



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT DEBATES AND ADOPTS PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION ON KUSH AND OTHER HARMFUL DRUGS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on Tuesday, 23/04/2024 extensively debated and adopted with unanimity the following constitutional instruments that were laid on the table of the House on Thursday, 18th, April 2024.

The following documents were debated and adopted by Parliament:

1. The Public Emergency Regulations 2024 and
2. The Drug and Substances Abuse Public Emergency Response Regulations, 2024.

Presenting the regulations to the House for debate, Majority Leader and Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma vehemently assured the House of curtailing the harmful drug." We should go after the drug lords," he said and went on to underscore the Government's efforts relative to the establishment of treatment and rehab centers for the victims.

While applauding the support of the opposition in the fight, the Leader called on all and sundry to galvanize efforts to eradicate the spread of the menace. He emphatically alluded to the application of drug enforcement laws and went on to say that the regulations of the health of emergency are vital for the implementation of the proclamation by the

President. "We don't want people to misuse the health of emergency," he said and reassured that,

"No one is above the law, we should go after the manufacturers to eliminate the supply chain of the Kush drug". He urged stakeholders to come on board to help the government to eradicate the Kush in the country.

Seconding the motion, Hon. Dr. Unpha Sorie Koroma appreciated the Leadership of Parliament and the President for declaring a health Emergency on Kush.

On the regulation of the health emergency, he said Parliament should treat it as their baby and welcomed the guides on the Health emergency. He said the Kush menace has threatened the lives of the people of Sierra Leone and underscored the importance of the proclamation by the President.

In light of urging the authorities to provide the necessary financial support, the erudite MP expressed the need for inclusivity of the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and the Opposition for their strategic roles.

"The fighting against kush should not only stop at fighting it but also fighting other harmful related drugs in the country", he asserted and went on to emphasize that the war on Kush should have a national lens and not otherwise.

On his part, Hon. Mustapha Sellu from Moyamba District denounced any attempt to politicize the clarion call and underscored the necessity for massive education on the regulations. "Ignorant of the law is no excuse" he categorically stated and suggested that penalties must be stated in the regulation for those in sea transportation. He advised colleague MPs to make the fight against Kush as their primary focus and not otherwise.

Hon. Abdal Timbo Esq. from Western Area Urban expressed disappointment over the rate at which the harmful drug has engulfed the fabric of the society and related it to the delay of action. He stressed the need for the application of extraordinary measures to defeat the menace. The Youthful MP expressed concern over the definition of Kush in the regulations to guide the procedures. Hon. Timbo made reference to other Acts that speak louder on the punishment of drug users and manufacturers than regulations before the House.

Hon. Abdal Timbo said the proclamation and regulations should last for 90 days and not for 12 months as stated in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. He called for the total involvement of the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency to be part of the process in the fight against kush.

In her submission, Deputy Majority Whip 1, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay commended Parliament for instituting proactive action against the deadly Kush drug. "Let us come together and fight the Kush drug in the country", she said and went on to support the proclaimed 12 months for the emergency as a sufficient timeline to set up the structures to fight the harmful drug. She suggested to the authorities to state stronger penalties against law enforcement officers who are implicated.

Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin from Bo District highlighted the negative effect of Kush and other related harmful drugs on compatriots in the country. "We should be ahead of the drug dealers and suppliers" he advised.

In his contribution to the debate, the Deputy Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie recalled his criticism of the police and the seaport over drug handling. "You see police officers who should be upholding the laws, are part of the Ghettos" he disclosed and went on to call on the Judiciary to do the needful in supporting the fight against drugs in the country.

The Deputy Leader used the opportunity to call on the Attorney General to involve court system in the fight against Kush and informed the House that strong laws had been enacted by Parliament but questioned their implementation. "We have laws and we are not short of laws", he asserted and called on the general public, the opposition, and other stakeholders to support the government in the fight against kush. "After 90 days from now we will continue to invite the police and judiciary to give Parliament feedback" he concluded.

Hon. Mohamed Bangura from Karene District underscored the effort of the security sector and the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency in the fight against Kush drug and called on the government to support those that are spearheading the fight. He also commended the Leadership of the opposition for supporting President Bio's proclamation on kush. The MP used the opportunity to encourage commercial banks to alert the Financial Intelligence Unity on frequent deposits of huge amounts of money by individuals for investigation. "Suppliers of drugs should be followed and punished". He said.

