



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT RATIFIES AIR SERVICE AGREEMENTS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on Thursday, 18/07/2024, Debated and ratified with unanimity Air Service Agreements for the development and economic growth of Sierra Leone.

The Agreements were laid on the table of the House on Tuesday, 28th March, Thursday, 24th June, and Tuesday, 16th July 2024, respectively.

The following agreements were ratified by Parliament:

1. Agreement Between the Government Of the United Arab Emirates and the Government of Sierra Leone For Air Services Between and Beyond Respective Territories Dated 23rd October 2014.
2. Bilateral Air Services Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, dated 3rd December 2023.
3. Bilateral Air Services Agreement Between The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, 2023.
4. Memorandum of Understanding Between the Aeronautical of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Aeronautical Authority of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Dated 6th December 2023.
5. Air Services Agreements between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and The Government of the Republic of Singapore, Dated 26, December 2013.

6. Air Transport Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and The Government of the Republic of The Czech Republic, Dated 5th December 2023.
7. Administrative package for Ratification of the Protocol Amending Article 50 (A) of the Convention of the International Civil Aviation, Dated 6, October 2016.
8. Administrative package for Ratification of the Protocol Amending Protocol (56) of the Convention on International Aviation, Dated 6th October 2016.

Presenting the Agreements, the Deputy Minister of Transport and Aviation, Mr Rex Bonapha, said the Agreements intended to undertake the development of a world-class facility. The Deputy Minister of Transport and Aviation made a reference to the Chicago Convention of 1944, which established the International Civil Aviation Commission (ICACO), which is responsible for fostering the planning and development of International Air Transport and International Civil Aviation.

Over the following years, he said ICACO developed a series of traffic rights known as Freedoms of the Air. These freedoms continued to form the basis of rights in the exchange of air services negotiations, amongst others.

The Deputy Minister of Transport and Aviation, Mr Rex Bonapha, said the government must continuously negotiate new treaties to allow international aviation to grow and expand airline carriers in the new emerging markets. The Deputy Minister of Transport and Aviation also informed the House that the bilateral system has allowed international aviation to grow its industry, adding that it is a sure part of legalizing air transportation. The Minister informed Parliament that the agreements have no financial cost burden to the government and the people of Sierra Leone. According to him, the Agreements are meant to facilitate air transport and economic benefit, facilitate and promote tourism, and improve on sufficient supply chain high investment. He reiterated that the Agreements would enhance the labour supply Mechanism for Investors both indoors and outside of the Country to boost the National Economy.

In his submission to the debate, the Chairman of the Committee on Transport and Aviation, Hon Ambrose Madaa Leby, said they have ratified a lot of concessional agreements, but some of them had not yielded dividends. He said the Agreements are well-standardised and not controversial. According to him, the Agreements will boost trade and help in the transport sector.

Hon. Tamba Kellie From Kono District pinpointed that the Agreements are not controversial but geared towards national ownership of airlines to generate income for the nation.

Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi from Kailahun District said the agreements would create the opportunity for direct flights to and fro Sierra Leone to England and other countries.

She called for the involvement of the Legislative Committee in all Agreements. Treaties are signed on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone, she maintained.

The Opposition Chief Whip from Kambia District, Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara expressed disappointment over the high price of air tickets from Sierra Leone to other countries and went on to do a comparative analysis of costs to other countries. He emphasized that compatriots prefer to travel through Guinea because of the skyrocketing air tickets in Sierra Leone.

While contributing to the debate, Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin from Bo District said having airlines is prudent but also tantamount to a huge financial burden on the state. He went on to make the comparative analysis of other countries, including Ghana, and said buying an airline is not like buying an Adada or Kkeepor bicycle and cautioned Honourable Members. He expressed hope that the country will resurrect to that level of high standard soonest.

In rounding up the debate Acting Leader of Opposition, Hon. Daniel Koroma used the opportunity to present the necessity of the proposed Mammah Airport and informed Colleague MPs that it was necessary to have Sierra Leone National Airlines for internal and external air transportation. He also informed the House that aircraft can also be bought on loan and not upfront. He commended the Deputy Minister for bringing agreements that are innovative and beneficial to the nation. He used the opportunity to appeal to the government to pursue the Mammah Airport Project for the country to have two airports for the implementation of the Agreements.

Concluding the debate, the Acting Leader Of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie from Bo District thanked the Deputy Minister for bringing very important Agreements to Parliament for ratification

He underscored the need to have internal airports or own aircraft, with an inscription, Fly Sierra Leone.

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