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PRESS RELEASE



SPEAKER LAUNCHES LEADERSHIP RETREAT IN MAKENI

The Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu has on Saturday 22/10/2022 officially opened the Parliamentary Leadership Retreat, at the Royal Hotel in Makeni City, on the Theme; "Enhancing Parliamentary Reforms and Effectiveness". The retreat is intended to review the Standing Orders of Parliament and deepen the understanding of the Parliamentary

Service Commission. The engagement was organized by the Parliament of Sierra Leone with joint support from European Union, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Officially launching the event, the Speaker heaped praises on his team of Leadership and staff for the tremendous progress made by the current Parliament. He recalled and categorically stated that there had been an incremental improvement in the work of all Parliaments of the Second Republic, from 1991 unto the Fourth Parliament, but none can compare both to n quality and quantity with the milestones of transformative and innovative developments of the current Fifth Parliament under its Speakership and Leadership.

"Success is never the work of one person, it is almighty st always the work of a team", he said and went on to share his years of experience in that regard and commended all whose efforts have placed this Fifth Parliament on a much higher and greater pedestal. The Speaker eloquently stated that Parliament is a dynamic institution and implored all donor partners to continue to give support towards its laudable achievements. The Speaker vehemently reassured that, with partners support, collaboration, and synergy, the future of the Honourable House is bright.

The Speaker nevertheless admitted that despite these wonderful achievements there are still many challenges of which they as Leadership were fully aware but expressed hope and confidence that with the continued support from donors they would enhance their engagement. He reiterated that they would want to know the problems affecting budget reforms and reaffirmed that they would judiciously use Section 74. 4 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, which gives Parliament an independent budgeting autonomy. He decried the Ministry of Finance for its lethargic responsiveness by treating Parliament as an MDA rather than an arm of Government. This treatment must stop. "We have a provision in Section 74(4) of the constitution that has been dormant which we are now going to give it impetus and vitality" he stated and went on to express hope that with the blessing of the President, they would apply that law for Parliament to gain its financial independence.

While using the opportunity to make a global comparative analysis of parliamentary democracy, the Speaker said the efficient and effective functioning of Parliament would determine how deep democracy is taking root in Sierra Leone to the satisfaction of the people and the donors.

Concluding he said they were going to review the Standing Orders of Parliament and added that, the document has not been touched for more than a decade and a half now. He informed that, they are going to improve on it, to ensure that, MPs deliver on their duties and responsibilities in the future.

Earlier in her declaration of purpose, the Director General of Parliament, Madam Finda Frazer commended the Leadership of Parliament for their commitment towards the progress made so far. She recalled the consensus resolution geared towards the improvement of the budget

appropriation process. "Today, this event is in fulfillment of that commitment for the Leadership to discuss the constraints to the national budget appropriation process and to propose actionable measures that seek improvement in the budget accountability and performance" she maintained.

The Director General informed that engagements would focus on the Parliamentary Service Commission and the review of the Standing Order. She reiterated that, the purpose of the engagement is to deepen the understanding of Parliamentary Leadership to make Parliament more efficient and relevant.

Delivering a statement on behalf of the President and Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Deputy Director for the Department of Programs Research and Partnership Mrs. Nancy Jalloh described the retreat as a testament to the Parliament of Sierra Leone. She recalled an event where staff members were trained on neutrality and went on to highlight positive governance globally. She commended Parliament for the engagement and heaped praises on the Leadership. She assured Parliament of IPU's continued support.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Technical Advisor to Parliament, Hon. Jariatu K. Smith said promoting democracy predicates on reviewing the Standing Orders of Parliament and reiterated that, they intend to solidify their commitment in that direction. She reiterated that, the Leadership is expected to endorse and validate the Standing Order. Hon. Smith disclosed that UNDP was leaving Parliament, but, would want to ensure that the guiding principles of the House are reviewed. She expressed hope and continued collaboration in the process.

Adams Fusheini, the Key Expert on the Parliamentary component of the European Union Governance Program, lauded the Parliament of Sierra Leone for tremendous achievement related to the opening up of Parliament, notably in its engagement with the media and the CSOs. He cited the ongoing retreat as a testament to the fulfillment of a key principle of the Bo Declaration, which called for greater collaboration in parliamentary business. He reiterated that such dialogue as this, to discuss opportunities for strengthening budget performance and accountability is key to democratic consolidation and good governance.

The Key Expert explained that the economic stress facing every country, including Sierra Leone, due to both local and global challenges, necessitates that, Parliament's role in the upcoming appropriation process is reinforced. He informed that the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) will be supported to engage with oversight committees to enable Parliament to assure that requisite counterparts to jointly funded development projects with partners are not delayed or derailed during the implementation phase of the budget. He observed that, some development partners have observed a few Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) had missed in the past budgeting adequately for joint projects. He advised Parliament to pay attention to key development projects to ensure that, the MDAs budget is implemented for the Government of Sierra Leone's priorities for such projects, had agreed with partners,

He noted that the directors of Parliament have been engaged and they have made key suggestions for consideration of the Leadership to improve the current Standing Orders, for example, that the Gender Committee be empowered to certify that MDAs submissions have duly considered the gender implications and this be giving the prerequisite on sponsoring agencies of matters that come before the House. He said that this would enable Parliament to ensure the implementation of government policies and programs, “leaving no one behind”

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