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PRESS RELEASE



SIERRA LEONE VICE PRESIDENT LAUNCHES ECOWAS PARLIAMENT DELOCALISED JOINT MEETING ON ENERGY

The Honourable Vice President of Sierra Leone, Dr .Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh has on Monday 20/03/2023, at the Sierra Leone Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Tower Hill in Freetown, officially launched the ECOWAS Parliament delocalized joint meeting on energy on the theme: "Building the Regional Energy Market for a Just Energy Transition".

The Hon. Vice President during the official launch commended the ECOWAS Parliament on behalf of the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Dr. Julius Maada Bio for organizing the programme in Sierra Leone and heaped praises on them for their good work towards advancing

the ideals of the sub-regional organization in the area of good governance and regional integration for the development of its community people.

The Vice President also said that ECOWAS was established to achieving regional integration as a vehicle to enhance the prosperity of the people and went on to highlight the huge energy deficiency in the region

The Vice President of Sierra Leone, Dr. Jalloh said energy is the backbone of any nation's economic development. "No country or region would develop or prosper without energy", he said and went on to say that "energy is vital in the productive sector that holds the key to economic development". He also said that, the region is challenged to meeting its growing needs as over for hundred million people are in of need electricity, a critical proponent for the development of country in the world.

On the energy sector in Sierra Leone, the Vice President said in 2018, when the Ruling SLPP took over governance, the energy sector was plunged into a lot of problems with gross inadequate accessibility of 16% generation, and high cost of electricity. He stated that, the SLPP led-Government was able to turn things around with a massive transformation by increasing energy generation and accessibility to over 35%. Dr. Jalloh said over 56 towns and villages in Sierra Leone have access to solar and renewable energy. "No country would develop if you don't have a solid and productive energy sector, and no productive sector would move an inch without expansive energy access", he said.

The Honourable Vice President said, President Bio's wisdom is to move the country from utility to productive energy so that the country would be able to attract private investors, and also established industries with higher energy concentration and consumption.

He said in actualizing the ECOWAS dream for 2050, the region should collectively come together with a positive approach and went on to advice MPs to build on regional integration with a huge capital investment on energy.

The Vice President used the occasion to highlight government's accomplishments in the areas of education, health and other sectors.

The Hon. Vice President concluded by saying that, the sub-region needs to think creatively to attract private sector investments in the energy sector; adding that Banks need to invest in the process for the realization of a clean energy hub.

In his remarks, the ECOWAS Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Mohamed Sidie Tunis expressed his delight in hosting the Joint Delocalized Committee Meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He commended President Bio for his continued support to the ECOWAS Parliament. "As Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament and on behalf of the Bureau of the ECOWAS Parliament, I will like to extend a warm welcome to all the Parliamentarians, distinguished guests, and resource persons to Sierra Leone".

The ECOWAS Speaker said the Parliament is committed to strengthening representative democracy in the community and to contribute to the promotion of peace, security, and stability in the sub-region.

The ECOWAS Speaker also said the vision of the region to access electricity for all through energy transitioning is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

He also said that more than half of the populations in the region has no access to electricity, adding that with a population of over four hundred million, only 220 million have access to electricity and went on to highlight the importance of the West Africa Power Pool to interconnect the region with electricity supply.

He concluded by saying that the sub-region has high expectations in terms of energy supply for its citizens, and called on MPs in the region to monitor the implementation of the project on electricity supply.

In his welcome address, the Sierra Leone Head of delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament, Hon. Chernor R.M Bah said it is a privilege and honour for him to welcome MPs from the ECOWAS Parliament to Sierra Leone and went on to acknowledge the kind hospitality of the Sierra Leonean People. He also commended the entire leadership of the ECOWAS Parliament for the approval to hosting the Joint ECOWAS Delocalized Committee meeting in Freetown. He said Sierra Leone is very proud to host the ECOWAS regional representatives, and added that as a region, he is pleased to work as a team to consolidate and promote regional integration.

He said the actions currently taken by the ECOWAS Parliament to get closer to the people are truly encouraging. "This would enhance the image of ECOWAS and further strengthen the dynamics of the region". He also said that access to electricity is an issue of crucial importance for the well-being of the people. He said other countries have made tremendous progress whilst some are just moving and encouraged others to do needful in light of access to energy for development purposes.

In his statement, the Parliamentary Chairperson on Energy in the Sierra Leone Parliament, Hon. Keikura Vandy commended the work of the energy sector in Sierra Leone and went further to highlight the work of Parliament relative to law-making, representation, and oversight.

Hon.Vandy explained the importance of the West African Power Pool electrification in the subregion and called on the regional Parliament to actualize the dream of African rural and urban electrification. He also spoke on the pillars for the sustainability of electricity relative to Government Support or funding system, strong diversity, collaboration, and economic diversification. The Member of Parliament concluded by commending the energy minister for transforming electricity supply in the country.

In his statement, Co-Chairman, Joint Committee, Hon. Bidida said it was a great pleasure to come to Sierra Leone to promote energy-related activities and expressed gratitude to Sierra

Leone for hosting this joint parliamentary session. He spoke on the work of the Joint Committee and also pointed out statistical data on West African electrification relative to its negative effects on the population.

In his remarks, the ECOWAS Resident Representative in Sierra Leone, Amb. Harouna Moussa applauded the Delocalized ECOWAS meeting in Sierra Leone. "We recognize the role played by the ECOWAS Parliament in the promotion of the energy sector", he said and went on to commend President Bio on his drives on economic diversification in the country.

In his statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Prof. David John Francis welcomed dignitaries to the beautiful shores of Sierra Leone and also expressed warmest hospitality of the people of Sierra Leone. He commended ECOWAS Parliament for choosing Sierra Leone to host the joint meeting and expressed the timelines of the energy sector joint meeting. He said the importance of a joint meeting on energy cannot be overemphasized in light of energy security." Without energy, there is economic development for a State, he concluded.

Making his statement, the Minister of Finance, Sheku Ahmed Fantamadi Bangura said he is honoured to be part of the delocalized joint meeting of the ECOWAS Parliament. He spoke on the efforts of President Bio's government in transforming the electricity projects in Sierra Leone to a higher and sustainable level. He said regional integration of electricity is very vital for the sustainability of the socioeconomic development of States in the region and went on to explain the regional approach to energy security . "This country has started to enjoy regional electricity in the subregion", he concluded

The ECOWAS Joint Committee Session is expected to close on Thursday 25/03/2023 with a lot of sessions and recommendations for adoption and implementation by countries in the ECOWAS Community to promote regional integration and trade for the benefits of its people.

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