

# **NEW Presents CSOs Position Paper on the Draft Decentralization Policy to the Minister of Local Government**

National Election Watch (NEW) yesterday, Tuesday 6th October 2020 formally presented civil society's position on the draft Decentralization Policy to the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development at the Ministry's Youyi Building Office in Freetown.

The Position Paper is the outcome of the meeting of NEW and civil society leaders from across the country held in Freetown on Thursday 22nd September 2020 to specifically discuss the draft Decentralization Policy. NEW had earlier shared civil society's position with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, but not until yesterday that NEW had the opportunity to formally present it to the Minister and his team including the Deputy Minister and Director of Decentralization". NEW described the draft policy as "progressive" and that it "provides citizens the opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the past 16 years of decentralization" in the country.

However, NEW raised a number of critical issues relating to the draft policy; they include: the absence of constitutional provision for local governance; the continuous redrawing of territorial boundaries without taking into consideration historical, cultural, ethnic and social factors; conduct of local council elections on non-partisan basis; and MPs sitting in local council meetings.

NEW strongly emphasized the need for the government to finalize the Constitutional Review process, as the implementation of this progressive policy will be hampered by the failure to finalize the 1991 constitutional review process.

Receiving the Position Paper, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon Tamba Lamina, thanked NEW and the wider civil society for their active participation in the review of the decentralization policy.

He said it's in tandem with the objective of the process which is to consult widely "until the people get what they want".

"NEW is a powerful organization in this country and when it comes to elections processes, you cannot hear any better voice," the minister said.



