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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PARLIAMENT APPROVES CEO FOR STUDENTS' LOAN SCHEME**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 17/05/2022 approved the First Report of the Committee on Appointments and Public Service, chaired by the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma.

The following Presidential Nominee was approved by Parliament:

Mr. Paul Joseph Amara, Chief Executive Officer, Students' Loan Scheme.

Presenting the nominee, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma said the Appointments and Public Service Committee followed due diligence and procedures during the interview. He spoke very well of the Presidential Nominee.

Seconding the motion, Leader of C4C, Hon Saa Emerson Lamina recalled President Bio's manifesto, in light of the institution and commended the latter. He informed that the scheme is developmentally unique and advised the CEO to manage it well, referencing other countries that are implementing the same.

He also recalled several instances of students' issues and suffering, whilst appealing for a positive charge in that direction.

Chairman Tertiary Education Committee, Hon Mohamed Lansana said the scheme would complement the Grant-in-Aid and proffered recommendations of awarding and repaying. The Chairman used the opportunity to call on oversight committees to work in tandem with the scheme to achieve its purpose.

Hon. Dr. Unpha Sorie G. Koroma spoke about the potential benefit of the scheme, referencing the scheme overseas. He spoke about sustainability, transparency, fairness in awarding the loan and suggested that the scheme be tied up to NCRA and NASSIT as well as to be nationally implemented.

Hon. Wuyata Songa said she had been a beneficiary of such a scheme abroad and expressed appreciation over same. She spoke about political interference, in light of fulfilling the demand of their constituents to benefit from the scheme and cautioned the CEO to try as best as possible to change the narrative for better output and to award the loan to qualified people. She used the opportunity to recall instances relating to a certain student that had a better requirement to enter university, but could not defend that result.

Hon. P. C. Bai Kurr Kanabaro Sanka III said for any country to develop, education should be prioritized and went on to speak about the change of dynamic through self-sufficiency in manufacturing and production by citizens.

He said the Loan Scheme was good but cautioned the CEO not to condone the advantage of dishonest people who can afford it. He advised the CEO to give the Loan to the most qualified and very poor applicants.

An Independent MP from Kailahun District, Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi spoke about sustainably and pursuing careers that are job creative and demanding.

Opposition Whip, Hon Hassan Sesay said the scheme was timely but used the opportunity to caution the state to beware of the educated illiterate. He spoke about the quality and hard work against the lack of capacity of current graduates. He gave a strong warning to the CEO.

Rounding up the debate, the Leader of Opposition Hon Chornor R. M. Bah cautioned the CEO to enhance sustainability and proper management of the funds.

Concluding the debate, Leader of Government Business said he had no doubt in the nominee and spoke about his experience. He spoke about affordability and clarified certain issues. He advised the CEO to enhance better structure to ensure that deserving students get the loan.

In his felicitation Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Abass Chornor Bundu wished the CEO well in his new office.

In another development, the Parliament of Sierra Leone has also debated and ratified several protocols and conventions for the improvement of the socio-economic development of the state.

The following agreements were ratified by Parliament:

- 1.1954 convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict with regulations for the execution of the convention
- 2.1970 Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property

3. 1972 Convention on the protection of the world cultural heritage

4. 2001 Convention on the protection of the underwater cultural heritage

5. 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and

6. 2005 Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression

The Parliamentary Chairman of the Committee on Tourism and Culture, Hon. Tom A. Tucker spoke positively about the agreements.

P.C Bai Kurr Kanagboro Sanka and Leaders of opposition and Government Business also spoke well about the agreements.

Mr. William Robinson Deputy Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs presented the agreements

Also, Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 17th May 2022 enacted into law with some amendments the Bill entitled "The National Investment Board Act 2022 into law

The Bill seeks to establish an investment board to promote investment opportunities, act as a facilitating body and assist investors to obtain facilities relating to their business enterprises, and generally improve the investment climate of Sierra Leone

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