



SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY
**HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA G.C.R.S.L.**

*President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the
Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces*

**On the Occasion of the State Opening of the Fourth
Session of the Fourth Parliament of the Second Republic
of Sierra Leone**

**In the Chamber of Parliament Building
Tower Hill, Freetown**

On Friday, 11th December, 2015 at 10:00 a.m

MR. SPEAKER,
MR. VICE PRESIDENT,
MY LADY THE CHIEF JUSTICE,
MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT,
HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
EXCELLENCIES,
MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF FREETOWN,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The last 18 months have been very difficult for our country. A disease we knew nothing about attacked us with a ferocity greater than war, greater than terrorism, greater than anything this country had ever faced before. The Ebola epidemic claimed more than 3,500 lives of our compatriots, over 200 of them healthcare workers. Schools and universities were closed, and the provision of non-Ebola healthcare faced very severe constraints. The outbreak curtailed normal development activities, with most mining, manufacturing, and trading activities coming to a standstill. Real GDP is now projected to contract by 21.5 percent in 2015. A number of foreign-financed investment projects scaled-down resulting in a reduction in investment-related spending. The country's international image that we had worked so hard to rebrand, suffered. Flights to our country were cancelled, and our people were greatly stigmatized in many airports and other places in foreign countries.

2. But we fought back. The fight was on two main fronts, the foremost battle was to defeat the virus; but very important also was the battle to prevent Ebola from totally overwhelming every other sector of our society. This other battle was the battle to continue to pay salaries, to keep some flights to Sierra Leone running and prevent other countries from shutting down their doors on us. This other fight was the fight to mobilize resources, to maintain law and order, to keep vehicles running, to ensure that salaries of thousands of Sierra Leonean mine workers

were paid in spite of the severe challenges our largest iron ore mine was facing, to prevent starvation in the midst of low farm activities, to support local councils with tens of billions of leones, to sustain our democracy by ensuring that this great House of the People continues to pass laws; to get the courts and justice system running, and to keep the state from totally collapsing as it did at some point during the rebel war.

3. The world had predicted millions of deaths, but we prevented that. The world said 90% of persons with Ebola would die, but our Ebola response workers ensured that the survival rate was more than four times what the world predicted; the world said there would be breakdown of law and order, but we maintained security by deploying our own soldiers and police.

4. The fight showed the best of our country. Sierra Leoneans at treatment and holding centres, labs, the staff of the NERC, the DERCs, the Health Ministry, burial teams, and other response agencies developed a work ethic and culture of delivery and excellence that was extraordinary. From knowing nothing about Ebola, our fighting force of over 35,000 Ebola response workers – most of them young people - are now the world experts on Ebola. Many of them were kicked out by landlords worried about the risks they posed. Their spouses and partners abandoned them. But they continued to go to work each day, to risk their lives so they could save the lives of fellow Sierra Leoneans. Some got infected and died. Others survived. After their discharge from treatment centres many of them went straight back to work, putting themselves in harm's way. They have showed us the way and we thank them for it. But we must also have in our prayers those who died, and I hereby ask, ladies and gentlemen, that we stand up in prayer and memory of their lives.

5. Mr. Speaker, whilst the overwhelming majority of our people showed great dedication during the fight, Ebola also revealed some of the worst things in our society. Some people deliberately spread false news to create panic and confusion. Some posted dangerous misinformation on social media. Others incited communities to undermine their cooperation with the Ebola response. But perhaps

most shocking was that whilst many of us saw Ebola as a calamity, others saw it as an opportunity. In some cases some of these people were prepared to put their own interests above those of their colleagues, their communities and their country. We heard about people who were supposed to be in charge of facilities and teams adding names of their friends and families to hazard pay lists and excluding hard working nurses and frontline workers. These people did not see the importance of personal responsibility and accountability at the most crucial time in the life of our nation.

