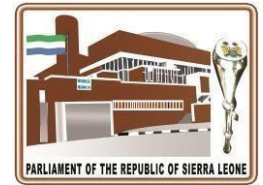




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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT DISCUSSES UPCOMING ELECTIONS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday, 11/05/2023 conducted a one-day consultative engagement with political parties, electoral management bodies, former Parliamentary Female Caucus Members and other stakeholders. According to the organizers, the stakeholders were expected to have a dialogue session on challenges related to women's participation and representation, leading to the June 24th Multi-Tier Elections.

The engagement was organized by the Parliament of Sierra Leone in collaboration with Parliamentary Network Africa, with support from UN Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Giving an overview of the engagement, the Director of Programmes, Research and Partnership, Gilbert Nhabay recalled that in March this year, a project was launched that is geared toward enhancing gender sensitivity and promotion of women's empowerment. He also spoke about departmental capacity building and Parliamentary gender sensitivity amongst staff and Members of Parliament. He reiterated that Parliament is excelling in the implementation of its gender Programmes. Whilst speaking about the purpose of consultative engagement, he

highlighted some of the challenges faced by women and expressed hope for the way forward relative to solutions and critical actions in line with the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act.

In her statement, the Director General of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Mrs. Finda Fraser said enhancing women's political participation is a critical challenge, but went on to say, those challenges must be surmounted. She informed that women must be encouraged to participate and be part of the decision process. She spoke about the necessity of the implementation of the GEWE law and recalled several processes and activities related to women's emancipation and progress made by Parliament in that direction. "We are one of the few institutions in the country, that can account for over 50% of female staff", she maintained and went to ask others to emulate in the promotion of women participation.

Speaking on behalf of IPU Graca Sanches, the Project Officer of the Gender Equality in Politics Project reaffirmed IPU support to various political activities and ensuring women's participation in politics. She spoke about the objective of the project and also recalled previous activities that engendered the implementation of the consultative engagement and support to women participation in politics. She spoke about their partnership to strength support towards same and gave a research data from study conducted on challenges faced by women that participate in politics. She said through the project, they want to find solutions that would minimize violence or challenges faced by women during and after the upcoming elections.

UN Women, Program Specialist, Madam Baindu Massaquoi, spoke about the strive made by UN Women. She said they are working in collaboration with other partners to promote women's participation in politics. According to her, irrespective of the effort made by all, the barriers or gaps are far and many, giving statistics of women's participation in the world. She spoke about efforts made by Sierra Leone, in light of recent laws made. She reiterated that, the engagement is critical and important milestone that would mark the increase of women's participation in politics

A representative from Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), Jenneh Amadu said the engagement would engender issues that would provide a lasting solution to the problems of women's participation in politics. She lauded the regulations and framework that provide solution to the problem. She assured participants that, PPRC now have powers to enforce women participation in politics. She assured that they would follow the law to the letter in that direction. According to her, they ban on street rally is in the interest of women participation in politics and assured all that, they would continue to promote same.

Assistant Director Legal Affairs ECSL, Mary E. Bairoh spoke about the critical challenges faced by women in the electoral processes of Sierra Leone. She said women's participation faces a lot of obstacles including traditional barriers, political violence, and lack of financial resources, and went on to say, ECSL has drastically reduced nomination fees, ensured accessibility of registration centers, increased awareness raising, and working with regulated frameworks that would enhance women's participation in politics.

Vice President of the Parliamentary Female Caucus, Hon. Rose Marie Bangura said there are tremendous challenges faced by women. She thanked partners for supporting women's participation in politics. She spoke about the necessity of the engagement and went on to highlight the many challenges they envisaged in the political arena.

She recalled the support provided by Parliamentary Female Caucus irrespective of their political affiliation. She explained the numerous challenges they continue to face and expressed that the 30% quota is achievable. She commended all women who contributed to women's emancipation that is about to yield dividends.

Gender Specialist 50/50 Julia B Byrne spoke about the strive made to promote women's participation and went on to commend the Government and other partners. She appealed to all and sundry to ensure that women come forward to make use of the opportunity created for them. She called on stakeholders to work collaboratively to surmount the challenges faced by women in politics, to support them not crash.

The Director of Parliamentary and Public Relations in the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Sheku Lamin Turay moderated the program and spoke on the need for women's empowerment in the political landscape of the nation.

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