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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT RATIFIES AGREEMENT TO AUGMENT ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 3rd November 2020 debated and ratified an agreement geared towards improving the distribution and supply of electricity in the country.

The following agreement was approved by Parliament:

1. The Utility Grid Infrastructure and Electricity Supply Agreement by and Between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone Represented by the Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority and the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Finance and Karadeniz Powership Kaya Bey Company Limited, Sierra Leone, dated 30th June 2020.

Presenting the agreement prior to ratification, the Minister of Energy Alhaji Kanja Sesay reminded the House of the Kar-Powership agreement two years ago and went on to explain the importance of the new agreement relative to the hiring of two ships. He said this agreement is one of the most reliable sources of energy for the country. He informed the House that Bumbuna II and the West African Power Pool are not up keeping the electricity service for now and hence there was a need for re-arrangement and re-negotiation with Kar-Powership to supply electricity for 5 years.

In his contribution to the debate, the Chairman of the Committee on Energy in Parliament, Hon. Keikura Vandy acknowledged the tremendous efforts made by Government to restore electricity supply in the country and noted that electricity "is a human right issue". He said the electricity problem in the country is a decade old one in respect of generation, distribution and sustainable supply of electricity in the country.

Hon. Hassan Sesay, the Opposition Whip commended the Chairman of the Committee for recognizing the concept of continuity in governance and went on to point out the hike of tariffs relating to the consumption of energy in the country; adding it is affecting the people of Sierra Leone gravely in spite of huge savings.

On his part, Hon. Abdul Kargbo said there would be no proper investment without electricity whilst decrying the high tariff rates levied on ordinary citizens. He narrated the tolling effects on poor supply of energy in the country including education, businesses and marriages.

In his contribution, the Deputy Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie said this government inherited a very huge debt on electricity supply from the past government and praised the Minister of Energy for a job well done. He said they are pleased with the agreement and hoped that it would be translated into action for the benefits of the country. He commended the Minister for giving light to places like Bathurst and other new settlements in various parts of the country; adding and that the government is moving in the right direction.

On his part, Hon. Dr. Kandeh Yumkella Leader of NGC said electricity should not be politicized and urged the Minister to work with Parliament to address the long standing problems of electricity supply in the country. He spoke on long term fixes and observed that temporary fixes are becoming permanent solutions to energy crisis in the country whilst alluding to measures taken by other countries to combat electricity challenges like Ghana and Rwanda.

Contributing to the debate, Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina, Leader of C4C praised the agreement and said described it as “non-controversial” whilst encouraging the Minister to look at the “Bikongor” waterfall as the long term solution for electricity supply in the country.

In rounding up the debate, Hon. Chernor R.M Bah, Leader of the Opposition supported the agreement saying it is in the interest of the people of Sierra Leone, adding the APC would never politicize electricity whilst speaking on tax exemptions that are contained in the agreement. He called on the Minister to work with the Leadership of the House to address the challenges affecting electricity in the country.

Concluding the debate, the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma said as a government they want to change the narrative on electricity in the country and acknowledged the challenges involved in the supply of power and admitted that electricity is the right of people.

Hon. Nyuma appreciated the Minister and the Members of Parliament for contributing to the agreement and explained in details critical pillars embedded in the agreement between the government and that of the Kar-Powership. He commended the technical team of the energy sector and urged the Minister to address issues around safety and the protection of the environment.

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