6. But we will not let the worst amongst us deter the best in us. We must continue to uphold our best practices; we must continue with the better habits of partnership, sanitation, and transparency that got us to defeat Ebola. And we must not also forget that there is life after Ebola, that we need to recover from the traumas of the disease and build a post-Ebola society that is more resilient, better, and fairer. My Government has designed and commenced implementation of our Post-Ebola Recovery Plan. The Plan has two phases. The first phase involves emergency but very detailed 6-9 months actions in health, education, social protection and reviving the economy through private sector promotion. The second phase is a 24 months plan that begins soon after the first phase. The second phase is aimed at sustaining and broadening our actions in health education, social protection, the private sector, water resources and energy.

7. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I chair The Presidential Delivery Team that supervises and monitors the implementation of the plan. Of the 30 initiatives being directly tracked for completion during the first phase of our recovery programme 22 are on track for completion within the timeframe. We are therefore laying a firm foundation for recovery that will take us back to the path towards prosperity. And I am very confident that with the support of this Honourable House; and the proven resilience and dedication of leaders right across the country, from government ministries to local councils, chiefdoms and village communities, we will surely achieve the goals set forth for the second phase of the Post Ebola Recovery Plan. Permit me now Mr. Speaker to give an account of the progress we have made in our priority sectors, as well our actions in other areas.

Health

8. Mr. Speaker, even as we were anticipating the end of the Ebola outbreak, my government had already taken the proactive step of developing a Health Sector Recovery Plan (HSRP) to ensure the immediate and seamless resumption of essential health services. The first part of the Plan focused on ensuring that our health facilities are safe for both the health care workers and the patients and that essential health services particularly those related to Reproductive, Neonatal, Maternal, and Child Health services (RMNCH) are restored as quickly as possible. Over 6000 health care workers have been trained in infection prevention and control. IPC committees have been established in all health care facilities to monitor compliance with patients and health worker safety protocols.

9. All the more than 1,200 Peripheral Health Units (PHUs) and 40 Hospitals nationwide have fully resumed their operations and services to the public including the Free Health Care Initiative. Over 2500 EVD survivors have benefited from our expanded free health care. We have intensified both routine and supplementary immunization of our children against the killer childhood diseases with very high coverage; over 1,475,856 children 0-59 months were vaccinated against Polio which represented 98.8% coverage and over 206, 229 women of child bearing age have received at least two doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine.

10. Ante-natal and under five consultations as well as institutional deliveries are on the rise again after a slump during the EVD. This is an indication that our health facilities are gradually regaining the confidence of our people. In 2016 and 2017 the Ministry of Health will prioritize maintaining resilient zero cases of EVD and address the other factors that would help to drastically reduce maternal and child mortality. We will continue to provide the necessary equipment, intensify monitoring, improve medical waste management and WASH in health facilities to ensure zero infections in health facilities.

11. We will strengthen district capacity to deliver quality services by bringing in health professionals from the African Union and Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora. We will also intensify training of medical professionals domestically focusing on

middle level cadres. The School of Health Sciences in Makeni which was used as an Ebola treatment centre has been decontaminated and it will be utilized to train Clinical Assistants to work primarily in hospitals with a possibility to extend to other disciplines.

12. We will establish a Postgraduate Medical Training Institute to train Specialist Medical Doctors locally. The Act for the establishment of a Postgraduate Medical Training College will soon be presented to Parliament for ratification. We will continue to implement the Service Level Agreement approach that I launched on the 4th of July this year. The SLA ensures that we know who does what, where, and with how much.

13. We will establish the National Medical Emergency Services to provide pre-hospital care and transportation of patient to hospital and strengthen the referral system using a public private partnership approach.

14. We will strengthen the capacity of the Directorate of Environmental Health and Sanitation to monitor environmental safeguards. We will revise the Public Health Ordinance of 1960; re-establish front-line sanitary monitoring across the country, and sanitary courts for prosecution of non-compliance.

15. We will establish a functional national laboratory network with increased capacity for quality assessment, information system, and supervision.

16. Mr. Speaker, My Government is committed to ensuring that within the next 12 months, all of our over 1,200 Peripheral Health Units have reliable solar power, clean primary water source with submersible solar-powered pumps, and solar powered refrigerators to store essential medicines including vaccines.

