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10th NOVEMBER, 2022

PRESS RELEASE



UNDP ENGAGES MPs ON DISABILITY RIGHTS AND INCLUSION

UNDP and the Department for Programmes, Research and Partnership in Parliament on Thursday 10/11/2022 engaged Hon. Members and Staff of Parliament on a knowledge building workshop on disability rights and inclusion at the Eden Park, Mamah Beach in the outskirts of Freetown.

Welcoming participants, Director of the Department for Programmes, Research and Partnership, Gilbert N'habay said it was a knowledge acquisition workshop aimed at increasing awareness on disability to MPs and Staff of Parliament.

Speaking on behalf of UNDP, Tanzilla Sankoh thanked MPs for passing the Disability Act of 2011 into law. Referencing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, she spoke on the

need of knowledge sharing with a view to reviewing the Disability Act of 2011 in light of improving access to justice, health, education and political offices among others. Adding, she said Sierra Leone was selected for a grant by UN to improve on gains that have been made on improving issues that are related to disabilities in the country.

Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma acknowledged the role played by Hon. Julius N. Cuffie in the development and passage of the Disability Act of 2011 into law. He also said that some of his constituents are physically challenged and visually impaired. He said that the Parliament of Sierra Leone remains committed to opening its doors to all categories of persons in the country. Hon. Nyuma also said that the knowledge gaps on disability should be addressed by using a right based approach. He said such a platform would provide MPs with additional information on disability that would enable them to effectively contribute to debate in light of reviewing the Disability Act of 2011.

Speaking on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Aaron Aruna Koroma said issues relating to disability are non-political. He said as opposition, they also share the view that disability is not inability. He also referred to MPs who are disabled in the current Parliament including one who was able but has become disabled during the life of this Parliament. He called on MPs to pass laws on disability as everyone was prone to disability over time.

Leader of C4C, Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina said knowledge sharing was good because it would culminate into policy and subsequently passed into law. He also said that the Parliamentary Service Commission had approved policies that are geared towards improving disability and gender issues in Parliament. Hon. Lamina said Sierra Leone is currently providing free quality education for persons with disability in tertiary institutions. He said in other countries, persons with disability are referred to as senior citizens. Speaking on the quota system for representation, he called on political parties to mainstream representation for persons with disability in Parliament and the local councils.

Speaking on behalf of the Leader of NGC, Hon. Foday Mario Kamara said NGC was in empathy with persons with disability as they believe in the principle of equality. He praised Parliament for understanding Bills before passage into laws. He also spoke on the need for passing laws on disability as every Member of Parliament was prone to disability.

Declaring the workshop open, Director General of Parliament, Mrs Finda Findosia Fraser said it was intended to raise awareness and increase understanding on disability before a review of the Disability Act of 2011. She praised Parliament for opening its doors through consultation and inclusion before Bills are enacted into laws. Referencing a research on disability, she said 93,000 persons are disabled in the country. Speaking on radical inclusion, she said the disaggregated data showed more men are in disability than women. On mainstreaming disability, she spoke on the need to lifting discriminatory policies and laws that affecting the advancement of disability issues in the country. She also said that the implementation of laws were equally critical to its passage for the development of the country. She said Parliament was inclusive in light of recruitment and infrastructure and spoke about the construction of a ramp

to aid the movement of persons with disability, and a disability policy that had been approved by the Parliamentary Service Commission. She called on MPs to come up with suitable suggestions that would inform a thorough review of the Disability Act of 2011.

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