



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT CELEBRATES FIRST LADY FATIMA MAADA BIO FOR MERITORIOUS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF OAFLAD

In an event embedded with melodious ambiance, the leadership of the Sixth Parliament, especially the Parliamentary Female Caucus, in collaboration with the Office of the Gender Advisor at the Office of the President, on Thursday, 03/04/2025, celebrated the meritorious election of First Lady Madam Fatima Maada Bio as the President of the Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD). The event, which was staged at the State Hall of Parliament, attracted many dignitaries and Government Officials.

Introducing the First Lady, the Minister of Information and Civic Education, Chernor Bah, said that Dr Fatima Bio represents the face of Sierra Leone. He said that even though he had worked with the First Lady of America and the First Lady of the UK, and other First Ladies across the world, none of them could be matched with the First Lady of Sierra Leone in terms of advocacy and result orientation, among others.

The Majority Leader of Government Business, Honourable Mathew Sahr Nyuma, said that in terms of legislation, Parliament has done extremely well in supporting women through the enactment of the

GEWE Act. He added that the 30% direct female representation in the legislative arm of government is a clear manifestation of Parliament's commitment to empowering women. He described the First Lady as God-sent and noted that she won the election through democratic means. The Majority Leader added that President Bio's Government is committed to ensuring that women are always supported and protected.

The Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Paran Umar Tarawally, said, Parliament is celebrating the First Lady as one of the strongest women on the continent of Africa. He affirmed that Dr. Fatima's representation as the President of the Organization of African First Ladies for Development is commendable. Honourable Paran stated that Parliament has enormous trust that the First Lady would provide quality representation for the people of Sierra Leone in her capacity as the President of the Organization of African First Ladies for Development.

"The First Lady is fearless and relentless in the defense of the people," he said.

In her submission, the President of the Parliamentary Female Caucus, Hon. Wuyatta Batilo Songa, joined others in congratulating the First Lady for her election. She said, "The women of Sierra Leone need a strong woman like Dr. Fatima Bio to protect the rights of women in and outside the country." Honourable Wuyatta added that the First Lady is competent and eloquent, and that her self-esteem shows she is one of the greatest women in the world. "The women of Sierra Leone believe that with the knowledge and experience of the First Lady, much more progress will be attained in Africa", she said.

In her message of appreciation, Her Excellency Dr. Fatima Maada Bio honored and acknowledged the Parliament of Sierra Leone, especially the Sixth Parliament, for demonstrating the "HeForShe" syndrome. She singled out the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Abdul Kargbo, and the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Matthew Saher Nyuma, for effortlessly standing out for women and, above all, putting out their differences when it comes to promoting the interests of women.

She acknowledged the presence of the various female groups, mami queens, paramount chiefs, and other dignitaries for their timeless support to her. She paid a special tribute to those who are serving as ministers and in other positions within the government, as the legacies of the President represent their legacies. She also paid a special tribute to the Parliamentary Female Caucus for their support of the course of women. She praised the Chairman of the Sierra Leone People's Party for attending the program, which demonstrates his true nature for "He for SHE" to her.

She said that she won the election in Addis Ababa with a landslide victory. She said that "we are here today because one woman has asked other women to celebrate another woman". She therefore commended Madam Isata Jabbe Kabba for such a program. She acknowledged Madam Sylvia O. Blyden as her sister from another mother. She commended the Anti-Corruption Commissioner Francis Ben Kaifala for the support he has provided not only to her but to the government as well.

Madam First Lady continued that no President in Sierra Leone before President Julius Maada Bio had contributed to the development of women and girls in Sierra Leone, noting that it should be a collective effort for everyone to protect the children. She appealed to the consciences of the audience to ensure that their children are brought up for the betterment of Sierra Leone.

The Master of Ceremony for the event was the Director General of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, Josephine Kamara, and was moderated by the Director of the Parliamentary and Public Relations Department, Sheku Lamin Turay.

It could be recalled that in 2002, First Ladies of Africa came together to form the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA), with the objective to be a united voice for Africa's most susceptible citizens; women and children living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. Along the years, OAFLA has evolved to become an institution that is able to offer a continent-wide leadership in terms of advocacy in the areas of HIV and a broad range of maternal and child health intervention. OAFLA currently named as the Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD) is an advocacy organization where First Ladies of Africa seek to leverage their unique position to advocate for policies that make health services accessible and laws that boost women and youth empowerment. First Ladies of Africa reinforce favorable policies and programs through advocacy, resource mobilization and development of partnerships with all stakeholders at all levels. First Ladies engage in various community-level activities to sensitize community and create awareness on health risks and policies.

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