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General Notice

The attention of the Sierra Leone Bar Association (hereinafter referred to SLBA) has been drawn to a Bill entitled "THE COUNCIL OF LEGAL EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2021" which is making the rounds on social media. The proposed Bill seeks to amend the Council of Legal Education Act of 1989 to provide, among other things, for "*representation of Njala University and University of Makeni in the Council of Legal Education, and to provide for the establishment and maintenance of Njala University Law School and the University of Makeni Law School*".

The SLBA notes the many concerns of members of the legal profession and some section of the public. The Association further notes with grave concern that its views or contributions were not solicited in the drafting of the said bill and has on good authority that no consultations were done with the General Legal Council (GLC), the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the legal profession in Sierra Leone.

The SLBA believes a wider consultation on the subject matter would have benefited from a deeper brainstorming of the challenges sought to be remedied by the proposed Bill. The Association holds the view that, the heightened protest against the Bill, is as a result of the absence of wide consultation with members of the legal community. While the idea to restructure Legal Education in Sierra Leone is much needed, the process of such restructuring ought to be consultative and extensive.

Following a perusal of the said Bill including the "MEMORANDUM OF OBJECTS AND REASONS", SLBA wishes to inform the general membership of the Bar and the Public of the following:

1. That the Council of Legal Education is facing serious challenges in providing oversight of the Sierra Leone Law School. Hence, by proposing for the Council of Legal Education to further establish and maintain new law schools, will compound the challenges and affect the quality of the professional legal training.
2. That while we recognise that both Njala University and University of Makeni offer a degree in Law, we are concerned that they may not at this material time have the

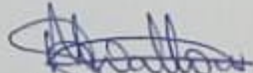
capacity to provide the required and/or adequate professional legal training and supervision of same; as such this may have the tendency to undermine the academic standards required to provide professional legal training in Sierra Leone.

3. That the current Sierra Leone Law School is constrained by inadequate subvention from Government and inadequate infrastructure. Hence, any desire to increase access to professional legal training must start by addressing these two constraints faced by the Sierra Leone Law School.
4. That what is proposed in the amendment is not in tandem with other jurisdictions in the sub region, where such universities turn out even more law graduates than Sierra Leone. The practice is to establish and maintain one Law School and several campuses. For instance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has one Law School called the Nigerian Law School which has six (6) campuses.
5. That the proposal to include Njala University and University of Makeni in the Council of Legal Education is an unnecessary expansion of the composition of the Council of Legal Education which is currently facing an infrastructure constraint. We do not believe that it is the best practice for every university which offers a degree in law to be included in the Council of Legal Education.

Therefore, from the foregoing, SLBA has serious concerns and/or reservations with respect to the said Bill in its entirety and call on the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice to engage with key stakeholders in addressing the existing challenges which the Council already faces whilst attempting to increase access to professional legal training in Sierra Leone without a recourse to the establishment and maintenance of new law schools in Sierra Leone.

In this vein, SLBA intends to engage the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to request wider consultation on the way forward for improving legal education in Sierra Leone. The membership of SLBA and the general public will be duly updated on the outcome of the engagement with the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on this issue.

Signed:



Eddinia Michaela Swallow
President



Abdul Karim Koroma
General Secretary

