



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

Parliament Building - O.A.U Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown | admin@parliament.gov.sl | www.parliament.gov.sl

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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT PARTNERS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone in partnership with civil society organizations around the country, on Wednesday 17/07/2024 officially launched a collaborative partnership at State Hall Parliament Building at Tower Hill in Freetown. The purpose of the launching was to move the developmental trajectory of the country forward. The event attracted hundreds of civil society organisations nationwide. The Press and other personalities also witnessed the program.

The partnership geared toward fostering collaboration, accountability and transparency between Parliament and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), with the intention to address pressing societal issues. The Nexus is aimed to bridge the gap between legislative process, policymaking and grassroots movements as well as bringing a new era of unity and collaboration.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Andrew Lavalie who served as the Chairman of Parliament-Civil Society Network (ParlCSONet) said an effective Parliament is one that is transformative and Parliament and Civil Society indeed need a collaborative working relationship for a better nation. "The Nexus is set to create a platform for meaningful dialogue, mutual understanding, and joint efforts to address key challenges facing the nation", he said.

Giving an overview of Parliament-Civil Society Network (ParlCSONet), through a presentation, the Acting Clerk of Parliament, Gilbert Bosco Nhabay said the nexus between Parliament and CSOs is to build constructive dialogue by setting up a CSO desk in Parliament. The Acting Clerk continued, by saying that the nexus intends to ensure effective collaboration between Parliament and CSOs and to ensure the efficient operation of ParlCSONet. "This partnership is to strengthen the relationship between Parliament and civil society organizations further", he noted and went on to note that the partnership will improve collaboration between Parliament and civil society organizations.

The CSO representative and the co-chair of the Parliament-Civil Society Network (ParlCSONet), Edmond Abu Jr., began his submission by acknowledging the commitment of Parliament for building the nexus with CSO. He said the relationship between Parliament and CSO can be sweet and sometimes not. He mentioned that the Parliament and CSO relationship began way back in 1991, adding that CSOs are not state actors, they serve humanity, and they want to be treated with respect by politicians.

The President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, Madam Tuma J. Gento Kamara, said the partnership represents a significant step towards inclusive governance and participatory decision-making in nation-building.

Hon. Ibrahim Aziz Bangura who spoke on behalf of the co-chair said the event is geared towards promoting more transparency in the parliamentary system. Honourable Bangura re-emphasized the role of Parliament in nation-building. "The network will serve as a platform to bridge the gap between Parliament and civil society organizations", he said.

Speaking on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Honourable Daniel Koroma who also doubles as the Deputy Leader of Opposition 1 in Parliament said lack of transparency will bring a whole country into chaos. He proceeded by saying that the relationship between Parliament and CSOs is not easy, but most of the times civil society organizations are associated with political parties. "Civil society is supposed to be fearless and nonpartisan", he concluded.

In his submission, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma, Majority Leader and Leader of Government Business in Parliament said one of the reasons for the Nexus is to make Sierra Leone a better place. He added by saying that the office space provided by Parliament symbolizes its unwavering commitment to providing an enabling environment for CSOs. "I reaffirmed our Government's full support for this initiative", he assured. Honourable Mathew Sahr Nyuma concluded by thanking all for ensuring that the Parliament-CSO relationship stands the test of time. "Use the law to address issues and not to abuse the law and don't take the law into your hand, transparency is at the heart of every good governance, including the Government of President Bio", he affirmed.

Representative of the British High Commission Jack Borne said the commission will support Parliament and CSO to ensure effective and efficient operations.

Mrs. Kadie Peters representative from United Nations Development Programme said the event signifies a breakthrough by creating dialogue and mutual understanding to ensure the voice of the people is heard. "UNDP believes that the active participation of CSOs is crucial to materialize Parliament's commitment to open Parliament", She concluded.

In his keynote address, the Speaker of Parliament, Honourable Segepoh Solomon Thomas said the launching of Parliament CSO network signifies not only a new chapter, but also a strong relationship between Parliament and CSO. Speaking on the core objectives of Parliament and CSO network, Honourable Segepoh Solomon Thomas said the aim is to enhance transparency in the parliamentary process.

"The relationship will help Parliament to fulfill its core functions", he said and went on to note that law-making process is crucial. The Spesker also said CSOs are to engage citizens on Bills discussed in Parliament and undertake educational programs to showcase Parliament's commitment to openness.

The events was climaxed by educating citizens on the role of civil society organisations and that of Parliament.

Parliamentary and Public Relations Department

Parliament of Sierra Leone

+23278495023/+23276625960/+23278426851/+23278697776