



ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION
CATHEDRAL HOUSE
3 GLOUCESTER STREET
FREETOWN
SIERRA LEONE, WEST AFRICA

Ref: ACC/PR/22/008

11th May, 2022

MEDIA RELEASE

ACC CONCLUDES INVESTIGATION INTO ISSUES RELATING TO PAYMENTS MADE TO
"NON-STAFF PERSONNEL" IN THE FREETOWN CITY COUNCIL BY MAYOR YVONNE

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The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) wishes to inform the general public that it has concluded investigation into the Freetown City Council (FCC), relating to issues highlighted on the Council in the 2019 Auditor General's Report concerning payments of council funds to personal staff of the Mayor..

The 2019 Audit Report stated inter alia that, the FCC made payments totaling **Two Hundred Million Eight Hundred and Forty-two Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty-three Leones (Le 200,842,333)** for travelling expenses (Air tickets and per diems) to one **Manja Isata Kargbo**, Head of the Mayor's Delivery Unit (MDU) who is not an employee of the FCC. The Report further claimed that the said amounts paid were not budgeted for by the Council nor did they receive appropriate approval.

The ACC comprehensively conducted the investigation into the issue, during which persons of interest were interviewed, including the Mayor of Freetown City Council, the Chief Administrator of the FCC, the Consultant Team Lead in the MDU, Manja Isata Kargbo, the Human Resource Officer of the FCC, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), among other staff of the FCC and the MLGRD.

The investigation confirms the following:

- i. That the MDU was a private unit within the Office of the Mayor that did not go through normal administrative procedures for its set up and was entirely done by the Mayor without any approval from the Ordinary General Meeting of Council, and was done without any recourse to the MLGRD, and there was no legal basis under the Local Government Act of 2004 for such.
- ii. That Manja Isata Kargbo was not properly employed by the FCC. She started work as a volunteer in the Mayor's Office and later was singlehandedly contracted by the Mayor as a Consultant Team Lead in the MDU on 1st November, 2018 without



observing the Council's normal recruitment procedures and without going through the administrative and Human Resource apparatus of Council.

- iii. That on various dates in 2019, Manja Isata Kargbo received the total sum of **Two Hundred Million Eight Hundred and Forty-two Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty-three Leones (Le 200,842,333)** as travelling expenses while accompanying the Mayor on her foreign trips: **Fifty-two Million One Hundred and Fifty-eight Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-six Leones (Le 52,158,176)** for a trip to Copenhagen, Denmark for the C40 World Mayors Summit; **Fifteen Million Nine Hundred and Two Thousand Leones (Le 15,902,000)** for a trip to the United States of America for the TED Women; **Fifty-eight Million Nine Hundred and Forty Thousand Leones (Le 58,940,000)** for a trip to Durban, South Africa for the Global Parliament of Mayors; **Twenty-eight Million One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand One Hundred and Forty-eight Leones (Le 28,144,148)** for a trip to South Carolina, United States of America for the Ground Breaking IAAM Charleston Structure and Bloomberg City Lab; **Thirty-three Million Nine Hundred and Ninety-four Thousand Leones Six Hundred and Thirty-eight Cents (Le 33,994,638)** for a trip to United States of America for the International African American Museum and Mayor's Migration Council; and **Sixteen Million and Thirty-three Thousand Leones (Le 16,033,000)** for a trip to Paris, France for the C40 Women in Climate Change. Manja Isata Kargbo however refunded the sum of One Thousand, Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$ 1,250) in its equivalent in Leones out of the One Thousand Four Hundred Dollars (\$1,400) paid to her in Leones for the said trip.
- iv. That for the trip to Copenhagen, the Foreign and Protocol Officer mistakenly paid Manja Isata Kargbo the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) instead of Four Hundred Dollars (\$400) when a request for additional two days per diem was made.
- v. That these payments were improper payments as captured in the Auditor General's Report.
- vi. That the Commission takes note of the Administrative Inquiry Report into the Management of the Freetown City Council commissioned by the MLGRD in November, 2021, which stated as follow;
- 1) That the issue of the MDU is the greatest threat to peaceful coexistence at the FCC. The introduction of the Unit in the governance structure of the FCC has caused ill feelings in the minds of the FCC functionaries.
 - 2) That there is need to critically re-examine the position/status of the MDU within Council with a view of abolishing it and transferring roles and responsibilities to regular Council staff.
 - 3) That a cumulative sum of Two Hundred Million Leones (Le200,000,000) was paid from Council account to a non-Council staff (an MDU staff) for various overseas



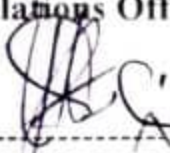
trips. These payments were not provided for a part of expected Council expenditure. Therefore, the payment contravenes the Local Government Act 2004.

- 4) That the MDU staff who was paid a cumulative sum of Two Hundred Million Leones (Le200,000,000) for overseas trip be made to repay the amount within a period to be determined by Council.
- 5) That these findings are consistent with our separate and independent investigation of the issue and similarly confirm the findings in the Audit Report aforesaid.

The Commission, therefore, had directed that, the Consultant Team Lead in the MDU, Manja Isata Kargbo and the Mayor Yvonne Aki Sawyerr jointly pay back the sum of One Hundred and Eighty-seven Million, Nine Hundred and Four Thousand, Eight Hundred and Thirty Leones (Le 187,904,830) in lieu of criminal prosecution.

That the Mayor and Madam Kargbo had through their lawyers communicated requesting that they do not repay the said amount; but the Commission has rejected same and they are now under obligation to pay while prosecution is being considered.

For further enquiries on this and other ACC matters, please contact **Sylvanus Blake, Assistant Public Relations Officer**, on +232-78-832-131 or by email to info@anticorruption.gov.sl.


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