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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT RATIFIES AN AGREEMENT ON DEFENCE COOPERATION

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday 11/11/2021 ratified an agreement with unanimity on defence industry cooperation for strengthening and enhancing the capacity of the military for the socio-economic development of Sierra Leone.

The following agreement was ratified by Parliament:

1. Agreement on Defence Industry Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone

Presenting the agreement to Parliament, Minister of Defence, Rtd. Brigadier Kellie Conteh said the agreement would improve the skills of the Sierra Leone Military and would also improve the capacity of both countries in respect of defence. "This agreement focuses on human capacity building", he assured. He also spoke on the attendant benefits for RSLAF in light of defence industry cooperation and professionalism sequel to the said agreement.

The Chairman of Defence Committee, Hon. Sahr Juana in his contribution thanked the military for initiating such an agreement with a view to enhancing the capacity of the military. He recalled the previous state of the military and commended Minister for transforming it in respect of professionalism. Commending the military for upholding the security and defence of the state, he said President Bio is serious about revitalizing and transforming the army for good. He described the agreement as a reward to the army for fighting the concluded civil war many years ago.

Hon. Dr. Mark Mahmoud Kalokoh said as opposition they would always support a good bilateral agreement, adding he hoped the intention of the agreement would be realized. He expressed hope that the intention of the agreement would be realized. Calling on capacity building for the army, he said the current Government inherited a good army from the past government.

Hon. Ibrahim Koyo Kamara said the agreement was timely and important for Sierra Leone. He dilated on the purpose and benefit of the document in light of improving the military through a defence industry cooperation.

Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara said given the importance of the agreement, its two years life span was too small. He used the occasion to say that the military was up to the tasks and expressed hope that the agreement would help them

to participate more in international missions. He also said that the agreement would address issues around maintenance and health among others.

Chief Whip of Parliament, Hon. Dickson Rogers called on the House to observe a minute of silent prayers for the fallen heroes who had served as military personnel and spoke intensively on the benefits the agreement would bring to the military and called on them to be professional.

Hon. Francis Amara Kai-Samba referred to the agreement as "simple", and added that the agreement would help to transform the capacity of the military.

Hon. Osaio Alusine Kamara spoke on the importance of the agreement, and recalled that in the 70s similar agreements were signed between Guinea and Sierra Leone on bilateral defence cooperation. He appealed for adequate training and housing facilities for the military.

Hon. Mohamed Bangura referred to the military as "professionals" and advised them to be apolitical in the performance of their duties, and decried a video that went viral where military officers were allegedly meddling in politics.

Hon. Afiju Kanja alluded to the adage that "once a soldier is always a soldier", adding "he who feels it knows it". He commended the Minister who is also a retired officer. Speaking on the need for the agreement and the benefits it would attract in respect of capacity building and professionalism, he recognized the role being played by the military in peace keeping mission overseas.

Hon. Abdul Kargbo said that the military has the primary function to protect the sovereignty of the state. "I have benefited from the military and I know their challenges, my father was a soldier". Speaking on the challenges of the military, he recalled how the military had won accolades for best infantry. He also called for an improved conditions of service for the military including decent accommodation.

Hon. Emilia L. Tongi spoke about the discriminatory promotion against women in the military and appealed to the Ministry of Defence to consider women relative to some of the benefits in the agreement.

Hon. P.C. Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III said Turkey is a member of NATO and has good military power and that signing such an agreement with them would yield dividends for the country. He also said that with this agreement the military would be enhanced to construct roads, assist with health service, and agriculture among others.

Hon. Sahr Charles described the agreement as very important and highlighted its purpose and expected benefits. The agreement, he reiterated was not controversial and would improve on the status and talent of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

Hon. Lahai Marah recalled the benefit he had enjoyed from a military school and barracks when he was a school boy. He expressed hope that the agreement would capture other infrastructural development for the military and supported the position of the previous debaters in light of improving conditions of service for the military.

Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Hassan Sesay spoke positively on military professionalism and maintained that the agreement would empower the military. He observed on the contrary that women were not discriminated against in the military. The military he said needed the agreement to improve on their service. "We will not oppose

this agreement, because it is meant for Sierra Leone", he stated and called on the Minister to pay attention to an improved conditions of service for the military.

The Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie said the agreement has actually shown that other countries have confidence in Sierra Leone. "In this agreement, the Government of Sierra Leone will be the greatest beneficiary". Speaking on benefits in the agreement he talked on specialized training in several areas including agriculture, engineering, and roads among others. He said Sierra Leone has a lot to do in terms of improving the capacity of the military. He thanked the MPs for their brilliant contributions in light of the agreement.

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