17. My Government will also establish a Centre for Disease Control that will be able to predict, respond to and decisively deal with infectious diseases like Ebola.

18. We will need support from our development partners in delivering these goals for our people. This is why we are also creating the environment to ensure effective collaboration in the implementation of the various projects in the health sector. We have re-established the Integrated Health Projects Administration Unit (IHPAU). This unit will fast-track the execution of donor funded projects, improve financial accountability, increase our absorptive capacity and strengthen international confidence in national structures.

19. We will continue to implement the Free Health Care Initiative focusing on reproductive, neonatal and child health, family planning and nutrition services within the context of the revised basic package of essential health services. We established the free health initiative to improve the health of pregnant women, children and young mothers; we allocated billions of Leones to prevent new mothers from dying from childbirth; we improved salaries for health workers, procured and supplied drugs to health centres all over the country to sustain joy of families bringing in new human life to the world. But the current maternal and child health statistics is a great challenge to our efforts. To create greater urgency to addressing this tragedy, I am declaring Maternal and Child Health a National Health Emergency.

20. We will leverage resources that came to this country from our international partners during our fight against Ebola to advance the health sector goal of building functional and resilient national and sub-national health systems that deliver safe, efficient and high quality health care services that are accessible, equitable and affordable for all Sierra Leoneans.

Education

21. In education, our goal has been to reopen safe schools, improve access and ease costs of sending kids to school on parents and guardians, and foster a conducive learning environment. To date, my Government has paid for and supported the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) to conduct all school level exams, including those that should have been conducted before schools were closed in 2014. We have expanded payment of school fees to cover not only fees

for the primary but also the secondary level. In 2015, we paid school fees for 777,917 primary school pupils, 232,294 junior secondary pupils and 119,524 senior secondary pupils. We also paid fees subsidies for all students in our public universities. All Paramount Chiefs and many other traditional leaders became members of the education team carrying out social mobilisation and ensuring that schools were safe on opening and remained safe. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) that was postponed in 2014 was taken in April 2015 by a total of 90,616 candidates as against 75,357 in 2013. The fact that 15,000 more took the BECE examination in April 2015 indicated that pupils returned in large numbers when schools re-opened. More importantly, 53,085 candidates passed the April 2015 BECE in contrast to the 44,190 in 2013. For the first time in recent years, we have developed a core content to be taught in schools, moving away from the dependency on content set by examining bodies; and we have trained 9,000 teachers on the use of the core content.

22. Recognising the impact of the closure of schools on young girls during the epidemic, we have commenced a government led education programme for pregnant girls built around what is culturally acceptable. For the first time, pregnant school girls have been categorised as students with special needs. We have registered and are providing special education services for over 5,000 teenage pregnant girls and lactating mothers in 91 community learning centres across the country, exceeding the original target of 3,000.

23. Mr. Speaker, the Education Ministry has completed the first phase of its recovery plan, and it is now focusing on sustaining this progress and acting on the goals spelt out in its Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2014 – 2018. These include supporting the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) to take over teacher management so that it could contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools; using school feeding to enhance retention in schools; and developing minimum standards for institutions at all levels of education.

Private sector

24. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, underlining my Government's recovery programme is our plan to revamp the private sector to lay the foundations for medium and long term economic growth.

25. In this regard, we have provided seeds to more than 69,000 farming households out of a target of 70,000. We have distributed fertilizers to more than 31,000 farming households out of a target of 40,000. We have identified fifty (50) agricultural business centres or ABCs for transformation into legal persons and we are training their managers and operators on business management and machine operations.

26. We are going to provide access to finance for more than 29,000 petty traders across the country in order to help them restart their businesses and cushion the impact of the Ebola epidemic on their businesses. We are also creating the SME Agency that will serve as the principal government agency regulating and supporting the operations of SMEs in Sierra Leone. In the second phase of the recovery we will utilize the Agency to ensure rapid local SME growth and we will also enhance agriculture's potential for job creation. The Road Maintenance Fund Administration will also support the private sector through capacity building for local road contractors.

