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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PAC ENDS PUBLIC HEARINGS ON COVID-19 AUDIT**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas has announced conclusion of its public hearings on the COVID-19 Audit carried out by Audit Service Sierra Leone. Following commentaries on the COVID-19 Audit, he said PAC's public hearings have provided an opportunity to lay bare issues raised in audit for the understanding of the general public by resolving, recommending and making clarifications on the issues raised therein.

Following an order, the PAC has today Wednesday 10/02/2021 visited the Offices of NaCOVERC and the Joint Logistics Unit, together with Auditors and Independent Journalists to physically verify items mentioned in Appendix 16 of the Report. Samples of i-5; i-7; smart phones; wheel chairs; and mattresses were verified by the Committee.

In respect of discrepancies and concerns raised by the Auditors about the missing 1, 356 25 kg bags of rice without supporting documents; the Public Accounts Committee has referred the matter to the ACC for investigation.

On the query relating to 50 KVA Generator on paper donated by the Chinese Embassy and a 65 KVA Generator found in ZIMMI by the Auditors; the PAC has also referred same to the ACC for investigation. This is because of varied explanations that it is a 50 KVA Generator donated by the Chinese; that the Generator was taken to ZIMMI in 2019; but that the actual Generator found on the ground is 65 KVA.

The PAC has also stated that the ACC is an extension of Parliament and a competent authority to look into this matter; adding Parliament could only recommend to competent authorities to take concrete actions.

The PAC has also advised NaCOVERC to review the SIERRATEL contract by making provision for shortfalls.

For the query relating to the 47 laptops, the PAC has promised to recommend stringent actions such as criminal prosecution in addition to payment ordered by ACC; on the proviso that the items supplied are of less value than specified. Meanwhile, officers have claimed on oath that the items supplied are of higher value than specified.

The Public Accounts Committee has thanked the Auditor General and Team, the ACC Commissioner and Team, Auditees, Journalists, Hon. Members and Staff of Parliament for attending to its public hearings.

Following a business case and consideration with a human face, the Public Accounts Committee had earlier ruled and directed NaCOVERC that full payment be made to BUYA's Hotel; housing COVID-19 patients.

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