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PRESS RELEASE

**SPEAKING POINTS FOR HON. SPEAKER DURING CAPACITY BUILDING EVENT FOR 1ST COHORT
OF EMERGING FEMALE LEADERS IN THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE ON WEDNESDAY 1st
MARCH, 2023.**

The Parliamentary Leadership of the Parliament of Sierra Leone,
The President and Members of the Parliamentary Female Caucus,
Hon. Members of Parliament,
Madam Director General,
Representatives of various Development Partners represented here,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to this very special event!

I am most delighted to be here and indeed to be a part of this special gender empowerment event. I am delighted because this is an event that provides an eloquent testimony of our unswerving and unflinching determination to promote gender parity in all our public institutions and ultimately to take Sierra Leone to the pinnacle of the exclusive group of performing countries in the world that practice what they say about gender equality; the talk and do countries.

Unfortunately, we have to admit that the old habit of stereotyping, of cocooning women in traditionally defined roles and in the backrooms of society still lingers with us and it is refusing to go away; but go it must. Women were never destined by our common Maker to remain indefinitely in the world of darkness or antiquity; in shaa Allah women, like men, were destined to be treated equally; to take their place and walk and talk side by side with men. No matter how long it might take, this issue of gender parity will remain at the top of our national agenda until the battle is won. And there is no room for complacency nor any other way to achieve this noble aspiration than to scale up women into leadership positions in all our public institutions. Unless we do this, and particularly so in the African society, those seemingly entrenched gender-related barriers and biases will continue to project women as not well placed; as not capable; and as not having what it takes; and all these stereotypes will continue unashamedly

to rear their ugly heads in public and, like corruption, to fight back. Those who still dwell in the corridors of darkness must know they are going to be vanguished and will be accorded a fitting requiem in the attics of history.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in this Parliament, in the Fourth Parliament, for example, who could have imagined a woman being appointed the Director-General of Parliament? Well today we have Mrs Finda Findrosa Fraser as our Director-General and thank God it happened under my leadership of this Fifth Parliament. And who is here that will cast any doubt on her ability, discipline, tact and capacity to deliver? If you are yet to applaud Mrs Fraser for her hard work and devotion to duty, then please join me to do so now to appreciate and celebrate her. For our part, the leadership of this Fifth Parliament is very proud of her. Everybody knows where the Speaker of this Parliament hails from: everybody knows where Finda hails from in this country and I am sure no one in their right senses would say our decision to appoint Finda Director-General was informed by ethnic or regional considerations. And we are all very proud of what she has done and is accomplishing. Believe it nor not, quietly but firmly, things are changing remarkably and dramatically in this environment of the Fifth Parliament and are changing for the better.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is just one example. I assure you there are many more to come in the years ahead!

This Fifth Parliament of Sierra Leone has developed a 5 year strategic plan. Goal 1 is the strategic priority of developing and strengthening capacity and filling gaps where they exist within the institution, with specific emphasis on promoting gender parity. This Parliament will never be afraid to narrow or totally eliminate gender disparity within top management positions in the Parliamentary Service. This means we shall “mainstream gender in all departments and operations of Parliament”. The 2023 Operational Plan of the Parliament of Sierra Leone lays emphasis on this and will be one of the core priorities for Parliament for the rest of this year.

This 5th Parliament of Sierra Leone has adopted this goal as a deliberate policy. We aim to create an inclusive and safe working environment for both Members of Parliament and Staff, with the intention of incorporating gender equality in its daily work. As a way of re-affirming its commitment, Parliament has put mechanisms in place in order to combat gender inequality. This is revealed through the various actions we have already taken:

- ☐ Enactment of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Legislation;
- ☐ Drafting of gender policy documents, to prioritise the recruitment of qualified female candidates;
- ☐ Approval by the Parliamentary Service Commission for three (3) female staff to take up the position of Deputy Director in three Directorates within Parliament.

Today we are launching the commencement of a leadership journey for the first cohort of emerging Female Leaders in the Parliamentary Service. This is an initiative that is led by the Department for Programmes, Research and Partnership, in collaboration with the Department

for Parliamentary Public Relations, Centre for Strategy and Parliamentary Studies and the Department for Committees. And this leadership journey is starting now and will last for a year; a capacity building session for 50 selected female staff.

The main thrust will be to provide them with training support that would strengthen their public speaking, leadership management and confidence building skills to enhance their capacity to take up potential leadership positions within the Parliamentary Service in the future. We anticipate that this training will eventually help promising female staff leaders to enhance their Self-Esteem, Self-Consciousness, and Confidence and make room for them to be able to exude leadership qualities that will prepare them to tap into their career opportunities.

The acquisition of Public Speaking and Leadership Management skills remains fundamental to building career prospects in order to aspire for leadership positions within the Public Service. Parliamentary Female staff need to acquire the required skills that will enhance their commitment to improve on their management, supervision and support provision to Members of Parliament and other colleague staff.

It is my fervent conviction that the immediate and long- term outcomes of this leadership journey will be the emergence of a core of highly groomed and motivated female leaders within the Parliamentary Service, with the relevant skills to take up leadership positions and be open to make new connections with like-minded individuals and make informed decisions regarding their work. There is need also for projected improvement in the Gender mainstreaming indicators within the Strategic Plan of the Parliament of Sierra Leone.

On this note, I wish now to take this singular honour to officially launch this Capacity Strengthening Event and Leadership Programme for 50 Emerging Leaders in the Parliamentary Service of the Parliament of Sierra Leone and to extend my best wishes to them for a brighter future ahead.

I thank you all for your kind attention.