



# PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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## PRESS RELEASE



### **WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY ORGANIZES 1st FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT KNOWLEDGE ORIENTATION SEMINAR**

Westminster Foundation for Democracy, a body dedicated to benefiting democracy around the world has on Friday, 16/02/2024 organized a two-day capacity-building seminar for female MPs at Nimiya Hotel Poyor Bar, Rokel Village, in the Western Area Rural District.

In her welcome address, the Director General of Parliament, Mrs. Finda Fraser said she is honored to be part of the process of advancing the participation of women. She said the seminar is geared towards equipping female MPs on Parliamentary procedures and related activities. She said WFD has been supporting the work of Parliament and acknowledged their roles in the Promotion of good governance and democracy.

In her goodwill message, the president of the Parliamentary Female Caucus, Hon. Neneh Lebbie said the seminar focuses on enhancing capacity building and welcomed the training for the advancement of women's participation in governance and promised that knowledge gained would be implemented. Hon. Lebbie acknowledged the work of the Parliamentary Female Caucus in promoting good governance and democracy in Sierra Leone.

In her goodwill message also, the president ECOWAS Female Caucus, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay said as a former president of the Caucus and now the President of ECOWAS Caucus, she is very proud of her work and

that of the Parliament of Sierra Leone. The President highlighted the work of the female MPs in the development of good governance and democracy. Hon. Veronica appreciated the training for the female MPs and went on to praise President Bio for supporting women's empowerment. She called on development partners to support the Female Caucus with a bus to help them carry out their activities properly.

On his part, WFD Country Director, Rev. Alusine Diamond-Suma said the work of WFD is mainly supported by the British Government to enhance development. He said WFD is proud to support the training for female MPs on parliamentary-related programs.

"As we embark on this journey of knowledge sharing and capacity building, I commend your commitment to advancing democratic principles and serving the interests of the people of Sierra Leone. The orientation seminar provides a valuable opportunity for parliamentarians to deepen their understanding of legislative processes, enhance their policy analysis and formulation of skills, and engage in constructive dialogue on critical issues facing our nation", he affirmed.

He promised to work with Parliament in supporting all gender-related activities for the promotion and development of democracy.

In his statement, Deputy Leader of Government Business 1, Hon. Bashiru Silikie warmly appreciated the training for female MPs. The Leader highlighted the work of the 30% Gender Bill by President Bio and that of Parliament. He went on to give statistical data of the previous Parliament on women's representation in Parliament. He commended President Bio for championing women's participation and inclusion into governance. He urged participants to seize the advantage and participate well in the training. The Deputy Leader commended WFD for their support to the Parliament of Sierra Leone and other partners in the development of the State.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Abdul Kargbo used the opportunity to express that female MPs should lobby and protect other women in society. The Leader narrated domestic gender base violence meted out to a woman in his district who lost her eyesight.

He encouraged the female MPs to do the needful to support women and went on to appreciate WFD and other partners for supporting the work of Parliament.

He used the opportunity to commend India and Rwanda for their huge women's participation in Parliament and urged for the same in Sierra Leone. The Opposition Leader appreciated the training and went on to advise MPs to implement what had been learned. "Let us make law for the protection of women and, we the opposition are fully with you on that", he concluded.

In her keynote remarks and official opening, the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, H.E. Lisa Chesney submitted her statement by asking why female representation matters, and the challenges of women in Parliament.

Her excellency appreciated the work of the Government in the promotion of gender equality and went on to note that the British Government is working on discrediting barriers to gender equality.

"Here in Salone, the BHC seeks to remove barriers that get in the way of gender equality in all we do – whether that is in girls' education; improving sexual and reproductive health; reducing maternal mortality; or helping women's economic empowerment. And I hope my all-female senior leadership team shows everyone who works at the BHC or with us, that a women's place is anywhere and everywhere she wants it to be. The

UK has tripled the number of women ambassadors and HCs, women represent over 50% of heads of mission in Africa", she said

Madam High Commissioner said gender empowerment is the smart thing to do in the development of a State. She said she is a big fan of WFD in Supporting good governance and democracy around the world. She also stated that more women in politics means less corruption in society and went on to underscore the importance of women's participation in governance. She gave a background on her upbringing and experiences in her workplace as a woman.

Madam High Commissioner said she is looking up to the opportunity for female MPs to take positions and encouraged them to take leadership responsibility and use their collective voices. She advised the MPs to work together and support each other and underscored that democracy is better when they have more female representation.

"But let me close with the many opportunities all of you here have the chance to change the course of history, You can change the game and show the country what it looks like to put the citizens you represent first and politics second. Ee no ezi oh! So this is about using human power to bring that about", she concluded.

The Director of Parliamentary and Public Relations in the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Sheku Lamain Turay who served as master of ceremony outlined the expectation of the seminar and its relevance to the development of the Sixth Parliament.

The knowledge-sharing engagement focuses on:

Constructive dialogue and open space, debating and lobbying skills for female MPs, dealing with the media, instruction to the female caucus (vision/objectives/structure /) SWOT analysis of the female Caucus, Parliamentary processes and procedures, engaging with civil societies: building partnership for change, coping with intimidation, harassment and violence in the new media landscape

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