



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PARAMOUNT CHIEFS (NCPC/SL)



NCPC BO-MAKENI RESOLUTION ON "THE CUSTOMARY LAND RIGHTS BILL"

Whereas the National Council of Paramount Chiefs (NCPC) is an organization comprising all Paramount Chiefs in Sierra Leone;

Whereas NCPC held emergency plenary sessions of its members on Saturday, 5th March 2022 at Bo, Kakua Chiefdom and at Makeni, Bombali Shebora Chiefdom on Wednesday, March 16 2022, to discuss issues of vital interest to all Paramount Chiefs in Sierra Leone;

Whereas one of the key issues which was extensively discussed at said plenary session was a bill currently presented for consideration by Parliament entitled "The Customary Land Rights Act, 2021" (hereinafter called The Bill);

Whereas NCPC members found the following fundamental problems with The Bill as written:

a) The Bill does not recognize important Customary Law provisions which puts Paramount Chiefs as titular owners of all lands in their Chiefdoms, which authority is captured in the name given to Paramount Chiefs in our various local languages, viz:

- i. Mendes have Ndorn-Mahei (Chief/Owner of the land)
- ii. Temnes have Bai-Ka-Bomp (Chief/Owner of the Land)
- iii. Yalunkas have Yamana-Kan-Nah (Chief/Owner of the Land)
- iv. Kurankos have Nyaman-Ti (Chief/Owner of the Land)
- v. Konos have Gbom-Mansa (Ruler in Book/Title)
- vi. Susus have Bokhie Kandeh (Chief/Owner of the Land)
- vii. Limbas have Gbako Ka Kekenko (Chief/Owner of the Land)
- viii. Lokos have Pologoh Maha (Chief/Owner of the Land)
- ix. Kissis have Mansa Lendor (Chief/Owner of the Land)

b) The Bill duplicates and/or eliminates existing land ownership and dispute resolution mechanisms which are intimately tied to Chieftaincy and, which have largely worked well for over a century. The Bill therefore introduces uncertainty and chaos over land matters in our Chiefdoms, which could lead to civil strife on a significant scale, if implemented fully as written.

c) The Bill introduces a "Land Commission" to take over traditional responsibilities of Chieftaincy, including Paramount Chiefs.

d) The Bill places ultimate dispute resolution (over lands) outside the reach of most poor and vulnerable citizens of our Chiefdoms. This Land Commission sitting in Freetown, unlike Paramount Chiefs, will make decisions for which they bear no political or moral consequences in the locality their decisions affect.

e) The Bill fundamentally undermines Chieftaincy in a way that effectively abolishes Chieftaincy. Which is contrary to entrenched clauses in Sierra Leone's extant Constitution.

Now therefore, in consideration of the foregoing, the NCPC resolves as follows:

1. NCPC rejects The Customary Land Rights Bill, 2021 in its entirety as submitted
2. NCPC expresses confidence in the existing statutory provisions for land ownership given in Cap 122 (The Provinces Lands Act), which legally vests lands in our Chiefdoms in our Chiefdom Councils headed by Paramount Chiefs and is consistent with our various Customary Laws.
3. NCPC leaves the door open for further discussions with relevant parties to craft an acceptable bill that addresses specific problems identified with land tenure laws and practices, while preserving the fundamental rights and responsibilities of Chieftaincy and the people we serve in our Chiefdoms.
4. NCPC members shall, as necessary, engage political representatives from our various Chiefdoms, to express our opposition to The Bill as submitted. NCPC members shall also engage the citizens in our Chiefdoms, as necessary, to let them know how their respective members of Parliament voted on The Bill.
5. NCPC shall communicate this resolution to our Country's President and leaders in Parliament.