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### PRESS RELEASE

#### PARLIAMENT RATIFIES VISA-FREE TRAVELS FOR DIPLOMATIC AND SERVICE PASSPORT HOLDERS TO RUSSIA

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on Tuesday 09/11/2021 debated and ratified with unanimity visa-free travels for holders of diplomatic and service passports to Russia.

The following agreement was ratified by Parliament:

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Russian Federation on Visa-free travels for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Presenting the agreement prior to ratification, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Prof. David John Francis said on a recent visit to Russia he had signed an agreement with his Russian counterpart for a visa exemption for holders of diplomatic and service passports of both countries. He also spoke on bilateral cooperation between both countries in the areas of education, military and the fishing sector. He also told MPs that during his tour of duty in the said ministry, he had facilitated the provision of a thousand scholarship to Sierra Leoneans to study overseas.

Contributing, Chief Whip of Parliament, Hon. Dickson Rogers spoke on the derivatives in light of benefits to Sierra Leoneans and described the agreement as straight forward and non-controversial.

Hon. Mohamed Bangura thanked the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the agreement and appealed for visa-free travels to be extended to other Sierra Leoneans.

Hon. Francis A. Kaisamba commended government for signing a strong bilateral agreement with Russia relating to visa-free travels for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Highlighting its benefits to the people of Sierra Leone, Leader of C4C, Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina supported the ratification of the agreement on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic and service passports in Russia and Sierra Leone.

Speaking on benefit to the education sector, PC Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III praised the agreement as being good to promote bilateral cooperation between both countries.

Calling on the Minister to sign similar agreement with other grade A countries in the world, Independent MP from Kailahun, Hon. Quintin Salia-Konneh implored holders of diplomatic and service passports not to misuse such an opportunity between both countries.

Hon. Abdul Kargbo acclaimed the agreement and called on the Minister to do same for other countries where Sierra Leoneans travel to on a regular basis.

Rounding, Acting Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Ajibola Manly-Spain supported the agreement and called for speedy ratification.

Concluding, Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie said government was making frank efforts to develop every sector in the country and supported the view that such a facility be extended to other Sierra Leoneans, even though it would take time for such to take effect.

In another development, the Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 09/11/2021 debated and ratified an agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and General Beverages Company Limited (SL) dated November 2021.

The said agreement was piloted by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. Edward Hinga Sandy.

MPs who spoke to the motion acclaimed the government for expanding the business sector and described the agreement as non-controversial; but they also called on Parliament to do follow-up on agreements ratified by the House to ensure proper implementation.

Both Acting Leaders of Opposition and Government, Hon. Manly-Spain and Bashiru Silikie shared similar sentiments on the need for following up on agreements ratified by Parliament in light of effective oversight by Committees in Parliament.

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Tuesday 09/11/2021 intensively debated and committed the Bill entitled: "The National Investment Board Act 2021" to the Legislative Committee for further deliberations and scrutiny.

The Bill was being piloted by the Deputy Minister of Finance, Sheku F. Bangura.

The Act is seeking to establish an investment board to promote investment opportunities, to act as facilitating body and assist investors to obtain facilities relating to business enterprises, and to generally improve the investment climate in Sierra Leone.

MPs who contributed to the debate commended the establishment of an investment board, but they decried certain aspects relating to the composition of the board.

Rounding, the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Chernor Bah supported the committal of the said Bill for proper scrutiny given the proposed composition of the board.

Concluding, Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie said investors' confidence would increase after enactment, and assured MPs that the needful would be done during deliberations by the Legislative Committee in Parliament.

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