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PRESS RELEASE



RED CROSS VISITS SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT

A delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), accompanied by the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, on Friday 24/03/2023 paid a courtesy call on the Rt. Hon. Speaker of the Sierra Leone Parliament, Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu.

During the meeting held at the Speaker's Office at Parliament Building at Tower Hill in Freetown, the Leader of the ICRC delegation, Loukas Patrdis, who also doubles as Head of the Regional Delegation, engaged the Speaker on a wide range of issues including their post-war operations in West Africa, the upcoming general elections and their support to nation building.

In his response, the Speaker, clarified certain issues including the Government's preparedness for the conduct of peaceful, credible and violence-free general elections. The Honourable

Speaker underscored the country's present stability which derived largely from the conduct of several post conflict elections that had brought about peaceful changes of governments in 2007 and 2018 which were litmus tests of the nation's maturity in democracy. The Speaker used the opportunity to reassure the delegation of the peaceful outcome of the forthcoming general elections. "We changed Government in 2007 from one party to another and again in 2018", he categorically stated, and that these had been solid and tangible developments since that had contributed in no small measure to consolidating the peace and stability that's so palpable throughout the country all these past years leading to another general elections in a few months from now.

The Speaker also told the delegates that the Proportional Representation system of Election which was first used in 2002, will be applied again in the upcoming elections to generate the potency of significantly increasing the representation of women in Parliament as the first incremental step towards the attainment of gender parity in the not too distant future. "We want to see a radical change in the composition of our legislature", he further added.

He further related the development to the education of women as a necessary prerequisite to increasing their participation in Parliament and in all walks of life and revealed that they are now taking full advantage of the present Government's Free Quality Education to ensure they are better prepared to take advantage of the new opportunities they are being offered for the first time in our nation's history.

Further, while responding to questions regarding the trust of the people, the Speaker assured the ICRC delegation of the independence and impartiality of the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) in the conduct and outcome of previous bye-elections and that that trust would be further amplified and transposed in the forthcoming general elections. The Hon. Speaker also did not doubt that the police would be able to live up to public expectations but recommended more robust capacity training would be needed.

While reaffirming their commitment of continuous support to the nation the Movement Cooperation Coordinator, Gisandre Dominique, drew the attention of the Hon. Speaker to their International Humanitarian Treaty and other Legal Instruments that were yet to reach Parliament for ratification and expressed the hope that this matter would receive the necessary and expeditious attention of Government.

An expression of warm appreciation by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Sierra Leone Red Society in Sierra Leone Kpawaru E. T. Sandy to President Bio's Government for the subvention granted to them under the 2023 National Budget climaxed the discussion.

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