARENCY VISITS AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

The Parliamentary Committee on Transparency and Accountability (TAC), chaired by Hon. Claude D. M Kamanda, who doubles as the Chief Whip of Parliament, has returned from a day's visit to Sierra Leone Airports Authority (SLAA) in Lungi on the 24th June, 2015. A bi-partisan Committee of 16-Members includes 9-APC, 6-SLPP and 1 Paramount Chief Representative, as representation in Committees depends on the strengths of political parties in Parliament.

After the host MP, Hon. Nicholas Kamara had welcome the Committee, the Chairman of TAC declared the premises of the meeting at the airport as Parliament for the purpose of the deliberations, and said that the reason for the meeting was to determine the level of compliance relating to established rules and regulations by Ministries, Departments and Agencies, starting with SLAA. He enumerated the functions of SLAA ranging from coordination, security, promotion of international aviation safety, meeting international and national travelling demands, supervision, licensing and regulation of aircraft. He furthered that the Committee is seeking evidence-based information to ascertain whether these regulations and human resource issues are being implemented to the letter.

The Clerk to TAC, Augustine Sesay highlighted the provisions in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone on the mandate of the Committees in Parliament before administering an oath to officials of SLAA.

The acting General Manager of SLAA, Sheik A. Swarray Deen welcomed TAC on behalf of management and the newly reconstituted board. He said among other things that SLAA came into being by an Act of Parliament in 1988, to provide airports and navigational services. He said that unlike other countries in the sub-region where the main role was to provide airport services, SLAA is disadvantaged by its Act, to provide both airports and navigational services. He furthered that security is one of their functions which they had outsourced to Westminster Security Services Limited amongst others. He said that in the face of the ebola outbreak of which we are yet to "get out of the woods" senior management staff are receiving half-salary, and noted the drop in quarterly revenue from Le 9 billion to Le 7 billion. He also said that some of the flights

which had stopped coming into the country because of ebola, have started landing and cited Kenya Airways and Air France, which is due at the end of this month. He said that they are yet to see British Airways, Arik, and Gambia Bird fly back to Sierra Leone. He noted that Hastings airfield is operational even though it has suffered encroachment, whilst the other internal airfields have been outsourced for light aircraft to the provinces and the sub-region. He further spoke about the dual fencing of the airport, which according to a research recommendation has warranted the World Bank to allocate \$ 500,000 for the upgrading of those fences. He said that poor rehabilitation work was done which resulted in the roofing being blown away by heavy storm, and that they needed an estimated \$ 450,000 to fix it. The rehabilitation work was wholly funded by the GoSL, he said, and spoke about the need for the procurement of a new search and rescue fire engine estimated at \$ 600,000. He also said that with light electrical equipment at the airport, they are paying EDSA bi-weekly Le 62,000,000.00 on what he described as an unfairly industrial commercial charge rates for 12-hours electricity, after which they self-generate power supply. He ended by saying that the airport should be supported in the post-ebola recovery strategy of the country.

The meeting discussed a range of issues on security and safety, to explore the possibility of reducing the electricity cost in their best interest, \$ 1.2 million for the rehabilitation of the terminal building and the procurement of a fire engine, administration, airports and navigational services, projects that have been implemented by SLAA, cognizant of those funded by donors, GoSL and counterpart funding, and recruitments and retirement issues, to give way to young people.

The Committee resolved that the contractor should take full responsibility for redoing the damaged roofing at the Lungi airport, cognizant of the retention fees, and that GoSL would not duplicate expenditure of \$ 450,000 for the same purpose again. To this end, the Committee said that a meeting should be held among TAC, Strategic Policy Unit at State House, and the contractor, for the finalization of the issue.

The Committee in a conducted tour at the airport, observed all the ebola and security protocols, the run way, arrivals and departures, one ambulance, and the fire prevention vehicles.