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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT RATIFIES TWO AGREEMENTS ON IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 16th April 2019 extensively debated and ratified two international Agreements that are geared towards the implementation of the UN Convention on the law of the sea and the promotion of compliance with international conservation and management measures by fishing vessels on the high seas.

Observing, the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu spoke on the need for coming up with regulations to give effect to these Agreements and recalled that the UN Convention on the law of the sea had been adopted by countries since 1982, adding that since the Migratory Convention was adopted in 1995, it was only after a period of 24 years had lapsed before Sierra Leone could think of ratifying it, “the reason why a yellow card had been issued to the country”.

The following Agreements were ratified by Parliament:

I. Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and

II. Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas

Presenting the Agreements prior to ratification, the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Hon. Emma Kowa-Jalloh said among other things that Sierra Leone is a coastal State and a party to the UN Convention relating to the high sea with a view to promoting compliance in light of conservation and management measures for fishing vessels on the high seas. She also said that “these Agreements will address issues around flagging, illegal and unreported and unregulated fishing conduct in the country and also enhance collaboration and monitoring of our high seas by our regional partners”.

Contributing to the debate, Chairperson for the Parliamentary Committee on Fisheries and Marine Resources, Hon. Nenneh Lebbie described the Agreements as “non-controversial”,

adding that the ratification of these Agreements would enable the country to enter the EU market; thus the improvement of revenue generation for Government to undertake development programmes. She also spoke on the need for effective monitoring of the high seas and the management and prevention of our fishing species including “bonga” from extinction.

Hon. Abdul Titus Kamara of NGC praised the Ministry of Fisheries as one of the performing ones under the New Direction, championed by President Bio through the generation of huge revenue for the Government to implement its policies and programmes for the development of the country; adding that “the Agreements are neither contentious nor controversial”.

Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi, an Independent MP from Kailahun said that “the country is rich in land and sea”, but decried the late ratification of these documents over a long period of time”, adding the Ministry is generating needed revenue for the running of the State. She also pitied the country for not having effective monitoring tools for our high seas that is being ravaged by foreign fishing vessels since independence to date.

Hon. Sahr Charles of C4C described the Agreements as “non-controversial” and appealed for priority to be given to Sierra Leoneans to benefit from their marine resources, adding that “the Chinese are engaged in illegal and unregulated fishing activities in our high seas”.

Concluding the debate, the Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew S. Nyuma said that Sierra Leone is a flag state with a responsibility to implement the laws that are governing the high seas relating to conservation and effective management of our marine resources. He also said that regulations should be made to give effect to these Agreements by depending on regional partners to monitor our high seas from poachers. He also spoke on information exchange and procedures involved in the settlement of disputes and called for the protection of our local fishermen from Tombo to Goderich and other riverine areas through effective regulations.

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