Social protection

26. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, whereas the Ebola epidemic affected every one of us, the brunt of the disease has been borne by the most vulnerable of our compatriots. It is for this reason that my government has prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable in our society, in our post-Ebola recovery plan.

28. We have therefore profiled more than 43,800 poor and vulnerable households; providing income support for more than 31, 600 across the country, with the target of 50,000 expected before the close of the year. My Government has provided minimum assistance packages for more than 27, 800 beneficiaries across the country.

29. During the second phase of the Recovery Plan, we will continue with ongoing support for EVD-affected populations, including their inclusion in Free Healthcare; and provide cash transfers to 150,000 vulnerable households.

Energy

30. Mr. Speaker, my Government's objective remains 1000 megawatts by 2017 to increase access to energy in Freetown, provincial headquarter cities and rural areas.

31. Works on the rehabilitation and reinforcement of Low and Medium Voltage Distribution Networks in the western part of Freetown and the Upgrade of Primary Networks in the eastern part have commenced. These interventions will improve on the quality of electricity supply in the western and eastern parts of Freetown and extend access to electricity to unserved areas in Freetown, Waterloo, Deep Eye Water, Devil Hole, New London Hasting, Peace Camp Hasting, Leicester Road, Upper Allen Town, Bottle Field, Pamuronkoh Calaba Town, Blackhall Road, Joshua Drive, Wellington, Upper Savage Squire, Upper New England Ville, Rokupa Hospital, Riverside Drive, Electricity House, Joaque Bridge, Cockeril, Collegiate, Lumley and Lower Roportee.

32. My Government has signed the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Solar Era for the installation of 5MW of Solar Power plant for Bo. Also, Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House has ratified the Agreement between my Government and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development for the installation of 6MW solar power park in Newton and its environs. On 22nd of October this year, the Government of Sierra Leone and Department for International Development (DFID) signed an agreement to partner in the Energy Africa Campaign. This partnership will complement our efforts to expand large-scale energy infrastructure connecting people now, while they wait for the grid to reach them. This is in line with our Agenda for Prosperity bringing electricity to all of our 149 chiefdoms using modern solar and other renewable technology.

33. Mr. Speaker, my Government has also embarked on the implementation of the Cote D' Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea (CLSG) Project funded by the African Development Bank. The project will provide a 225 KV Transmission line across seven districts (Pujehun, Kenema Kono, Tonkolili, Bombali, Koinadugu and Kambia). The CLSG project will also encompass a rural electrification component from which, twenty-six (26) communities, including schools and health centres will be provided with electricity supply.

Water Resources

34. To increase access to safe and water affordable, my Government embarked on several projects:

35. The Three Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Project for Bo, Kenema and Makeni is now over 65% complete and is expected to be in full operations by March 2016. Water Supply Projects in Pujehun, Kailahun, Lunsar, Mile91/ Yonibana, Lungi Phase I, Kambia and Kabala have been completed.

36. The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP) geared towards provision of water supply to over 625,000 rural inhabitants in Pujehun, Bonthe, Koinadugu and Kambia Districts is on track. Feasibility studies and preliminary designs for the Port Loko, and Koidu-New Sembehun water projects are now being reviewed by the Kuwaiti Fund.

37. We have also taken steps to improve water supply in the Western Area, particularly to low income earners. The Thunder Hill Water Supply is 65% complete, the Sumaila Town Community Water Supply is 80% complete and the construction of Waterloo Gravity System is 85% complete. When all these come on stream in 2016, there would be a considerable increase in access to safe and affordable water. The Rokel Water Supply Project (New Dam) for Freetown is now in advanced stages of funds mobilization.

38. My Government has also approved funding for the construction of Water Supply in Bonthe Town and Mattru Jong, Njala and Tiama and for the expansion of Lungi Water Supply. My Government has also approved funding for the Procurement of Water Meters and establishment of Laboratories in all provincial stations, and rehabilitation of Guma Water Treatment Facilities and distribution Network.

39. We have continued the reform of the water sector. The Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC) has also commenced operations to ensure that the utilities are adequately regulated. We will soon submit to this Honourable House a National Water Resources Management Bill to enhance water resources management.