Hon. PC Tongos Marrah III from Falaba District proffered solutions that will empower the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and PCMPs for onward support to other Paramount Chiefs to promote the enforcement of bylaws. "Just involved PCMPs, in the fight against Kush it would be eradicated"., he concluded.

Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara, Opposition Whip from Kambia District denounced personal or political gains from talking about kush and informed the House that the matter was in the interest of the State and people.

The MP highlighted the negativity of Kush in the universities and societies. "We need to speed up on the national timing in this fight", he urged and went on to note that "we should respond quickly and forget about political party affiliation in the fight against Kush". He underscored the need for a total involvement of all stakeholders. He assured Parliament that with a huge political will, within ninety days, they will eradicate Kush.

While alluding to the importance of the debate, Hon. Rebecca Y. Kamara from Kono District said dealers in Kush are within the community and requested immediate actions against them. The MP stressed the need for more community engagements in the fight against Kush. "The Young people are going down the drain". she expressed in tears. She called for a quick establishment of rehabilitation centers around the country that would later be transformed into training centers.

On his part, Hon Tamba Kellie from Kono commended the bye-partisan approach in the fight against Kush and called for the involvement of all stakeholders. He alluded to the fact that focusing on any definition of Kush would affect the subject matter.

Hon Quintin Salia-Konneh from Kailahun District said the fight against Kush should go beyond the regulation before the House . "We should put heavier penalties to debar the intake of Kush and the manufacturers" he stated and appealed for those that are in charge to do the needful to combat the spread of Kush.

Hon.PC Kawaleh Kandeh Paria II, From Karene District, said security measures have to be put in place, to eradicate Kush.

Contributing to the debate, Hon.Hawa Conteh from Koinadugu District expressed dismay over the negative conduct of kush addicts and their impact on society. She used the platform to advise the young generation to distance themselves from harmful drugs and also suggested to the authorities not to allow drug lords to go unpunished.

Hon.Bash Kamara from Bo District said in light of supporting the health emergency, they should also consider the longtime implementation and eradication of Kush and other harmful substances. He called on the attention of all and sundry to stop the blame game and fight the deadly drug with oneness.

Hon. Mohamed Billo Shaw described all types of smoking as a breach of the law and argued that those who are engaged in taking kush should be punished. The MP also called for the investigation' of manufacturers of alcohol that contained over 60% alcohol content to be investigated.

Hon.Latif Sesay from Port Loko District called on MPs to be an auxiliary task force in the fight against Kush. He appealed for more funds to be allocated to the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency, to achieve their mandate and objective. He used the opportunity to call on international partners to support the process. Speaking on other related drugs, the MP urged for collective efforts and strongly advised that funds meant for the implementation to eradicating kush be used judicially.

Hon. Margaret F. Johnson from Kailahun District predicated her debate on the psychological effects of the addiction of Kush on the youth. She advocated for the review of the Mental Health Act in order to promote the fight against drugs.

Hon. Tamba Jonney from Kono District said the intake of Kush affects Sierra Leoneans and also the subregion. "We should fight the intake of drugs together," he said

In an apathetic mood, Hon. Mariama Bangura from Western Area Urban said the drug had caused many harmful effects in every household. She commended the Leadership of Parliament and the President for taking proactive measures in addressing the Kush issue. She suggested heavy jail penalties and no fines levied on suppliers or dealers because of the gravity of the atrocity on the youths of Sierra Leone . "Let's treat this issue very seriously and treat it with utmost urgency" she concluded.

Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi from Kailahun District appreciated the President for the proclamation and went on to note that she had been championing the awareness raising on the Kush.

"These Kush dealers had blood in their hands by killing innocent people". She said.

Hon. Boston Munda from Kenema District said Kush is a security issue and went on to note that the enforcement agency lacks the funding to fight the harmful drugs. He said there are related laws enacted by Parliament but not implemented accordingly.

On his part, Hon. Peter Yamba Koroma from Bombali District revealed that MPs saw the dangers of Kush and raised the matter up and also suggested that those who are taking the Kush should not be punished but the manufacturers and the dealers must be dealt with. "The Users should be seen as victims and not perpetrators", he maintained.

He advanced argument to establish the distinction between the manufacturer of Kush and the addict of Kush in terms of the penalties and fines and assured that nothing should stop them from fighting the drugs.

