



## **HRC SL ENGAGES AG: DISCUSSES FUNCTIONS, STATE OBLIGATIONS AND UPR PROCESS**

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) on Friday 21st August 2020 engaged the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mr. Anthony Brewa at his office on the functions of HRCSL, challenges faced, review of legislation and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

The HRCSL Chairperson, Patricia Narsu Ndanema firstly congratulated the AG and gave a brief background to the establishment of the HRCSL and also threw light on some of its functions. Dilating on some of the functions one of which is to advise Government on the review of existing Legislation, the Chairperson stated that the Commission is mandated by its Act to give advice to Government on any law that will affect the enjoyment of the human rights of all in Sierra Leone. She also spoke about the function to investigate and inquire into complaints and also to produce a report of the Annual State of Human Rights in Sierra Leone.

Mrs. Ndanema continued by stating that since the HRCSL was directly under the Office of the Attorney General, it saw it fit to engage his office from time to time. She went on to inform the Minister of the shadow report to be prepared by the Commission for the Universal Periodic Review. To inform that report, she disclosed of a planning Conference for stakeholders to examine recommendations proffered by Countries during the previous UPR on Sierra Leone in 2016. The Chairperson used the opportunity to highlight some of the challenges of HRCSL which included lack of vehicles, Office space, staffing, liabilities and the disparity between the budget sealing given by the Ministry of Finance to that of the actual subvention given. The Chairperson noted the plan by the Commission to review its Act as it is limited to complaints against Government officials.

Acknowledging the efforts by the AG's office, the Director of Finance of HRCSL, Mr. Paul Moriba stated that the Ministry has been very helpful especially with matters involving the Ministry of Finance and the Commission's entitlements. Speaking on HRCSL's function to review existing legislation, the Vice Chairperson; Victor I. Lansana mentioned that they recommended the repeal of the Criminal and Seditious Libel provisions in the 1965 Public Order Act, participated in the sexual offences act, the criminal procedures act, disability act and have called to look into the present status of the reviewed 1991 Constitution.



He also asked that the Commission be included in the drafting of any Bill that has to do with human rights.

Reacting to the issues raised, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice stated that there were serious misconceptions about the Human Rights Commission to all MDAs. He said HRCSL was seen as a watch dog instead of being part of the governance system. He commented that the HRCSL does not only look at the activities of government but also those of the private sector. He assure the Commission of his support whenever his office was contacted.

The Minister stated that work was in progress on the Criminal Procedures Act of 1965 and the review 1991 Constitution was also presently on his desk.

He concluded by asking that the commission formally writes his office highlighting the challenges and also make sure to inform his office whenever they have issues regarding other MDAs.