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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PARLIAMENT CONTINUES DEBATE ON CYBERCRIME ACT 2020**

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday 18th March 2021, continued debate, after initial suspension, on the Bill entitled: " The Cyber Crime Act 2020", to go through popular sensitization; and to also attract public inputs requested by the Leadership of Parliament.

A dilatory motion was moved by the Deputy Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Chernor R.M. Bah for a two week timeframe be given to the Ministry of Information and Communications to do and expand massive sensitization and popularization of the aforesaid Bill.

Earlier, Minister Information and Communications, Mohamed Rahman Swaray said that engagement of key stakeholders is part of the process of passing Bill into law. Recalling some of the parties consulted, he said, "we have started part of the engagement before now"; adding that, social media groups including Facebook are part of the popularization process. He also said that, town hall meetings were held and formed part of the sensitization drive.

The Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Rt.Hon Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu, in responding to the Minister, he said the Ministry should go beyond ordinary engagement and ensure that the ordinary people understand that such a Bill is in the process for enactment by Parliament.

Hon. P. C. Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III, said that if they want to popularize the Bill, the Ministry should come along with copies of the Budapest Convention to enhance digestion and direction in light of the Bill. He referenced some of the sections that need to be simplified for better understanding; adding that radio, TV and mobile networks should also help in the process. He spoke on the need for civil societies, press and community stakeholders involvement as paramount to enhancing the legislative process.

Hon. Mohamed Bangura spoke on the importance of the Bill, saying it is prudent for the Ministry to collaborate with MPs in order to go to their constituencies to facilitate proper engagements and better understanding of the Bill. "The people down there do not have a better understanding of the Bill", he emphasized.

Hon. Alice Kumabeh spoke on communication gap and called for the decentralization of information by using community radios and local musicians.

She also requested the Minister to collaborate and coordinate with MPs in this regard.

Independent Member of Parliament from Pujehun, Hon. Shiaka M. Sama said radio sensitization should not be limited to Freetown, but jingles be done in our local languages to have a wider impact on the general populace. He also suggested that, thorough engagements of the civil society organizations be taken into consideration, according to him, they are more familiar with our local communities.

Chief Whip of Parliament, Hon. Dickson Rogers asked that, two weeks be given to the Ministry to translate and promote the messages across the country and play in popular town hall meetings in the various Districts. The Bill, he noted will affect an ordinary villager after passage and went to emphasize on the need for participation and sensitization on the content of the Bill.

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