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PRESS RELEASE

PRESIDENT BIO OPENS ECOWAS EXTRAORDINARY SESSION IN FREETOWN

The President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Brigadier Retired Julius Maada Bio has today Monday 29/03/2021 officially declared open the First Extraordinary Session of ECOWAS Parliament for the year 2021, holding for the first time in Sierra Leone at the Bintumani Conference Center, in Freetown.

Speaking of Sierra Leone as a nation of peace and serenity, he said it is no longer the land of war, bad governance and natural disasters; adding it is now a land of peace through the consolidation of democracy guided by human capital development hinging on priorities set forth in the Medium Term National Development Plan focusing on the achievement of inclusive national development.

He thanked ECOWAS MPs for unanimously electing Hon. Sidie Mohamed Tunis as Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament during its inaugural session in Niger, last year; furthering that his love for the advancement of the people and continent, coupled with his visionary leadership; President Bio confidently stated that, his tenure will undoubtedly leave a formidable legacy.

He also said, as nations in our community are recovering from the impacts of COVID-19, he urged ECOWAS MPs to support and imbue resilience in our recovery and rebuilding efforts by strengthening healthcare and disaster management structures so that our societies are not easily amenable to future shocks.

Speaking on economic recovery and delocalized meetings in light of engaging regional actors involved in the promotion of peace, good governance, economic development, and respect for human dignity, President Bio said regular interactions with stakeholders across the community will foster goodwill, understanding and cooperation on challenges key to governance and other questions.

Commending ECOWAS Parliament for its contributions to the promotion of peace, security, democracy and good governance in the region through deployment of election observation missions in Member States, President Bio called for even-handed resolutions of conflict and triggers of conflict by assuring the integrity and sovereignty of Member States. He commended the ECOWAS Commission for advancing the process regarding the construction of the Lungi Logistics Depot, whose completion by 2022, President Bio said will contribute greatly to sustainable peace and stability in the subregion.

Speaking on the adoption of a Strategic Plan for ECOWAS Parliament, President Bio described it as innovative thinking that is mandatory in light of priorities and rationalises prudent resource management.

Among other things, President Bio talked about the single currency and the need to meet the convergence criteria to put it into effect to ease trading barriers and enhance economic advancement in the subregion.

Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, Hon. Sidie Mohamed Tunis, thanked President Bio and the people of Sierra Leone for supporting his election to the position of Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament. He also said that the ECOWAS Parliament has converged in Freetown in light of provisions in the Supplementary Act and its Rules of Procedure.

Speaking on delocalized meetings amid COVID-19, Hon. Tunis said the cardinal purpose of the Extraordinary Session in Freetown is to present and adopt a Strategic Plan for the 5th Legislature (2020-2024) for the ECOWAS Parliament. This Hon. Tunis said is in agreement with provisions of the Community Strategic Framework and the ECOWAS Vision.

Hon. Tunis also said that the said plan will provide direction for decision making and the allocation of resources to enable ECOWAS Parliament to attain its goals. He said that it will allow it to focus on its mandates and priorities by providing guidance on the efficient and effective utilization of scarce resources. He also spoke on his earlier call and commitment relating to direct election of MPs to the ECOWAS Parliament.

Speaking on the invitation and the excellent relationship between the ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Parliament, President of ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou praised President Bio for his commitment to democratic advancement and regional integration by gracing the occasion in-person.

Regarding the compounding challenges of COVID-19, he commended the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament for the development and would-be adoption of a Strategic Plan aimed at providing direction relating to the implementation of planned activities on democracy and security and human capital development among others.

Statements were also made by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Guinea and the President of the National Transitional Council of Mali on the need of fostering regional integration, political stability and improving socio-economic livelihoods of the people in the subregion.

The Hon. Vice President, the First Lady of Sierra Leone, the Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament, the Deputy Speaker, the Leader of Government Business, the Clerk of Parliament and other dignitaries were in attendance when President Bio officially declared open the First Extraordinary Session of ECOWAS Parliament in Sierra Leone at the Bintumani Conference Center in Freetown.

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