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**PRESS RELEASE**



**SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT LAUNCHES NATIONAL TOURISM CONFERENCE**

The Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu has on Friday 17/6/2022 officially launched a two-day National Tourism Governance Conference at the Galliness Paradise, outskirts of Bo City, Southern Province of Sierra Leone on the theme "The role of Parliament in the Development of Tourism and Cultural Affairs in Sierra Leone".

In his keynote address, the Speaker lauded Members of Parliament for their huge attendance and used the opportunity to inform them that, the conducive

environment in that city would make it possible for Parliament to conduct sittings in that part of the country.

He welcomed and thanked the Ministry of Tourism and Culture for organizing the conference and commended World Bank for the support. The Hon. Speaker told MPs that, the conference would mark a significant milestone in the development of tourism and cultural sectors, acknowledging the latter regard for Parliament. "We know and appreciate the fact that seeking to extend your activities to our different Constituencies is truly a remarkable development" the Speaker stated and assured the Ministry of strong collaboration.

While acknowledging the potential opportunities the sectors create, the Hon. Speaker spoke about the trust bestowed on Parliament by the Ministry and used the opportunity to ask other MDAs to emulate and went to underscored strong collaboration and commitment, to achieve the common goal.

The Speaker referenced some inspirations for tourism development practiced by the European Union Parliament and went on to highlight the tasks and responsibilities for the Sierra Leone Parliament to imbibe and cascade down to their people. He spoke about the huge benefits, in light of job creation, and economic growth as well as the essential collaboration, synergy, and coordination amongst stakeholders and the people to promote the sectors. According to the Hon. Speaker, the Ministry Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023, President Bio New Direction Manifesto, and the country's frequent participation in international trade fairs had yielded dividends for the sectors and projected the image of Sierra Leone. He emphatically spoke about the nature, tourism and cultural features, the country is endowed with and their huge potentials, relative to the history and cultural heritages. He also spoke about peace and tranquility as contributing factors to the growth of the sectors.

Earlier in his opening statement, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas, who also doubles as Chairman of the program, said tourism development is not a lip service, but required concrete actions. He said Parliament is vital in the development of tourism in the country and underscored the potential tourism can bring to the socio-economic development of the state. He applauded the Minister for inviting MPs to the governance process of the tourism industry.

In his welcome address while representing the Mayor of Bo City, Councillor Abubakarr Lassana appreciated the organizers for choosing their city for the national tourism conference and highlighted the benefits of the tourism sector in the development of the country.

The Parliamentary Chairman on Tourism and Cultural Affairs Hon. Tom Tucker commended the Minister of Tourism for showcasing Sierra Leone on the world map.

While boasting about the attractiveness of Sierra Leone's tourism sector to the outside world, the chairman urged his colleagues MPs to continue to partner with the Tourism Ministry to showcase the positive images of Sierra Leone to the outside world.

Representing the Resident Minister, Southern Region, the Assistant Secretary to the Resident Minister Rashid F. Magbie said the Ministry of Tourism should be decentralized in the provinces and spoke on the roles of Parliament in enhancing the development of Tourism.

In her statement, the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs Memunatu Pratt said it is necessary to dialogue and chart the way forward for the tourism sector. "The tourism is the most attractive and improved sector in the world". She asserted. She commended President Bio's Government for supporting and prioritizing the tourism sector in the country and underscored the socio-economic benefits of the sector. She called for more collaborations in the tourism and cultural sectors including the private sector. She highlighted the working plans of the ministry and other partners in the tourism and cultural sectors. She said more than two thousand women had been trained in tourism-related programs to project the good image of Sierra Leone. The minister appealed for collaborative support in the sectors and encouraged private partnership cooperation "If tourism should thrive, all Sierra Leoneans should come on board", she concluded. She commended the Parliamentary oversight committee on Tourism and Culture for playing a pivotal role in the sectors. .

A presentation on "Tourism and the Role of Members of Parliament towards the Development of Tourism in Sierra Leone", was done by the Director of Tourism, Mr. Mohamed Jalloh, and also a presentation on "Culture and the Role of Members

of Parliament toward the development of Cultural heritage in Sierra Leone", was carried by Director of Culture Mr. Foday Jalloh

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