



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



E-mail: sierraleoneparliament@hotmail.com/admin@parliament.gov.sl

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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT DEBATES MINES AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT BILL

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday 17/3/2022 extensively debated the bill entitled, "The Mines and Minerals Development Act 2021"

The bill seeks to repeal and replace the Mines and Minerals Act, 2009, to provide for the introduction of new and improved provisions for exploration, mines and Minerals development, sale and export for the socio-economic benefits of the people of Sierra Leone, to provide for the facilitation of transparent and accountable management of the minerals sector in accordance with the international best practices, to provide for improved employment and employment practice; in the mineral sector; to provide improved welfare of communities affected by exploration, mining and related activities to provide for more effective measures to reduce the harmful effects of exploration and mining activities on life, property and the environment and to provide for other related matters.

Presenting the Mines and Mineral Development Bill, 2021, the Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, Timothy Kabbah recalled that, the parent Act was passed in 2009 and spoke about the framework of the document. The Minister highlighted the importance of the revived document, in light of proper regulations, growth and benefits of the mines and minerals to the state. The minister disclosed that, the bill would disclose the beneficial ownership of the companies and enhance legitimacy. The minister emphasized that, the document would address several issues including gender, improve on host mining community and district development, added value to artisanal mining, resolve surface rent payment and land owners inclusivity and related matters. Also, the administration of licenses, the Minister said has improved and informed that the bill is transformative.

The Parliamentary Chairman of Mines and Minerals Resources Committee in Parliament and who also doubles as the Leader of C4C , Hon, Saa Emerson Lamina recalled President Bio manifesto, in light of improving the mines and minerals sector. He informed that, in light of their duty as MPs, the interest of the state, the people and investors/miners should be considered. He recalled all the horrendous trends, the state had gone through, relative to conflicts, disease and other problems. He acknowledged that, the bill would help Sierra Leone

to grow and benefit immensely. He shared his experience as a son of a mining community, relative to the difficulties and problems that were associated with mining.

The chairman spoke about the positivity of administering of mining licenses, benefits and interest of all. "About 60% has been added to this bill" he stated on comparative benefits and developments. He commended the Minister for what he referred to as laudable venture. He comprehensively outlined many other important improvements and developments about the bill.

He however expressed dissatisfaction over the removal of mining beneficial percentage to MPs, considering the compelling Constituency development projects expected from their people.

On his part, Hon Abdul Karim Kamara said when such a bill is enacted many challenges would be addressed in that sector and also, they as Members of Parliament would now have a positive message for their constituents regarding the huge benefits that are contained in the document. He noted that, the percentage labelled in the bill, in lieu of mining taxation would help government raise huge revenue and subsequently reduce tax burden on the ordinary business compatriots and engender development.

He used the opportunity to speak about the imbroglio between National Minerals Agency and the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources, relative to power struggle. "The Relationship between the two institutions is not good at all" he expressed.

The MP said in term of institution representation on the board, most representatives are not effective and used the opportunity to let the President be given the leverage to appoint people that are effective.

Hon Joseph William Lamin, while contributing to the debate, expressed happiness over the extension of mines and minerals beneficiary percentage to district on fair scale. He also spoke about the judicious use of mining proceeds, relative to future consideration on impact assessment.

Hon Dr. Mark-Mahmoud Kalokoh spoke about the increment in percentage to mining community and also made humble request for communities that staying along the corridor of the mining rail to be included. He spoke about more improvement on artisanal mining, in light of it's contributions to the state.

Hon Alice Kumabeh thanked the Minister and team for putting the important document together. She informed the minister about pollution caused by mining affecting livelihoods in her Constituency. The Taia River she said is now permanently contaminated and appealed to the Minister to find a solution. She expressed hope that, the bill would provide solution to river pollution.

Hon. Musa Fofana buttressed the position of the Chairman of Mines and Minerals Committee and thanked the Minister for the Tonkolili Iron Ore mining as well as government ownership

of the mining railway. For surface rent he said they as MPs living in the mining communities had done many marvelous projects with their shares from mining. "I have used it to undertake tangible projects" he revealed. He informed that, MPs were under pressure to undertake projects and it was necessary to have beneficial percentage.

The MP spoke about the Local Content Policy, in light of exchange of training from experts to our compatriots. He said the Mines and Minerals bill is a very critical document and must be properly looked at before passage into law.

Rounding up the debate, the Leader of Opposition, Hon. Chernor R. M. Bah urged Legislative Committee Members to be attentive, in order to make a good law. He said they must be very cautious and careful in light of due diligence. He recalled that the parent Act was not a bad law, but time had changed and therefore, it was prudent to have the review bill. The Leader acknowledged the interest of MPs in light of beneficial percentage considering their projects implementation. "Please don't deprive those MPs that are coming from the mining areas" he stated. He also informed that, the bill is of interest to all and not only Parliament and urged the chairman of the Legislative Committee to give the bill the publicity that it deserves, in order to get multiple and relevant contributions "I continue to support the process" he ended.

The Acting Leader of Government Business Hon Bashiru Silikie said they want to correct the mistakes of the past in the previous document, in light of the passage of the bill. He asked colleague MPs to give due diligence to the passage of the bill. He spoke about addressing the grey areas in the bill, in light of the contributions of other stakeholders. "Let them bring a position paper so that the committee would factor it into their report" he stated and encouraged all members of the public to do so.

Considering the public perceptions especially from the constituents, the Acting Leader appealed to the committee to consider MPs in that regard as according to him, they were involved in huge development projects. He expressed hope that, the Legislative Committee would present a good report regarding the the document as they expect the document to stand the test of time.

The minister responded to all the concerns and comments made by MPs. The bill was committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny.

In another related development, Parliament also debated the bill entitled "The National Minerals Agency Act 2021" and subsequently committed it to the Legislative Committee for further consideration.

The bill seeks to provide for the continuances of the National Mineral Agency, to provide for more efficient and effective management of the mineral sector by effectively and efficiently managing the administration and regulations of mineral rights and mineral trading in Sierra Leone, including geological surveys and promoting the rights of communities and to provide for other related matters

Parliamentary and Public Relations Department
Parliament of Sierra Leone
+23278495023/+23276625960