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**PRESS RELEASE**

**INFORMATION COMMITTEE ENGAGES TELECOM STAKEHOLDERS**

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Information and Communications, in the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Chaired by Hon. Boston Munda has on Monday 18/07/2022, engaged various stakeholders in the telecommunications sectors, at the Conference Hall, Brookfield Hotel in Freetown. The purpose of the meeting was to address some of the challenges affecting the telecom industry in the country.

In his welcome remarks, the Parliamentary Committee Chairman of Information and Communications, said the engagement is based on addressing the poor services of the telecommunication sector and underscored that, the one-day stockholder's engagement is to discuss challenges that affect internet services delivering and other related matters. He said the engagement aims at providing an opportunity for various stockholders within the telecommunications sector to share their experiences, discuss challenges faced, learn best practices, and come up with possible solutions that would address the current internet-related challenges as they are directly affecting the people of Sierra Leone. He used the opportunity to highlight some of the challenges in the sector.

In his statement Chairman of the program, Hon PC Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III said the engagement is very important for the development of the state and encourages National Mobile Operators (NMO) and Internet Service Providers (ISP) to be more innovative in promoting and enhancing the telecom and education sector with service delivering

In his statement, the Deputy Director General of National Telecommunications (NATCOM) Mr. Amara Brewah thanked the committee for engaging the stakeholders in the telecom sector in other to promote internet connectivity in the country, He described the engagement as timely and expressed hope for a positive outcome. He said as an institution, they are doing their best to address the challenges faced by the telecom sector.

The Deputy Minister of Information and Communications, Solomon Jamiru Esq. welcomed the initiatives by the Information Committee in Parliament for organizing the program and highlighted the importance of engagement towards internet delivery. He said \$ US 73 Million

investment has been made on the fiber optic by the government, and underscored the point that the fiber optic has to be utilized and promised as a government to support the telecom sector to its fullest capacity.

In his statement, Opposition Leader, Hon. Chernor RM Bah commended the Information Committee in Parliament for organizing such a program and said the internet is something that should not be mortgaged and accentuated the expensiveness of the telecommunication sector. He commended the Deputy Minister of Information for submitting government supports to the telecom sector.

The Opposition Leader assured the telecom sector that Parliament would continue to support the government to actualize the improvement of the telecom sector, and urged for more internet distribution in the country.

In his submission to the program, the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma said it is a great pleasure for him to be part of the program and underscored the importance of the program for the development of internet services and other related internet deliveries

He said bringing all stockholders in the telecom industry together is a vital step in addressing some of the major problems of internet connectivity, and emphasized the point that, internet services would lead to the sustainable development of a state. He said internet services are very significant and urged the private sector to be given the leeway to operate with existing laws in Sierra Leone. He said the government of Sierra Leone has played a pivotal role in the development of the sector and highlighted the affordability of the internet service towards the operationalization of the telecom sector and the e-governance system.

The Leader affirmed that what has to be discussed in the engagement would be laid in the Chamber of Parliament and debated for the interest of the sector and that of the state.

Various presentations were made by National Mobile Operators (NMOs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on their operational challenges ranging from the high cost of fuel, exchange rate, high tariffs, and other related issues including service transfers.

In his vote of thanks, the Deputy Chairman of the Information and Communications Committee in Parliament Hon. Joseph William-Lamin appreciated the engagement and promised that all that have been discussed would be translated into action.

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