SUBJECT: SECOND SESSION OF THE FORUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW ON: PARLIAMENTS AS PROMOTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW.

**SUGGESTED TOPIC: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW.**

Parliament is the supreme law making body in almost every state. No state can function well without laws - I mean good laws. This means that those law makers in Parliament/Senate should not just be mere politicians but men and women with adequate expertise/knowledge in different fields. The legislative role of Parliament therefore is the basis of promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The concepts of human rights, democracy and the rule of law are inseparable and should be treated with utmost seriousness in order to make way for development in every state. But how do Parliaments promote these concepts?

**Law Making**: This is the fundamental role of every Parliament. Parliament is the voice of the people. Parliamentarians/Senators should always aspire to represent their people very well by making good laws and be willing to amend or repeal laws to match up with emerging issues. Such a role will certainly promote human right, democracy and rule of law. For example Section 27 of the 1991 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone provides that no law shall be made that is discriminative in nature or in effect.

 Apart from the legislation of local laws Parliament is also responsible for the domestication of international treaties. Several international treaties and conventions are geared towards promoting rule of law democracy and human rights. It therefore follows that member states to treaties through their Parliaments should aspire to domesticate those international laws that promote these tripartite development concepts.

Another way is through its **Oversight** role over ministries, departments and agencies including non-government institutions. Sierra Leone like many other states, Parliament has the authority to summon government ministers and other officials who find themselves in the business of developing the nation and empowering the people. For instance, with sincerity of purpose, Parliament can summon officials of multi-national organizations and probe into any allegation of human rights abuse and environmental degradation. Such probing will shield the respectability of Parliament and protect the right of people and the environment. By this way Parliament act as check and balance to institutions and endeavour to curtail the excesses of other arms of government and non-government institutions.

**International Collaboration**: We live in global village and no state can develop in isolation. Therefore international Parliamentary collaboration and partnership are pivotal towards promoting human rights, democracy and rule of law. When parliamentarians from different parliaments gather together it creates an opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities for all. Different international instruments that are tailored towards this tripartite concept could be discussed and ways of implementing brought to the fore. The concept of human right, democracy and rule of law are modern concept which can be only entrenched at local state levels with collaborative effort.

**Scrutinizing and Approving Presidential Nominees**: The issue of human right, democracy and the rule of law also has to do with servants of states. In any state the President appoints ministers and other servants of the state. However this power to appoint does not exclusively lie with the President. In Sierra Leone as in many other states for example, Presidential appointments are subject to the approval of parliament. Parliament however has the right to turn down presidential nominations if in the opinion of Parliament the nominee is not fit and proper to serve in a particular position. This is a way to prevent the head of the executive from becoming too powerful and despotic. So where a president appoints a person with a bad human right or a serious criminal record it is within the powers of Parliament to reject such a person. This in itself strengthens democracy, rule of law and human right.

In conclusion the role of parliament in promoting human rights, democracy and rule of law could not be over-emphasized. There is no denying that parliaments/senates play a very crucial role in ensuring that these inseparable concepts are realized for the development of any state. And this is made possible by upholding the supremacy and independence of this all important body. What is clear to all of us is that they both weak parliament and powerful ones. It is therefore imperative that international collaboration in between and amongst regional and international parliaments like Ecowas, African Union, Pan-African and European Union is pursued in a bid to capacitate the weaker parliaments to face the complex and herculean tasks associated with the work of parliament.

**NAMES OF DELEGATES**

1. Hon. Param Tarawally - Clerk of Parliament
2. Hon. Hindolo M. Gevao - Chairman- Human Right Committee
3. Hon. Wuyatta Songa - Member of Parliament
4. Hon. Edwaed George - Member of Parliament