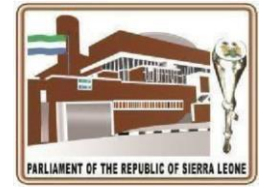




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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT PASSES NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED RESETTLEMENT ACT 2023

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Wednesday, 12/04/2023 debated and passed into law with some amendments the Bill entitled, "The National Development Induced Resettlement Act 2023" for the security and development of Sierra Leone.

The Act seeks to introduce uniform principles, to guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development-induced resettlement activities, and to provide for other related matters.

Presenting the Bill to Parliament, before enactment, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Prof. Foday Jaward told Members of Parliament that, the document was timely and very essential for the security and socio-economic development of Sierra Leone. The Minister while highlighting the importance of the Bill, revealed that the document is inclusive and the first ever to be introduced in the West African Sub-region.

The Minister said the Bill is to ensure proper planning, and went on to reiterate that the Bill is holistically inclusive. "Mr. Speaker Honourable Members this Bill was due yesterday", he stated and went on to say that, the Bill takes into account the relocation of people, their economic status, and social as well as environmental considerations.

The Deputy Chairman of the Environment Committee in Parliament, Hon. Joseph Bash Kamara said the Bill would engender conflict mitigation of land, especially over the occupation and resettlement of land. He recalled several land tussles including the Sahn Malen situation. According to him, the Bill would address problems that were witnessed in the past. The MP reiterated that the Bill would promote investment and reassure affected landowners or residents of positive livelihood in light of development, and the MP said the Bill is a guideline to address cross-cutting issues.

On his part, Hon. Mark-Mahmoud Kalokoh said the long title of the Bill is very important, but raised concern over its establishment as a department. He emphasized that the Bill should not be relegated or trivialized to the status of a department. "An important Bill of this nature is beyond a department", he stated and went on to ask them to change the Bill from department to directorate, and informed the House that at such a level it would not suffice to enforce its powers.

"The department is too narrow to handle the function of this Bill", he revealed. Also for the short title, the MP attached some importance to the Bill and used the occasion to advise the Minister to be robust in deliverables embedded in the Bill. He urged compatriots to celebrate the Bill.

Hon. Alice Kumabeh used the moment to thank the Minister and team. According to her, the Bill would address the perennial land menace, recalling the pollution of the Taia River. She informed the House that the River has lost several purposes and values including fishing and another domestic purpose. "The River is dirty", she emphasized and asked colleague MPs to pass the Bill into law with some amendments.

Hon Joseph Williams-Lamin said the Bill is a good document and spoke about the importance of the Government's singular subvention service to enhancing the operations of the Bill.

He emphasized the importance of planning in the Act and also environmental management, resettlement, and livelihoods. He recalled several precarious atrocities that affected people regarding resettlement. He said with this Bill, properties are now protected and asked for its speedy passage into law.

Acting Leader of C4C, Hon. Musa Fofanah said the Bill is timely and went on to refer to land-related issues they have suffered from miners in Kono District. He told Parliament that, the Bill is in line with the Government's medium-term development plan. He highlighted the importance of the Bill. "If we succeed in passing this Bill it, would also add some value to our Paramount Chiefs", he noted and went on to say it would curtail the excesses of investors who used to grab land.

Hon. Sama I. Sandy spoke about the situation of resettlement of residents and expressed that the livelihoods of people were not properly considered. He recalled instances with dismay based on research. He said some of the assessments were not properly done. He advised the House to properly amend the Bill before passage.

Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Dr. Abdulai D. Sesay highlighted several instances regarding resettlement, and pollution of water by illegal miners. He explained to Parliament how his constituents are suffering from illegal mining and stated that with such a Bill most of the problems would be addressed. He expressed happiness over resettlement issues the Bill is seeking to address.

Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie alluded to what previous speakers had said relating to water pollution and asked the Minister to address problems in that direction. "The Ministry together with EPA should meet and address issues regarding water pollution", he revealed. The Leader said the Bill was not only important, but timely. He assured that the Bill would settle several problems including payment of compensation, resettlement, and professional advice. He also spoke about training and capacity building to enhance efficiency and professionalism. He described the Bill as a unique document that is innovative for settling land-related matters. He advised the Minister to do more by bringing more policies relating to the same and that the Bill is not controversial.

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