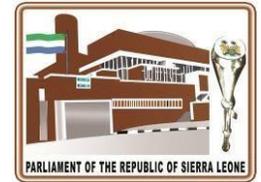




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PRESS RELEASE

PBO IN COLLABORATION WITH COMMITTEES TRAINS MPs AND COMMITTEE CLERKS ON CHANGES IN BUDGET APPROPRIATION PROCESS



The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) in collaboration with the Department of Committees, has commenced a two-day capacity building workshop for MPs and Committee Clerks on changes in the budget appropriation process, starting today 14/10/2021 in Committee Room One, Parliament Building.

Welcoming participants, Director of PBO, Ibrahim Jimissa thanked the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for supporting capacity building initiatives of Parliament regarding improved scrutiny in the approval process of the country's budget. He said the workshop would provide MPs and Committee Clerks an opportunity to deliberate and make recommendations to the Leadership of Parliament as to how to improve and move the budgetary process forward.

Speaking on zoom, a Representative of IPU, Nora Barbiq said among other things, that the IPU is willing to support democratic institutions, especially in the areas of effective budgetary scrutiny and capacity building of MPs and Staff of Parliament. Explaining about budget, she said it was about allocating resources to the policies and programmes the government intends to achieve in a financial year. She said, the budget could not be implemented except it is authorized by Parliament. She also talked on effective scrutiny, value for money, equitable and fair distributions of the country's resources for development. She said, through oversight, MPs could challenge the actions and policies of government and make recommendations for change using tools like cooperation, consultation, agreement and disagreement. She also said, that oversight is an effective tool to mount inquiry and to probe ministers and hold governments to account. Speaking on the establishment of PBO, she called on them to assist Parliament using neutrality and nonpartisan considerations.

Representing the Chairman of the Finance Committee in Parliament, Hon. Mustapha F. Sellu said among other things that the budget is the most potent document of government with an expression of its annual intentions and activities for development in the country. Explaining the role of Parliament in the annual budgetary appropriation, scrutiny and approval process, Hon. Sellu said the workshop would enhance the skills of MPs and Committee Clerks to do justice to the incoming budget scrutiny and approval by Parliament for the services of Sierra Leone.

Deputy Director of Committees, David Saffa said that parliamentary businesses and proceedings are initiated by Committees, before they are debated and approved in plenary. He thanked IPU for supporting the workshop that is geared towards enhancing the skills of MPs and Committee Clerks to improve on budget scrutiny and approval by Parliament.

Declaring the workshop open, the Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Paran Umar Tarawally said capacity building is key to enhancing democratic accountability. He called on PBO and the Department of Committees to continue the positive collaboration aimed at improving the skills of MPs and Committee Clerks in budget scrutiny and approval by Parliament. Speaking on the role of Parliament in reviewing the national budget and other pertinent documents like the Finance Act, he said Parliament has responsibility to approve the country's budget and hold the executive to account. Submitting on the need for budget approval to budget making, he said Parliament had improved and increased on its oversight engagements from 5 to 20 quarterly. With support from partners like IPU and EU, he said the administration of Parliament has thought it fit to review last year's appropriation process and make recommendations for amendment where necessary. Concluding, he called on Nora Barbiq and IPU to sustain the collaboration between the two institutions in respect of capacity building.

The topics include the role of Parliament and reforms in the national budget appropriation process, reflections and learning opportunities from last year's process, techniques in reviewing the appropriation questionnaire among others.

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