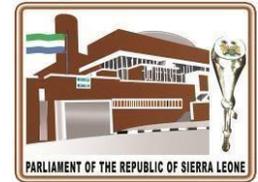




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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT DEBATES THE WORK PERMIT ACT, 2022

The Parliament of Sierra Leone, has on Wednesday, 18/01/2023, extensively debated the Bill entitled; "The Work Permit Act, 2022", in order to foster the socio-economic development of Sierra Leone.

The Work Permit Act, 2022 seeks to repeal part V1A of the Non-citizens (Registration, short time immigration and Expulsion) Act, 1965, (Act No.14 of 1965), to provide for the regulation of the Non-citizens in Sierra Leone and to provide for other related Matters.

Presenting the Bill, the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Alpha Timbo Esq. related the document to the fulfillment of his Sierra Leone Peoples Party's (SLPP) New Direction Manifesto, in light of protecting and empowering the country's workforce. The Minister went on to describe the Bill as a good asset. "A nation needs a workforce that is well motivated for the transformation of the natural resources to wealth", the Minister maintained and went on highlighting the importance of the Bill. The Minister recalled with dismay how foreigners had

occupied positions that could have been occupied by citizens in private businesses. He informed all that the bill is inundated with a lot of transformations.

Speaking on the relevance of the law, the Minister categorically stated among other things that the Work Permit is a mechanism that set up to ensure that a work which a Sierra Leonean is capable, willing, qualified and available to do is not needlessly taken away by non-citizens. He also assured all that legal aliens are recruited in accordance with the new laws with due regard to International standards.

The Minister also elaborately spoke on some relevant aspects of the bill that touch on the course of implementation and areas it would address in light of repealing.

Contributing to the debate, Hon. Musa Fofana quantified that the bill is not controversial and informed the House that it is prudent that campaign promises fulfilled, as have been done in the light of making such a law. The MP spoke about the leathery of the implementation and popularization, stating that the aforesaid would benefit the State. He expressed positive concerns in light of International best practices that are relating to development.

Chief Whip of Parliament, Hon. Dickson Rogers, predicated his debate on fulfilling International best practices and commended the Minister for his wealth of experience. He lamented over foreigners doing jobs that are supposed to be done by compatriots. He advised the Ministry on the issuance of work permits and assured the House on the relevance of the bill. He recalled many sad incidents in that direction, not excluding the previous status of the Ministry and also the current transformation. He expressed hope for a huge revenue mobilization.

Hon. Dr. Roland Kargbo mentioned that the bill has longed been overdue and pinpointed over the unemployment of citizens which is due to the lack of legal framework. He raised concerns over the issuance of work permit, relating it to non-governmental areas and proposed positivity in that direction, and particularly so when it comes to expatriates. He also asked the Minister to explain the differences between work permit and residential permit.

Hon. Josephine Makieu recalled the good efforts of the Minister and stated that they do not have even an iota of doubt in him. The Bill, she mentioned, is not controversial. She went on speaking about the attainment of fake work permit by some non-governmental organizations. She advised the Minister to look into such shady deals.

Deputy Whip, Hon. Alusine Kanneh, recalled his affiliation with the Minister and informed the House of his total belief in the competence of the Minister. He raised concerns over the implementation of the law and disclosed how foreigners have been illegally operating in Sierra Leone. He alleged that some of the Ministry workers do compromise and revealed an incident relating to his own relative. 'Sierra Leoneans are unnecessarily suffering in the hands of foreigners', he stated and asked the Minister to implement the law to its fullest. He patriotically advised the Minister and others to give more priority to compatriots.

The MP explained the difference between working permit and a resident permit. He Spoke about the mobilization of revenue in that direction and asked the House to pass the bill accordingly. In light of the implementation of the law, he recommended training for Sierra Leoneans, in order to enable them take up jobs from expatriates.

In concluding, the Acting Leader of the Opposition APC , Hon. Dr. Abdulai Sesay revealed that the parent laws as crucial to the passage and enforcement of the laws. He stated that there should be a very strong collaboration between the Immigration Department and the Ministry, which is very necessary because the former can help in the tracking down of foreigners. He spoke about revenue collection in that direction and said that the law is very important, but the implementation is also very crucial.

The Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma thanked all and sundry for their various contributions and applauded the Minister for his related experience. He reminded the Minister to furnish MPs with the parent document. He asked the Minister for clarifications on certain issues including domestication and related treaties or conventions as well as exemptions. He also mentioned and raised issues on various Clauses not excluding Local Content and obtaining work permits as well as appropriate training facility for the transfer of skills for citizens and penalties amongst others.

In another development, the Parliament of Sierra Leone, has on Wednesday, 18/01/2023, debated the bill entitled; "The Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act, 2022.

The bill seeks to provide for the regulation of Overseas Employment, to provide for the protection of the rights and welfare of migrant workers and members of their families, and to provide for other related Matters.

Presenting the Bill to Parliament, the Minister of Labour and Social Security highlighted the importance of the bill and how it would contribute towards the socio-economic development of the State, and underscored its timeliness..

MPs who spoke to the bill said that the bill, when enacted into law, would address the diabolical nature by which Sierra Leoneans have been traveling to overseas.

Both the Acting Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of Government Business welcomed the initiatives by the Minister, and asserted that the initiatives would contribute towards strengthening labour laws for the well-being of the State.

Both bills have been committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny.

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