



# PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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## PRESS RELEASE



### FIFTH ALLOTTED DAY:

#### PARLIAMENT CONCLUDES DEBATE ON PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday 08/11/2024 concluded the debate on a Motion of Thanks to President Bio on the speech he so graciously delivered on the Occasion of the State Opening of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone in the Chamber of the Parliament Building on Tuesday, August 6th, 2024.

During his submission to the debate on the final day, Honourable Abdul Karim Kamara from Kambia District, began by saying that if they allow politics to take over as a nation, it would affect development. He added that the President admitted that the actual owner of power is the people.

Speaking on Agriculture, Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara acknowledged that the Feed Salone seeks to address the issue of bread and butter in Sierra Leone and that bread and butter should not be politicized. He added that it is incumbent on the government to address food security. He continued that food security is the ability of people to afford food and feed themselves.

Regarding health, he said it is pathetic for Members of Parliament from the ruling government to have admitted that the health sector is doing well, which, according to him, means the health conditions in villages and towns are extremely poor. He said medication on affordability is needed, so the government should find ways to address the people's basic needs. Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara concluded by advising the President to work for nation-building, "let treat the people of Sierra Leone with respect, he ended."

Deputy Leader 2 of Opposition Hon. Aaron Aruna Koroma from Tonkolili District lauded the Opposition Whip for his statement, decrying the President for various fallacious promises in his Manifesto. He said they are not in the Well to Make the President happy but to work in line with their mandates enshrined in the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone as MPs. He refuted that the hospital and the girl's school in Port Loko were not built by the Bio's Administration but rather by Mercury's International as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

Hon. Koroma noted that the prices of food commodities had unprecedentedly skyrocketed. He also mentioned that even the cost of eggs had gone up exponentially. The MP also pegged his debate on the Feed Salone project and considered the Feed Salone to be fallacious and a gimmick to cover up his promise in his 2019 Presidential Speech to provide food sufficiency in the country. He said the President failed to allocate 10% of the National Budget to the Agriculture Ministry. He aligned himself with the President's National Calls for Unity, adding that the President had failed to involve the Private Sector in the Energy Sector.

He acknowledged that the country had a bigger economic boost with bigger debts, astronomical inflation, and the highest exchange rate. He called on the Government to boost the country's reserve as the World Bank had warned of the country's inimical reserve. He also reminded House of the high cost of Mobile Network tariffs across all the networks. He questioned the Government, especially on the lack of action to seek the interests of the citizens. He underscored the President's quest to boost the energy sector. However, he said the President had not done enough to electrify the country. Hon. Aaron Koroma decried the President's many travels, considering it a waste of the State's resources. He concluded by saying the President flying syndrome is not just a complete waste of State resources but also competing with inflation coupled with hardship on the nation. He said the condition of service for teachers and other public workers are very appalling.

The Chief Whip of Parliament, Hon. Dickson Momoh Rogers, from Pujehun District, expressed thanks to President Bio not only for his nationalistic speech but also for improving the welfare of Members of Parliament. He commended the initiation of the Free Quality Education launched by the Bio's Administration. He lamented the progress made by the Bio Administration in agriculture. He expressed optimism that food security would be actualized soon across the country under the Feed Salone. He said it was under the Bio's Administration that the Hill Cut Bypass Road had been completed. The Chief Whip referenced the adage, "What is good for the goose is good for the gander," adding that the Opposition should praise the President for his developmental initiative across the country. He decried President Koroma's administration for not handling prudent Fiscal policy. He added that before now, there was no car wash in the country, but under the Bio's Administration, Car wash facilities are all over the country. He concluded that the Koroma Administration was engulfed with Human Rights Violations and corruption.

Responding to questions raised by Members of Parliament during the Presidential Debate, the Minister of Basic Senior Secondary Education, Comrade Sacky, disclosed that since 2018, the Education Ministry had recruited about 14840 teachers. He elucidated that the recruitment of teachers during the Koroma Administration was 22,000. He affirmed that such a figure had improved to about 31,000 teachers recruited.

In terms of training, the Minister said since 2018, they had trained over twenty-two thousand training programs for teachers. The Minister of MBSSE disclosed that they had developed teaching and learning materials for pupils. He added that his ministry had rehabilitated over 335 classrooms.

