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PRESS RELEASE

HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND SERVICE PASSPORTS TO ENJOY VISA EXEMPTION TO CHINA

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Friday 09th November 2018 debated and ratified four bilateral Agreements with unanimity, including one that exempts holders of diplomatic and service passports from obtaining a visa before entering the People's Republic of China.

Presenting the Agreements to Parliament for ratification, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dr. Alie Sanjan Kabba said among other things that "these Agreements will enable Sierra Leone to tap into China's new outbound investments with a view of promoting trade, inclusion and the need for strengthening and deepening bilateral relations between the two countries". He also spoke about the need for acceding to the United Nations Convention which "recognizes the enforcement of foreign arbitral awards", whilst speaking on the importance of the Agreement between the Federation of Saint Christopher and NEVIS and the Republic of Sierra Leone on the exemption of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic, official and ordinary passports.

Contributing to the debate, the Chairman for the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon. Dr. Kandeh Yumkella said that "there is no controversy in any of these Agreements", save for "Parliament to be given an explicit role during the consultations with China", whilst calling "for easy visa access for MPs and Ministers in their data base already".

Whilst speaking on no visa restriction for officials of Government to China, the Opposition Whip, Hon. Hassan Sesay recalled by praising "the erstwhile leadership of Siaka Stevens for establishing and cultivating such a relationship that is benefiting the people of China and Sierra Leone, progressively".

Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara decried the idea of visa exemption only to holders of diplomatic and service passports, whilst appealing "for the extension of the no visa restriction to China for ordinary passport holders who are Sierra Leoneans that are involved in doing business between China and Sierra Leone".

Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Ibrahim Ben Kargbo commended the Government for these very important Agreements which recognized “continuity in governance with a view of deepening our diplomatic relations with other countries”. He also recalled Sierra Leone’s support “over Taiwan for mainland China to represent the people of China in the United Nations”.

The Leader of Government Business, Hon. Sidie M. Tunis said that “these Agreements are good and that they will promote friendly ties between Sierra Leone and China”, whilst recalling that “the current Government is following on some of the Agreements that had been signed by the previous government”. He promised that “in future the New Direction will negotiate for the inclusion of ordinary passport holders to enjoy visa exemption to China”.

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