



# PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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## PRESS RELEASE



### COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION CONCLUDES ENGAGEMENT WITH EASTERN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY AND NJALA UNIVERSITY

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Technical and Higher Education chaired by Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin has on Wednesday 26/06/2024 and Thursday 27/6/2024 respectively engaged officials of the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone in Kenema District and Njala University in Bo City and Mokonde Campuses to ascertain progress made so far in the improvement of technical and higher education in the country.

At the Eastern Technical University, the Vice Chancellor and Principal of the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone, Prof. Mohamed Taillu Lahai on behalf of the University thanked and commended Members of Parliament (MPs) for their visit and anticipated a fruitful discussion for the university's development. Briefing the Committee after an inspection of its facilities,

the Vice Chancellor and Principle Professor Mohamed Taillu Lahai explained to the Committee about some of the challenges and successes of the University. He commended the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio for helping the polytechnic to attain a university status. The VC&P also spoke about the massive infrastructural developments that have been

undertaken by the university and some of the many things the institution wishes to achieve in future.

In his brief statement, the Committee's Chairperson, Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin outlined the mandate of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee in light of probing into the University's activities in order to understand the strides that have been made so far.

Hon. Williams -Lamin underscored President Dr. Julius Maada Bio's commitment to promoting quality education in the country. He emphasized the need for authorities in the education sector to be respected and further highlighted the need for quality education for the country especially in tertiary education sector.

As part of its mandate, the Committee visited various facilities of the 47.5 acres of land in the campus in Kenema. The Committee commended the Management of the University for a job well done in keeping up to the required standards of a technical university.

Mr. John Juana, the Registrar of the University also briefed the Committee through a PowerPoint presentation on the current status of the University including its successes and challenges.

The Registrar explained that the University's mandate is to foster quality education, embark on research and innovation for all sectors, and develop middle level man power of the country. He went on to state the various faculties and departments the University has.

He mentioned that there are currently 8517 registered students and that 52% represents male whilst 48% represents female and a staff population of 415.

On the successes of the university, the Registrar informed the Committee that the University has embarked on several construction projects and have completed the roofing of the amphitheater, they have maintenance and fabricated over 2,500 student arm-chairs and have also maintenance some offices for senior administrative staff and Heads of Departments.

In outlining some of the challenges, the Registrar said staff are still on the polytechnic's payroll which is seen as a demotivating factor to the workers, non- replacement of deceased staff members and those who have retired and the untimely payment of government subventions, bad road network to Bunumbu and Kono campuses, inadequate workshops and laboratory equipment and host of others. He pleaded with the Committee on behalf of the University to support the institution in order to actualize the desired goals aimed at ensuring responsive education in Sierra Leone where graduates would not depend on jobs provided by Government.

The Registrar informed the Committee about the ongoing construction and rehabilitation of former Bunumbu Teachers College, now ETU-SL. Bunumbu Campus, he also informed the Committee that the statutory organs of the university including the University's Court and its committees are fully functional.

The Registrar also applauded Government for the prompt payment of monthly salary to staff on the Accountant General's payroll though on the university scale. He also appreciated the regulatory and supervisory roles of both Tertiary Education Committee and MTHE respectively.

He concluded by informing the Committee that "since 2017-2024 no grant-in-aid fees returns have been paid by Government to the University and that they are pleading with the Committee to fast-track this as it affects the infrastructural growth of the institution.

During the quest to know and understand the rubrics of the operations of the institution, the questions and answers by the MPs and authorities of the University, they applauded the administration on work done so far for the University.

The MPs went on to underscore the importance of quality education for the development of the nation and promised what had been highlighted would be looked into and brought to the attention of the relevant authorities for consideration.

The engagement ended with a call to the student union government to see themselves as additional administrative officers of the institution and encouraged them all to maintain peace and tranquility on the campus.

The students vouched to maintain peace and work in earnest with the central administration of the institution of ETUSL.

At Njala University, Bo Campus Towama, the Committee engaged officials of the University and a detailed information was shared with the Committee. The Vice Chancellor and Principal, Professor Basiru M. Koroma in welcoming the Committee highlighted the historical background of the University and its current activities. The VC&P informed the Committee about the ongoing development including infrastructural and the creation of new faculties. The VC&P also briefed the Committee on some of the challenges relating to the constraints of electricity supply and its huge tariff.

On agricultural research, he said, the University had partnered with Vietnam and other research centers for the improvement of seeds farm for agricultural productivity.

The Chairman, Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin appreciated the work of the University and highlighted the tremendous work of the University by developing the mindsets of Sierra Leoneans through education. The Chairman advised the university to establish a cyber security system in order to protect students data. MPs in their contributions commended the University and requested for more improvement and expansion of its programmes and teaching services. The Committee also did an inspection on the entire University at Towama and Kwama campuses.

At Njala Campus, Mokonde in Moyamba District, Professor Mohamed Alieu Bah, Deputy Vice Chancellor in welcoming the Committee highlighted the University's educational direction. He said Innovation and industrialization is fit for purpose in the field of education and learning in order to meet international standards.

He informed MPs that since the inception of Njala University power generation and water supply had been a major challenge.

"We are not connected to the electricity grid of the country, we power our University and also supply water to the campus", he informed the Committee. He appreciated the initiative of the Government for supporting education and the Feed Salone Project. He highlighted the challenges related to the slow pace of Government in paying grant-in-aid to the University.

The Chairman and Members of the Committee outlined the nature of Parliamentary work relating to oversight.

**The Registrar of the campus Dr. Muneer Jalloh informed the Committee about some of the financial challenges they are faced with for staff and other related payment by students. A conducted tour of the campus facilities climaxed the Committee's Oversight.**

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