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**PRESS RELEASE**



**FISHERY COMMITTEE VISITS TOMBO**

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Fisheries and Marine Resources in the Parliament of Sierra Leone, chaired by Hon. Neneh Lebbie has on Wednesday 15th June 2022 engaged fishing and marine stakeholders along the Tombo Coastal Rural Community in the Western Area, to ascertain information on fishing and marine activities.

The purpose of the committee visit was to engage Stakeholders in the Artisanal Sector as well as the Marine Officer attached to the Tombo community on a whole range of fishing activities including the daily operations of the Consortium, relating to successes as well as challenges in that fishing community.

The visit was also a follow-up on the last meeting held in Parliament with stakeholders of the Consortium.

In her remarks, the Chairperson of the said Committee in Parliament said since 2018 they have established a good working relationship with the fishing community, especially the artisanal fishermen,

The Hon.Chairperson emphatically underscored the constructive working conditions and the relationship between the fishing community and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. The Chairperson said they are on a fact-finding mission to ascertain how the fisheries and marine sector are doing, relative to illegal fishing, bad fishing nets, improve sanitation, positive working relationship with fishermen and the ministry as well as an update on surveillance of the boats, the youth in the fisheries project, construction of facilities, and maintenance of marine properties and fishing safety.

Given an update, the Fishery Officer, Fatmata Binta Jalloh attached to the Tombo Community said with the collaboration of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), they have built an ice plant, toilet facilities, and over 142 pipe-borne water taps around the Tombo Community and underscored the positive working relationship with the fishing community and that of the ministry. In terms of working conditions and fishing regulations, she clarified that fishermen are using the right fishing gear.

Secretary-General of the Sierra Leone Fishers Consortium Union, Masudi K. Koroma commended MPs and the committee for reuniting the operation of the fishing consortium around the county. He heaped praises on the committee for their leadership role and noted that they are working under a positive umbrella with all consortiums. He said the consortium needs decentralized powers to control fishermen and arrest them for illegal fishing. "We need the ministry to support in this process" he maintained. On surveillance, he said collaboration is needed from various sectors in the fisheries sector and empowers the fishing consortium.

In his Submission, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the Consortium, Wudie Bakie Koroma said the coastal fishing communities used to produce hazardous waste materials, but have reduced drastically owing to proactive measures and went on to acknowledge the tremendous improvement in sanitation, in the fishing communities. He also informed the Committee that, the project on youth in fisheries is going on well and applauded the ministry for supporting the process.

Illegal net, he said is one of the most challenging issues in the fishing sector, but noted that the Fisheries and Marine Resources Ministry had supplied the right fishing nets to the fishing communities. He said there is a lot of illegal fishing going on in coastal riverine areas across the country, and called on Parliament and the Government to do all in their powers to address the illegal fishing in the country.

He said the Tombo community is the hub of fishing in Sierra Leone and called for the pavement of sites along the sea for the fishermen to mend their nets and also pleaded with the Government to provide subsidies to fishermen to improve fishing nets. He blamed the private sector for selling and encouraging the use of illegal fishing nets by fishermen.

The Chairlady who also doubles as a member of Women in Fisheries, Kadie Seto Fofanah appreciated the Ministry of Fisheries sector for a good working relationship with the association and underscored the importance of the improved smoking system, oven provided by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources for the fishing sector. She also praised the Ministry through UNDP for providing them with boats.

Welcoming the committee at the Fishing Boat Yard at Tombo, Sarah Bah, Head of Tombo Community appreciated Parliament for their tremendous strides so far in improving the fishing sector. On bad fishing nets, he called on the Government to discourage businessmen from importing bad fishing nets into the fishing communities. He spoke on the recycling process of waste materials project to be supported in the Tombo Community. On the rehabilitation of government structures in the fishing sector, he said a board has been set up to monitor government's assets and properties

MPs who spoke at the meeting commended stakeholders in the fisheries sector and advised them to do more to address the issues of the illegal fishing, bad nets, and other related matters that are affecting the fishing industry

The committee in their deliberations promised to engage Senior Officials of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to discuss on issues highlighted and find a way to address them

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