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PRESS RELEASE

ACP-EU JPA CONTINUES STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION

The Sierra Leone Parliamentary Delegation to the ACP-EU (African Caribbean European Union) JPA (Joint Parliamentary Assembly), headed by the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma has on Tuesday 16/03/ 2021 continued its stakeholder discussion under the Cotonou Agreement in Kenema District after similar engagement in Freetown that attracted the attendance of the Head of EU Delegation to Sierra Leone, Ambassador Tom Vens.

Introducing the Head of Delegation, Hon. Dr. Paran Umar Tarawally said he was a battle tested political returnee and the current Leader of Government Business in the Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma.

Submitting, Hon. Nyuma said since they took over the reign of the current Parliament assembled, they had promised to take Parliament to the people including other International Parliaments like ECOWAS, ACP-EU and the Pan-African Parliament.

Giving a background the Cotonou Agreement, he said it was aimed at poverty reduction and creating a forum to discussing common political, economic and social relations among member states.

He also said that the Sierra Leone Delegation is an equal partner with membership to the Committees on Social and Political Affairs in the ACP-EU. In light of effective representation and participation, he said he had been appointed as co-rapporteur to the Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment, and his

Delegation had submitted four reports to the Parliament of Sierra Leone for consideration.

Speaking on a strong parliamentary dimension for effective representation, he solicited inputs from interested parties relating to a topic on social welfare and the environment; and observed that African products are not well received by their European counterpart due to economic power.

Relating to post-cotonou agreement, he said it will be focused on democracy and human rights, investments, climate change and migration.

Speaking on the intermediary role of the National Authorizing Office (NAO) established under the Cotonou Agreement, Director of NAO, Ambrose James said it was good to explain its development interventions to beneficiaries saying "EU in its development assistance gives grants and not loans". He said the Cotonou Agreement was due expiration in 2020, but has been extended to November 2021.

He said also that the 11th EDF fund was focused on improving Governance and Civil Society, Education, Agriculture and Infrastructure. He highlighted technical and capacity building support to Civil Society, Parliament, NEC, NCRA, value chain addition relating to agricultural productivity and profitability, construction of 100 kilometer road from Bandajuma to Liberia including major bridges, construction of 33 kilometer road from Moyamba Junction to Moyamba Town including Mabang and Gbere bridges.

He said Kenema District has benefited from EU grants in the area of education by the construction of 25 schools, provision of furniture, governance to improve service delivery to citizens and to improving the cocoa value chain for the attainment of food sufficiency.

He said communication gap, staff turnover in Councils and stringent rules and policies regarding utilization of EU funds still remain a challenge to projects implementation.

Speaking on the benefits of the Cotonou Agreement, Leader of C4C, Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina, however noted that following the coming together of 79

countries, Cuba and other 15 EU countries did not sign the Cotonou Agreement. He said grants are better than loans.

He said the agreement was geared towards promoting social development and equitable distribution of resources, sustainable development of the human person and promotion of development cooperation.

Speaking on benefits such as the construction of Gbalamuya and Bandajuma Roads by the EU, he spoke on ministerial and ambassadorial interventions before ratification by Parliament.

Speaking on barriers to the said agreement, he said Africans did not enjoy elections observation like their EU counterpart, more resources are directed to CSOs and deprived Parliament of much needed funds to do oversight, limited African representation in decision making, insecurity and BREXIT.

Speaking on the need for the enactment of the cyber crime Act by Parliament, he said post-cotonou will involve Organization of African Caribbean Pacific States (OACPS) focusing on democracy, human rights, climate change and investments.

On experience sharing, Hon. Dickson Rogers, Hon. Ibrahim Ben Kargbo said Hon. Aaron Aruna Koroma spoke on the need for early submission of project proposals for EU funding, proper utilization of those funds, acknowledgement of the good job done by Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, Sierra Leone now exports its fish to the EU market, recognizing the leadership skills of Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma, domestication of agreements to attract more EU funds, Councils had previously reneged on the use of EU funds resulting in suspension of those officers, and the need to see EU funds as revenue mobilization drive to Councils.

During the interactive session the Chief Administrators for both Kenema District and City Councils said they were neither aware nor consulted for the construction of 25 schools in Kenema District with EU funds. They also said the Cotonou Agreement is at variance with existing national legislations regarding tax deductions.

The Chief Administrators for Pujehun, Kenema and Kailahun District Councils, and Kenema City Council made brilliant submissions on projects funded by the EU.

The Chairman for Kenema District Council gave the welcome address, Members and Staff were introduced by Karmoh Conteh, Director of Legislative Services, and the vote of thanks was delivered by Christiana Syl-Turay, Secretary to the Delegation.

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