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PRESS RELEASE

COUNCILS IN EASTERN REGION IMPRESS PAC ON 2019 AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The Councils in the Eastern Region including Kono District, Koidu New Sembehun City, Kailahun District, Kenema City, and Kenema District have so far impressed the PAC regarding the issues raised in the Auditor General's Report of 2019; save for challenges with water management, proper filing of documents, assets marking and coding, weak internal audit and a refund of Le 23 Million by the Koidu New Sembehun City Council relating to payments of sitting fees and allowances to absentee councillors.

Addressing Auditees in the Hall of Bo City Council on Wednesday 14/04/2021, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Chairman of PAC, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas said they have been invited to answer to the conclusions of the Auditor General's Report of 2019. Explaining the audit process, he spoke on the annual allocations of funds to MDAs to undertake development programmes in the country. He said such funds are being audited and the Report tabled in Parliament by the PAC. He warned against volunteerism and lying under oath and any attempt to mislead the PAC would attract unlimited punishment based on Contempt of Parliament.

Speaking on the importance of public hearings and proper dissemination of information by the media and CSOs regarding the the proceedings of PAC, Hon. SS Thomas spoke about human rights, no witch-hunting and any attempt to forge documents would result in criminal prosecution by either the Police or ACC; and the confirmation of receipts by NRA to determine authenticity.

He said as a matter of fact, Parliament would be debating conclusions of the PAC's Report and not those of the Auditor General's after the conduct of its public hearings on issues raised in the Auditor General's Report of 2019.

For failure to do proper bank reconciliation by Kono District Council, the PAC has promised to levy fines in future for not doing the proper thing at the appropriate time, which they claimed has now been corrected.

Koidu New Sembehun City Council has been ordered to refund Le 23 Million as payments of sitting fees to absentee councillors for the period under review.

On the issue regarding the absence of Internal Auditors, the PAC has directed letters be written to the Local Government Service Commission in respect of same and copy the PAC.

For effective water management systems, the PAC has called for effective devolution of rural water sector through collaboration and coordination with the local councils. A challenge the PAC observed would be addressed by the MCC compact funds in some rural communities.

Following the impressive and outstanding performances by Councils in the Eastern Region in respect of the Auditor General's Report of 2019, the PAC asked the Auditors the reason behind such a huge success and they replied it was because they have improved and strengthened their systems; especially when they are complying with audit recommendations.

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