



**OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT  
PARLIAMENT BUILDING  
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL  
FREETOWN**



E-mail: [sierraleoneparliament@hotmail.com](mailto:sierraleoneparliament@hotmail.com)/[admin@parliament.gov.sl](mailto:admin@parliament.gov.sl)

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PARLIAMENT ACP-EU STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSSIONS**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Wednesday 17th February 2021 held a stakeholders discussion on the post- Cotonou agreement relative to the African Caribbean and Pacific-European Union at the State Hall of Parliament.

The event was graced by several personalities including the Hon. Deputy Speaker, Hon. Members of the Delegation to ACP-EU, Hon. Members and Staff of Parliament, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Head of EU Delegation, Director-General NAO among others. Welcoming, Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Paran Umar Tarawally said Sierra Leone's Delegation had a strong relationship within the ranks of the ACP-EU; adding the event would serve as a catalyst to showcase the work of the Delegation to ACP-EU. Introducing the Chairman, he spoke on the need of taking the work of the Delegation to the people.

Submitting, the Chairman of Sierra Leone's Delegation to ACP-EU, who doubles as Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma gave an overview of the ACP-EU in light of peace, security, trading and investment and economic development. He recognized the role played by Sierra Leone's Delegation to ACP-EU in the last Parliament. He also spoke on the importance of public discussions relating to the Cotonou agreement; having regards for strong parliamentary dimensions and positive impacts on developments of member states. Commending EU's support to the Government and people of Sierra Leone; he said stakeholders discussions would be trickled down to other parts of the country.

He said due to outstanding performance and leadership dexterity, he had been nominated as co-rapporteur to the Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment; whilst recognizing the significant role played by his predecessor, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu.

Delivering, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas thanked Members of the Delegation; and noted strengthening of democratic governance for sustainable development. He referred to Sierra Leone Parliament benefitting from EU's support including technical and infrastructural development. He thanked the Delegation for outstanding performance and called on other Delegates to other Parliaments to emulate the good example of taking their work to the people.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs described the event as a significant milestone in the development of the country. He assured of strengthening diplomatic relations for mutual benefits; whilst stating commitments relating to post-cotonou agreement.

Representative of the Minister of Planning and Economic Development spoke of ongoing discussions and consultations on post-cotonou agreement; and the need for strengthening diplomatic relations to facilitate development.

Speaking on achievements and challenges, the Director General of NAO, Ambrose James explained about progress made under the 11th EDF fund in light of development in the country. Recommending, he said there are ongoing discussions relating to post-cotonou agreement. Former Majority Leader of Parliament and co-rappporteur, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu as former Head of Delegation spoke on the benefits of the Cotonou agreement in respect of movement of people, goods and services among member states. Speaking on effective management of environmental resources, he said the fundamental principles of the Cotonou agreement were not adhered to such as supporting MPs to do oversight. On the way forward, he spoke on the need for poverty reduction.

Delivering his keynote address, Head of EU Delegation to Sierra Leone, Ambassador Tom Vens recalled the Cotonou agreement and spoke on the future of EU's partnership with Sierra Leone by confirming that it would remain compatible with the ambition they have with the view of further strengthening priorities they had identified together. In view of consultations, he said the priorities would likely include these three areas; a green deal for Sierra Leone focusing on sustainable food systems, renewable energy and the environment; continue to invest in education and human capital development; and they would continue to work together with the view to strengthening governance in the country.

Member's present made inputs and other Members of the Delegation to ACP-EU shared their experience and contributions at that level. Hon. Veronica Sesay, President Female Caucus also shared her experience at ECOWAS, where she is a member of the Committee on Finance and Administration.

Earlier, Mr. Karmoh Conteh, Director of Legislative Services introduced Sierra Leone's Delegation to ACP-EU and later a Senior Clerk of Committee and Secretary to the Delegation, Madam Christiana Syl-Turay gave the votes of thanks and assured of taking the stakeholders discussions to the South-East and North-West of the country.

Department of Public Relations  
Parliament of Sierra Leone  
+23278495023/+23278697776/+23278426851