



# Budget Advocacy Network

“we believe in participation transparency & accountability”

Freetown –Sierra Leone

11<sup>th</sup> November 2022

## Auditor General's Suspension- One Year Gone but still no Pathway to the End

It is one year today and still counting since Sierra Leone's Auditor General, Mrs Lara Taylor-Pearce and one of her deputies, Mr Tamba Momoh, were suspended from office. A Tribunal was set up on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to look into the alleged misconduct for which charges were only brought up by the state almost seven (7) months after their suspension.

We are concerned about the snail pace with which the Tribunal proceedings are unfolding, which has created uncertainty as to when all of these would end. In our previous press statements<sup>1</sup> dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022 on this matter, Budget Advocacy Network (BAN) members reminded the Government of Sierra Leone not to undermine public accountability, which is fundamental for good governance and development. Our press statements also appealed to the government to refrain from actions that would hamper efforts in maintaining fiscal discipline and accountable use of public resources.

Over the years, the Auditor-General and team have offered immense support to uncover corruption and mismanagement of public resources. This is evident in several Audit reports, which were also utilized in the last Commission of Inquiry. It goes to say that the suspended Auditor General and her team have been very committed to their work to ensure effective financial management of public resources.

We strongly support the statement of IMF in the Article IV Review<sup>2</sup> calling for the financial and operational independence of the Audit Service Sierra Leone to be a priority and the need for timely action to ensure the independence to safeguard confidence in the management of public resources. In the IMF Article IV Review, the government states, "**We are also committed to strengthening the ASSL's independence. We are committed to a time-bound and transparent tribunal for the suspended auditor general and her deputy**". However, the public is not aware of any timeline set by the tribunal. We strongly urge the government to uphold its commitment made in the Article IV Review by publishing a clear and transparent timeline for the tribunal process.

While we still hold on to our position for His Excellency the President to reverse such a decision, we are equally very much concerned about the Tribunal's slow pace, which tends to further derail the audit accountability architecture in Sierra Leone.

### End of Statement

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**About BAN-** The Budget Advocacy Network is organized around the three principles of the budget process i.e., Participation, Transparency and Accountability. BAN is composed of local and international organizations such as the Christian Aid (CA), Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), Western Area Budget Education Advocacy Network (WABEAN), ActionAid Sierra Leone (AASL), Talking Drum Studio (TDS) and Transparency International Sierra Leone (TISL).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ban-sl.org/ban-calls-on-his-excellency-to-reconsider-the-suspension-of-the-auditor-general-and-one-of-her-deputies/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2022/English/1SLEEA2022001.ashx>