Hon. Sarty Banya from Kailahun District acknowledged the efforts of some chiefdoms' authorities, youths, and others in the fight. He recalled a situation when the intaking of Kush commenced and supported an extension of time in the State of Emergency to effectively eradicate the drug. He recalled an instance in Kailahun where the Magistrate was attacked by Kush addicts for passing a verdict against them.

Hon. Sia Mahawa Tommy from Kono District spoke about the psychological impact, addiction, and danger of the drug. She asked the House to focus on prevention and education and went on to talk about the essence of the rehab centers. The MP also expressed fear over the destruction caused by the drug on young people. She warned colleague MPs not to politicize the fight and expressed worry over drug lords gaining financial powers. She spoke about the proper engagement of addicts and effective support to improve their lives. The dynamic female MP emphasized on the implementation of drug laws.

Hon. Alex Rogers from Pujehun District commended President Bio for the proclamation on Kush, adding that every community in the country is affected. He underscored the enforcement of the law and encouraged the House to conduct robust oversight relative to the implementation of the law. He buttressed the extension of the time in the proclamation and said that the action was timely.

Hon. Rachel Pessima from Port Loko spoke about the passion of President Bio for youths and the creation of provisions for victims who are baby mothers for the former to benefit. The MP suggested incremental fines on dealers and more medical support to save the lives of victims. She also encouraged colleague MPs not to politicize the fight. She called on partners to support the Government to create more rehabilitation centers and give support. She appealed for more community engagements with the collaboration of MPs.

In rounding up the debate, Acting Leader of Opposition, Hon. Daniel Koroma said the proclamation would help the government to help the people in the fight against the kush drug. The MP heaped praises on his Leader, Hon. Abdul Kargbo for his effort in the fight against the harmful drug and also acknowledged the consensus of both political parties in Parliament. The Leader also applauded colleague MPs for observing various concerns and reassured the House on the position of his APC party in light of supporting the fight against Kush. "This thing is not political" he went on to reaffirm with statements from his political party, relative to unity and collaboration with the Government. He however expressed fear of intimidation and abuse of power in the the implementation of the laws.

The MP went on to justify their support in the fight and related it to the same concerns raised by MPs from both parties. He also raised serious concerns over some areas in the document and the 12 months of proclamation. He emphasized on Section 29 -10(a) of the Constitution, in light of the declaration of proclamation.

The MP expressed hope that the State of Emergency would be implemented in good faith. He also pointed out other relevant sections in light of concerns. He allegedly recalled a sad incident relating to violence caused by drug addicts.

He reiterated and advised the setting up of a tribunal and its composition. The Acting Leader emphasized that it would not be good to have a proclamation without a tribunal.

The Acting Opposition Leader comprehensively spoke about the rules in the proclamation and raised concerns over the approval procedures.

He drew the attention of the House to some regulations and Sections of the Constitution in light of definitions, clauses, meanings, and clarifications.

He also expressed concerns over the appointment of the Taskforce Coordinator in light of existing institutions spearheading related matters.

"We are ready to participate in the fight" he reaffirmed and spoke about the formation of a task force.

"If we all come together we can contain the menace in three months" he reassured.

In concluding the debate, Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma underscored the collaborative effort in the fight against Kush drug and expressed hope for eradication of the menace. He explained the chemistry that produces Kush and went to educate the House on the same. He extensively explained some definitions of the Proclamation. "Kush is a public health emergency under the Proclamation," he said and went on to say the drug is synthetic.

The Leader clarified certain regulations and Constitutional instruments. "There are no perfect regulations," he said "but the spirit of unity by the opposition is necessary". He assured the opposition of the positive implementation of the regulations during the three months period. He clarified concerns raised around Section 29/10 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. He thanked the opposition for drawing the attention of the State to the menace and their support. The Leader comprehensively explained the meanings, and definitions and clarified the appointment of the National Taskforce Coordinator in the fight.

He also used the opportunity to reassure the Opposition that the law would not be violated and added that President Bio is the Father of democracy and would never use the law to intimidate the opposition. He emphasized that they would not intimidate the victims of Kush and advised colleague MPs to continue to protect them. "These people are our voters", he said "let us change the minds of the addicts". He encouraged colleague MPs to give solace to the addicts and urged them to educate the people on the law.

He appealed to the opposition to manage the three months and assured them positively.

In his statement, the Acting Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas said Parliament is being misconstrued and categorically stated that they are united in the fight against Kush drug "As I sit here I would never allow this matter to be politicized" he maintained. The Acting Speaker reassured the House that the implementation of the proclamation would not be politicized or used against anybody.

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