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21st MARCH, 2023

PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT RATIFIES SEVERAL BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 21/03/2023 extensively debated and ratified several bilateral cooperation agreements for the socioeconomic development of the State.

The following agreements were ratified by Parliament:

1. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of Hungary on economic and technical cooperation;
2. Agreement on the Establishment of a Joint Committee for Cooperation between the Government of the State of Qatar and the Government of Sierra Leone;
3. Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance for the Optimal Application of Customs Law, and Repression, Investigation, and Combating of Customs Violations Between the Government of the State of Qatar and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone; and
4. Agreement between the Government of the State of Qatar and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone Concerning the Regulation of the Employment of Sierra Leonean Workers in the State of Qatar.

Presenting the agreements prior to ratifications, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Prof. David Francis recalled the efforts of President Bio with regards to improvement of bilateral relationship between Qatar and Sierra Leone. The Minister highlighted the importance of the agreements in light of investment in agriculture, mining, marine resources, development of trade employment for Sierra Leonean workers abroad, law on custom amongst others.

According to the Minister, the Government considered some of the agreements as national response to the unemployment and went on to explain the process of recruitment. He also assured the House that the agreements would improve the cooperation between both countries and also the welfare of the people. One of the other agreements, the Minister assured, would address custom violation.

The Minister spoke about the long standing bilateral relationship between Hungary and Sierra Leone and also revealed to Parliament about the recent awards of fifty scholarship to compatriots to study in the latter country. He informed Parliament that the agreement intended to improve on the bilateral cooperation between both countries. The Minister said the agreement predicated on mutual benefit and focus on energy, agriculture, water resource, food process and education as well as trade. He emphasized on the improvement of mutual interest and commitment of both countries.

In his contribution, Hon. Sama Sandy expressed thanks to the Minister for what he described as a job well done for the State. The MP said those types of agreements are what the nation expects and went on to say that the agreements are not controversial.

Hon. Aaron Aruna Koroma said the Qatar agreements are the most laudable ones and dilated on the problems faced by compatriots in the Middle East. He advised the Minister to also focus on countries where compatriots are facing problems. However, the MP raised a certain concern on an article in the Qatar agreement and went on to ask House to ratify the agreement with special reservation on Article 8.2b

Chief Whip of Parliament Hon. Dickson Rogers said the agreements are thorough and not controversial. Hon. Rogers supported the position of the previous speaker and asked the House to relate the concern to the Labour Law of Qatar for redress. The MP suggested the contracts to exist between the Ministry of Labour and Employment of both countries and denounced third party.

Hon. Ibrahim Alieu Koyo Kamara, described the agreement as a laudable document and went on to highlight the importance of the benefit. He used the opportunity to tell the House that the Qatar agreements are tangible development accrued from President Bio's frequent traveling abroad and used the opportunity to denounce political critics. He lavished praises on the Government for creating more opportunities and jobs for compatriots, through the agreements. The MP recalled several developments that are related to the agreements.

Acting Leader of C4C, Hon. Musa Fofana pointed out that Article 8 was a critical aspect and called on the House to pay attention to it. He used the opportunity to reference the Government Midterm Development in light of the Hungary Agreement and further stated its prudent benefits. He expressed hope that the oversight role would promote the agreement relative to implementation.

Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin commended the Minister and informed the House that, a very strong relationship start with an individual and heaped praises on Minister in that regard. The MP said the documents are inundated with hope in light of mechanized farming to address food security and other opportunities. According to him, the recruitment of Sierra Leoneans to work in Qatar is fine, but decried illegal immigration of compatriots. He alluded the recruitment process in the Qatar agreement that gear towards the mitigation of illegal migration.

Acting Leader of Opposition, Hon. Hassan Sesay said the agreements of these nature are not controversial, but informed the Honourable House that it was prudent for the Minister of Labour and Employment to address areas where concerns are raised.

"We are expecting synergy between the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to ensure close monitoring," he said. He commended the Hungry agreement and also asked all and sundry to support the agreements. The Acting Leader emphasized on actualization of the agreements, in order to positively impact on the lives of the people.

Concluding the debate, the Leader of Government, Business, Hon Mathew Sahr Nyuma thanked all including the Minister. The Leader made reference to the coincidental presence of Work Permit and Oversea Employment and Migrant workers Bills in Parliament. He informed the House that the Bills could address some of the problems found in the agreements.

The Leader emphasized on the good nature of the agreements and its provisions. He categorically stated the positive position of the Government, recruitment, welfare and retirement process. He highlighted the relevance of various articles in the agreements.

The Leader also commended the Minister for promoting law relating to customs through the agreements. The Leader said the Hungry agreement has to address many sectors that are very important. He emphasized on the regulation and implementation of the agreements.

Responding, the Minister clarified all the concerns and issues raised by the Members of Parliament.

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