



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

Parliament Building - O.A.U Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown | admin@parliament.gov.sl | www.parliament.gov.sl

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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT AND EXPERTISE FRANCE GROUP DISCUSS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In a bid to foster development cooperation, the Leadership of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, on Monday, 09/12/2024, hosted a delegation from the Expertise France Group (AFD and the Human Capital Institute for Cooperation Project (PACOP) wherein strategic areas were pinned, which geared towards Parliamentary cooperation between France and Sierra Leone, especially in the areas of Constitutional Missions of Parliament (Legislation, Oversight), Gender Issues, Administrative Organization and Financial Independence of Parliament, international partnership, and open parliament and transparency.

In his welcoming address, the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament Segepoh Solomon Thomas welcomed the delegation to Parliament. He continued that the Parliament of Sierra Leone is more than willing to enter into such cooperation with France. Speaker Thomas thanked the France Group for visiting the Sierra Leone Parliament. Speaker Thomas confessed that the project components highlighted by the France Group were impressive. He assured the France Group that the Sixth Parliament is desirous of implementing all the project components mentioned by the France Group. The House Speaker, however, noted that the twenty-four months needed for the project implementation is infinitesimal. He reassured the France Group that the Sixth Parliament is open

for the implementation of those project components, adding that the project components mentioned by the France Group align with the Strategic Plan of Parliament of Sierra Leone.

The Chief Project Lead of the France Group, Jean Philippe Derosier, assured the Parliamentary Leadership that the project would help strengthen parliamentary cooperation with four African Countries. He elucidated that the PACOP Project is dedicated to Parliamentary cooperation, granted by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs and supported by Expertise France Groupe AFD, a national public agency that is leading French Government-wide international scientific projects.

He disclosed that the project has three partners: the two Chambers of the French Parliament, the National Assembly and the Senate, the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie—APF, and the Parliamentary Assembly of Francophone countries.

The Chief Project Lead continued that the PACOP project would be implemented in four African countries; two of them are French-speaking countries, Benin and Gabon, and two others are English-speaking countries, Botswana and Sierra Leone, respectively. He said the goal is to organize activities for parliamentary cooperation between France and the four countries. He added that the activities would be based on the five components of the projects, as outlined below: Constitutional missions of a Parliament (Legislation, oversight), Gender issues, administrative organization, financial independence of a Parliament, international relationships, and open Parliament and transparency.

He continued that the project would be implemented for two years. He said it had officially started on September 1, 2024, and would continue until August 31, 2026. He said they are now in the initiating phase, which means that as the Field Expert covering Sierra Leone and Botswana, he would mobilize, coordinate, and facilitate the exploratory and subsequent missions of the Project Team in Sierra Leone and Botswana in partnership with the Parliamentary Leadership, Members of Parliament, and staff for Sierra Leone and Botswana.

The Deputy Clerk of Parliament, Gilbert N’habay, also reassured the France Group that the Parliament of Sierra Leone is fully prepared for the implementation of the project. While they proceeded with the project implementation, he unveiled that the Sixth Parliament was putting in place a new program implementation structure within the House of Parliament. Among the emphasis, he said they are looking forward to the implementation of the multi-tier project especially a project that would last for long with a huge impact.

The Director of Training and Strategy, Mohamed A. Jalloh, made a PowerPoint presentation starting with the Parliament's Strategic Plan. He disclosed the composition of the Sixth Parliament, which had an appreciable number of forty-two (42) Female Members. He disclosed that the Parliament launched its Legislative Compendium, wherein the progress of Parliament was cataloged with the number of laws enacted and progress made so far. He also added that the Parliament of Sierra Leone launched a communique with the Civil Society Organization with the aim of promoting an open parliament.

The Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Paran Umar Tarawalie, also disclosed that when they came in 2018, they decided to review the Strategic Plan, of which they realized that not even 30% of the parliamentary activities were not taken forward due to lack of funding. He added that despite the gains made so far, he said there are still challenges when it comes to the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The Clerk of Parliament also said the Sixth Parliament is very proud of the open parliament syndrome with a transparency board where they publish everything about what happens in parliament. He continued that they give the general public access to witness sittings, and the budget process has been participatory, wherein journalists report everything in the budget hearing process.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Abdul Kargbo, expressed appreciation to the France Group for such cooperation with the Sierra Leone Parliament. He commended the team for pinning a specific project geared towards capacity building for the Parliament of Sierra Leone. He assured the France Group that whatever they invested in the project for the Sierra Leone Parliament, the Leadership of Parliament would institute special monitoring to ensure that the project would be successful. Hon. Abdul Kargbo reassured that the opposition and the government are fully prepared to monitor the implementation of the project.

Parliamentary and Public Relations Department, Sierra Leone Parliament.

Contacts: +23278495023/+23276625960/+23278426851/+23278697776/+23277473804.