

PARLIAMENTARIANS ON DEFENCE AND PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VISIT ACC

The Acting Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Morlai Buya-Kamara said the Commission is presently investigating fifty (50) cases and about twelve (12) cases are presently being prosecuted in court.

He made this statement whilst addressing nine members of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Defence and Presidential Affairs who visited the Commission on Wednesday 16th June at the Commission's Headquarter at 3 Gloucester Street, Freetown.

The purpose of their visit, was to see the Commission at work, to learn about the improvements made by the Commission for the last twelve months, to have first hand knowledge about cases that have not been addressed as well as the challenges faced by the Commission and the time frame for investigating and prosecuting a matter. The Acting Commissioner informed the gathering that the Commission is working as normal since the departure of the former Commissioner.

The Acting Commissioner Anti-Corruption Commission Morlai Buya Kamara said he is delighted in welcoming the Honourable members to the Commission. He stated the ACC has been acting impartially in its dealing with the general public, adding that the Commission normally takes the three pronged approach in fighting corruption. This, he said include education, prevention and enforcement.

He also intimated the Parliamentarians that the Commission has two regional offices one in Bo and another in Makeni. He added that the Commission has just received the keys to their newly constructed Office in Kenema and that a piece of land has been allocated to the Commission in Freetown for the construction of a Purpose –Built Office.

Mr. Buya Kamara thanked the Government for its support to the Commission, noting that between 70% and 80% of the Commission's financial support comes from the Government of Sierra Leone. The Commission also receives support from donor partners such as DFID, Irish Aid, GTZ and the World Bank.

Chief among the major challenges he highlighted were accommodation for the Headquarter Office, capacity building and security.

Explaining about the activities of the different departments, The Chief of Investigations, Evelyn Walker told the Honourable members of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Defence and Presidential Affairs that the Intelligence, Investigations and Prosecution Department look into corruption matters reported and take necessary measures. She said the official period for the completion of an investigation is ninety (90) days, but said it is not always possible to meet this target due to the difficulty in obtaining documents. Ms. Walker said her Department currently has forty three (43) cases they are dealing with.

The Director Systems and Processes Review Department, Neneh Dabo explained briefly the systems review process, Mrs. Dabo said the Systems and Processes Review Department (SPRD), review the Systems in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). She said corruption occurs in the Public Sector because of the lack of control mechanism and the SPRD reviews seeks to put these mechanisms in place in the MDAs adding that it is an holistic process which include examining financial procedures, human resource, procurement procedure and Code of Ethics/Conduct. She informed the gathering that Systems Review has been carried out in a number of institutions including the Ministry of Local Government and Internal Affairs, Agriculture and Food Security, Sierra Leone Police, Prisons, National Fire Force, Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Ministry of Education.

In his statement, the Director of Support Services Department, Maurice Williams said the present staff strength is one hundred and thirty nine (139). Mr. Williams said this number is grossly inadequate but the lack of accommodation is limiting the employment of new staff.

The Acting Director of the Public Education Department, Desmond Johnson said the Public Education and External Outreach Department educates the public on the evils of corruption as well as solicit public support in fighting corruption. He said a curriculum has been developed for corruption issues to be taught in schools. Mr. Johnson noted that presently students in Teacher Training Colleges are being taught these issues and will in turn teach pupils in primary schools. He said the Commission hopes to extend it up to secondary and university level. He said presently Integrity Clubs are established in schools to teach the pupils on behavioral change.

Other matters discussed include the ACC's relationship with the Attitudinal and Behavioral Change Secretariat, Transparency and Accountability Committee and Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, the Ombudsman and the Judiciary.

Heading the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Defence and Presidential Affairs, the Chairman of the Committee, Hon. Charles Kalawa said they were delighted about the work of the Commission. Hon. Kalawa commended the staff of the Commission for their good work. He said they look forward to better collaboration with the Commission.

The Deputy Commissioner took the Honourable Parliamentarians on a conducted tour of the various departments.