



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELESES



FIRST ALLOTTED DAY: PARLIAMENT COMMENCES DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION ACT, 2024

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday, 21/11/2023 commenced debate on the Appropriation Act, 2024 (Budget) for the development of the State, on the theme: "Restoring Macroeconomic Stability while Protecting the Poor and Vulnerable".

The Bill seeks to provide an authorized expenditure from the consolidated Fund for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2024 and other related matters.

Making his submission to the debate, the Parliamentary Oversight Committee Chairman on Finance, Hon. Francis Amara Kai-Samba commended the Ministry of Finance for presenting the budget to Parliament and underscored the importance of the theme of the budget toward socio-economic development of the State. While referring to the global economic downturn, the chairman said any disturbance of the economic chains around the world it would also affect the economic situation of Sierra Leone.

He said the 2024 budget would address the rise of inflation and other external shock.

On revenue generation, he said, the Government will continue to impose taxes and in return for develop other sectors. He also said the budget presented is pro-poor and it is in the interest of the citizens. "There are challenges, but there are landmark gains" he concluded.

Hon. Kai-Samba emphasized the need for the support of the Government's Big Five Changers.

On his part, Hon. Salieu Osman Sesay said to address the economic crises of the Country, inflation has to be addressed and went on to note that inflation has risen to over 55% and urged the Government to minimize the suffering of the people considering the hike in prices. The MP said the exchange rate of the country is nothing to write home about and called on the Finance Ministry

and the Bank Governor to address the dual currency use in the country "Let us ensure that this dual currency is being expunged in December coming".

The Member of Parliament said what the country needs at the moment is a robust revenue mobilization and not to impose a 5% tax on rice. He called on the President to expunge the 5% tax on rice to ease the suffering of the people and went on to describe the budget as a "ho-monger budget".

Hon. Tamba Simeon Johnny from Kono District referred to the budget as redemption and went to applaud the Finance Ministry and team. He informed the House that Sierra Leone's economy is better than the other Mano River Union Countries. He decried the previous Government on its "Agenda for Prosperity", and went on to state that, the budget for 2024 is honest. The MP highlighted the statistical data on the amount of revenue lost by the Government for failing to impose a tax on rice. The MP presented educational achievements of the Free Quality Education by the Government and went on to summarize most of the achievements of President Bio.

On his part, Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara re-echoed that the US Dollar should not be measured as an indicator of the economic performance of a country and went on to submit the negative impact of the Government on the economic development of the country. The MP decried many sectors that are not supporting the Government and went on to call on the Government to boost revenue mobilization.

Hon. Hindolo M. Gevao predicated his submission on taxation levied on certain products in the budget. He said the taxes levied on rice, cement, and iron rods would help the Government to acquire more revenue generation and later develop the economic situation of the nation. The MP went on to highlight the confidence of International Development partners in supporting the Government on its agenda. The MP said despite economic challenges, the Government would continue to fund and support the capital-intensive project around the country. He said the budget for 2024 speaks volumes on recruitment and assured of regional balance on employment. He referred to the budget as a people-centered budget and acknowledged the benefits of the Budget when approved.

Hon. John Charles Conteh in his submission to the debate commended the Minister of Finance and his team for putting the budget together, but to recall how Ministers of Government from the Finance Ministry badly performed towards the development of the economy. He also criticized the handling of the economy by the Government and went on to refer to the budget as "damage control deficit budget control".

On his part, Hon. Jibrila Surmoijueh said the theme of the budget can speak volumes on development and referred to the budget as resuscitation. The MP applauded the work of the Government and went on to highlight the analysis of the tax increment on rice and other products. "This Government is responsible and come next year, the development will be realized", he said and went on to note that the economic activities of the country would be realized through revenue mobilization. He also applauded the work of the President in transforming the socioeconomic development of the country.

Hon. Mohamed Conteh referred to the economic hardship of the people of Falaba District relative to the economic situation in the country and went on to decry deforestation caused by timber logging. He also informed the House that the Government is losing a lot of revenue from gold mining and also pleaded with the Government for the improvement and construction of roads linking to their district.

Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin appreciated the work of the Finance Ministry and urged Sierra Leoneans to be honest in their dealings, relative to development. "We are progressing as a nation and we are not moving back", he stated and went on to highlight the developmental achievements in the area of education, agriculture, and other related sectors.

On his part, Hon. Ibrahim Barrie said priority should be given to agriculture and recalled how the Late President Tejan Kabbah promised the nation food self-sufficiency. The MP advised and prayed that this time around, the country would succeed in the agriculture sector. He outlined the way forward for agriculture sustainability and development of the country. He went on to give a comparative analysis of how agriculture is happening in Africa relative to the "model" of development.

He recommended that Feed Salone will only succeed with monitoring and evaluation. He emphasized strongly for education and research on the agricultural food chain.

He called on the House to implement the recommendation of the 2021 needs assessment on Higher education conducted by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)

Hon. Ing. Fallah Tengbeh said everywhere around the world prices would go up and affect the economic condition of a country. He urged both the opposition and the ruling government to work together to develop the nation. The MP pinpointed his debate on the macroeconomic development of the State. "This Bill would transform the economic situation of a country like Singapore", he said, and went further to expand the concept of macroeconomics, relative to the development of the State. On employment, he said, it would be accomplished by the Government.

On the 5% tax on rice, he said it is in the right place, and it would foster revenue generation and boost economic development for the nation.

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