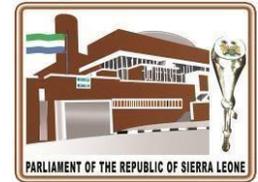




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PRESS RELEASE

**VERBATIM STATEMENT ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION BY THE SPEAKER OF
PARLIAMENT ON PARLIAMENTARY SITTING DATED TUESDAY 12/07/2022 IN THE CHAMBER
OF PARLIAMENT**

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER AT THE SITTING OF 12 JULY 2022

Hon. Members

Since our last meeting in this Chamber of Parliament in plenary, a lot has been said and written on social media about the role of this current Parliament and more especially about this particular sitting and what is perceived by many to be its aim and objective today; about my role in it as Speaker; and equally importantly about the Constitutional Instruments and the Public Elections Bill 2022 that are presently before us for consideration.

Most of what I have read and heard on social media seemed to me to have stemmed from a mountain of mischaracterisation, misunderstanding and misinformation of monumental proportions about the work of this Parliament. It is a big shame that as a nation that has earned self-rule as an Independent Sovereign Nation for over 61 years, and had once been the pride of West Africa as the “Athens of Education” there are still in our midst adult men and women who deliberately and maliciously set out through political propaganda to manipulate and deceive the masses of our people. This is most lamentable, to say the least.

So let me take this opportunity to make it abundantly clear that contrary to the hype given to the general public, the Public Elections Bill of 2022 currently before this Parliament does not introduce any new proportional representation into our law. The District Block Representation System, a form of PR, which is mentioned in the Bill, was introduced into our laws as far back as 2001 by way of a constitutional amendment that was encapsulated in Section 38A. Therefore the debate about the PR system is not going to happen in this Parliament because it is already embedded in the laws of Sierra Leone, in the Constitution of Sierra Leone, the highest law of our land.

Instead what the Public Elections Bill before this Parliament seeks to introduce is the empowerment of women to give them a justifiable say in the Parliamentary affairs of this country by raising the percentage of their representation to a minimum of thirty per cent. The Bill also seeks to strengthen the independence of the Electoral Commission by making it extremely difficult to remove the Commissioners from office. The Bill also seeks to take away the prerogative power of the President to determine the date of elections by fixing a date for such elections and this will now be set in the Constitution in the same way as is done in the United States of America.

These are the main issues that should focus our attention.

I propose to explain in greater detail to this House and to the general public the true nature and character of the Instruments that are currently before this Parliament if only to enhance their better understanding and appreciation of both their content and their implications for the political development, peace and stability of our country. In this regard, I shall also call upon the leadership of all the political parties represented in this Parliament to lend their respective voices in removing the cobwebs of misunderstanding and misinformation that seem to have surrounded the Bills before this House. To join me in this assignment will be a hallmark of great leadership and a fitting performance of our collective duty to maintain peace and stability in this country and to promote, preserve and protect the wellbeing and prosperity of all who dwell in it. This is a primordial duty that we all owe to the people of this country as Members of Parliament and to this veritable institution of Parliament.

I shall most certainly perform mine as and when necessary. For now I shall just simply say here clearly and loudly, and with all the authority at my command as Speaker of this Parliament, and mindful also of the need to accelerate momentum in our consideration of the important Bills currently before this Parliament, that our unsuspecting compatriots within this country and around the world have been hugely and thoroughly misinformed, misguided and misdirected. But, as promised, I shall elaborate on this further when we get to that point.

Also, at this crucial juncture, we should address what in my opinion constitutes the foundation upon which so much that is contained in the Public Elections Bill of 2022 is grounded. And it is imperative that first and foremost we construct the foundation of the metaphoric building if the essence of the new electoral edifice – the Public Elections Bill of 2022- is to be understood and accepted by all and sundry.

This is precisely the manner in which the Order Paper for today's sitting has been crafted.

Suffice it, however, that I should make mention here of the egregious harm that has been committed by a certain individual who decided unilaterally and without prior authorisation from me to upload my personal telephone number on the social media. This singular act of his has caused me great harm. And he did not just stop there. He went on to exhort Sierra Leoneans both at home and abroad to send messages to my phone about the perceptions they hold about the Public Elections Bill and what they believe it is purporting to introduce into our body politic. To say the very least, these acts constitute as much intimidation and harassment

as they were unwarranted and unnecessary and in effect an invitation to anarchy under the guise of respectable journalism.

Frankly, in my considered opinion, it was a most intolerable and unworthy display of reckless journalism. And I want to take this opportunity to condemn it completely and unreservedly so that the individual concerned would be better advised in future to try to think twice before indulging in any more despicable and uncanny activities of this sort from the comfort environment of his overseas habitat. I hope a word for the wise is sufficient.

END

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