In her response to the debate, the Deputy Minister of Finance, Kadiatu Allie, said the Government had implemented mechanisms to boost economic policy and growth. The Deputy Minister assured the House that inflation had drastically declined. She said a lot has been done on domestic revenue mobilization. She reassured that measures have also been implemented to generate more revenue. She said the government had attracted more donor support and went on to explain the conclusion

of the Millenium Compact of the United States of America to boost electricity supply. She highlighted most of the rehabilitation work by the Government through donor support.

In his response, the Minister of Political Affairs and Public Administration Amara Kallon, said the ministry's objective is to enhance delivery for better public service and narrated the ministry's overall working plans.

He said that, at present, the ministry is coordinating all civil service activities and striving for transformation. The Minister highlighted that the civil service code is being reviewed and will be adopted by the cabinet and approved.

He also said that reviewing the 1991 constitution is ongoing, and key sections would be included. He said the Civil Service Training College is on the verge of transformation to train and upgrade civil servants.

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture 1 Theresa Tenneh Dick, indicated that BADEA and the Islamic Development Bank funded the Torma Bum project. She added that there were some constraints regarding the funding from BADEA. The Deputy Minister assured the House that the Ministry is striving hard to move from subsistence to mechanized farming. She continued that the Ministry had supported Members of Parliament with agricultural aid to boost agricultural facilities. She expressed an open-door policy for Members of Parliament, especially Female MPs.

Rounding up the debate, the Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Daniel Brima Koroma from Koinadugu District thanked President Bio for fulfilling his constitutional mandates in delivering the Presidential Address on the 6th of August 2024. He called on the House of Parliament to be true to themselves and the people they represent. He decried the expungement of the Jury System within the judiciary system. He said the opposition supported the government, especially in the Fifth Parliament, by putting the government to speed in terms of good governance. He also appreciated the government and Members of Parliament for repealing the Death Penalty in the constitution. He said Sierra Leone is among the hungriest countries in the world, which stands at a high risk of child mortality. He aligned with the Leader of Government business for the opposition to join forces with the Government in the interest of national development once elections were over. He called on the Government to align with the eighty-four roadmap outlined in the Tripartite Recommendations to achieve the implementation.

The Acting Leader commended the Feed Salone project and prayed for its success. He however, said the Feed Salone would not succeed without the involvement of the Opposition. He called on the government to see the opposition as partners in development. The Acting Leader of the Opposition vehemently opposed the 5% tax increment on rice, iron rods, and zinc. He commended the Bio Administration for a score of 79% in the fight against corruption. The Leader referenced the IMF report that Sierra Leone is the second poorest country in the world. He questioned the independence of accountability bodies, including the Anti-Corruption Commission. He strongly warned the government not to venture into removing the Auditor General from office.

In concluding the Presidential Debate, the Majority Leader and Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nuyma, commended MPs for the Presidential Debate and appreciated the positive contribution so far on the five-day-long debate. He said under difficult times, the President promoted the nation to democracy during the NPRC era. He said the President is committed to peace and national development. The Leader made reference to paragraphs in the speech that touched on national unity and political cohesion for the nation. He commended all for the fight to bring peace and national tranquillity in Sierra Leone.

He said the constitution touched on unity, freedom, and justice and called on his colleagues in Parliament to promote peace and stability.

The Leader recalled past elections that were taken to court by the SLPP that were denied and went on to reference the importance of the Court by addressing election grievances. He also recalled elections that were against the SLPP party during the national election and went on to emphasize the rules of the game during the national election.

On Agriculture, the Leader said the President is consistent and called on the MPs not to politicize Agriculture. He narrated how past presidents had contributed to the development of the agricultural sector. "We have full donor support and confidence in this government," he affirmed. He said many presidents had tried to make Sierra Leone's food self-sufficient, but President Bio's Leadership in agriculture is outstanding.

Hon. Nyuma highlighted the amount of donor support the government has received on agricultural matters so far and went on to encourage colleagues MPs to work together to develop the nation.

He said the National Revenue Authority had done a lot in terms of revenue mobilization. He said the previous government had put this country in an economic mess and noted that this government would set the trajectory for the country's economic growth straight.

He said donors have confidence in the current government and recalled the positive economic growth of the nation.

He said the President had played a pivotal role in promoting human capital development in education and had transformed the country's image on the international stage. "We are recognized. Let's put Sierra Leone first in the interest of moving forward", he concluded.

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