Finance and Economic Development

40. Mr. Speaker, though we are still facing great challenges our economy is slowly recovering. We experienced a gradual recovery in the non-iron ore sector in the second quarter, which helped domestic revenue remain in line with projections.

41. My Government continues to make significant progress in the implementation of the economic and financial programmes supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through the Extended Credit Facility (ECF). We pursued fiscal consolidation during the first half of 2015 through enhanced revenue collection efforts and expenditure restraint. The combined third and fourth review undertaken by the IMF and my Government in September 2015 to assess programme performance for end of June 2015 showed that all the Quantitative Performance Criteria were met. Also, Sierra Leone maintained the score of 3.3 under the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) rating for 2014.

42. In the Financial Sector, Government through the efforts of the National Commission for Privatization and the Bank of Sierra Leone has recapitalized the Rokel Commercial Bank, and, NASSIT has invested Le19bn in the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank 's equity to bring them in conformity with prescribed regulatory framework. The Bank of Sierra Leone continues to promote financial sector development by providing the appropriate regulatory framework to enable the use

of a new generation of financial instruments and types of transaction such as mobile financial services. The Bank is putting in place the infrastructure to support a modern payments and settlement system; and also preparing a National Financial Inclusion strategy with the objective of increasing access to affordable finance.

43. Mr. Speaker, we have also made progress in the implementation of certain critical reforms. The final draft of the Public Financial Management Bill, replacing the Government Budget and Accountability Act 2005, was gazetted and submitted to Parliament on 27th August 2015 for enactment. This Act will promote greater accountability for efficient allocation and use of public funds. The establishment of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) is far advanced and we expect it to go live by end-December 2015. Also, to further strengthen tax administration, a Tax Administration Bill will soon be submitted to Parliament for enactment.

44. Mr. Speaker, in September this year, I joined other world leaders and adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be implemented by all countries to end poverty and attain sustainable development by 2030. My Government is committed to meeting the SDGs. Sierra Leone's rating on financial governance is on the increase. In the 2015 Global Budget Index Survey, we scored 52 out of 100, above the global average of 45%. As Sierra Leone chairs the G7 Plus Group of Fragile and Conflict Affected States we will continue to take the lead in the implementation of the New Deal in the Mutual Accountability Framework.

Reviving the Mineral Sector

45. Mr. Speaker, the combined effect of falling commodities prices and the Ebola outbreak have had serious impact on the mining sector, resulting in some changes in the operations of the major mining companies. The African Minerals Limited ran into financial difficulties and was acquired by Shandong Iron and Steel Group. The Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources played a key role in the negotiations between Shandong and AML leading to Shandong acquisition of 100% of Tonkolili Iron Ore Limited (TIO). During that process, Shandong signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Government to resume operations** later in 2015. The company is concluding negotiations with contractors, after which, it has committed to start and ramp up production to 18 million tons per annum starting in 2016.

46. We are also promoting transparency in the minerals sector. In 2015, we upgraded the Mining Cadastre Administration System to effectively process, record and monitor applications, licenses and revenue. Records on revenues from all fees and taxes could now be accessed by the public. We have also published all major mining contracts online, on the NMA website.

Marine Resources

47. We have just launched a fisheries inspection vessel into our waters to provide surveillance patrol for both artisanal and industrial fishing activities as well as serve as a research laboratory for marine related activities. We continue to monitor all licensed and poaching vessels through a 24 hour Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Automatic Identification System (AIS) and we have enhanced the capacity of our local communities with 6 inshore fiber glass boats for community surveillance for the marine protected areas.

48. To further enhance private sector intervention in the sector, we have signed a PPP investment agreement with a Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) Company for the management of our four Fish receiving Centres at Goderich, Tombo, Shenge and Bonthe.

49. We are implementing a Technical Cooperation Project to build capacities of fish farmers and develop local fish feed production technology in our country. Fish ponds are now being constructed and managed in key hinterland areas including Makali in the North, Bo in the South and Kono in the East.

Infrastructure

50. Mr. Speaker, the outbreak halted work on some of our infrastructural projects, but we pushed on to prevent a complete stop. We continued with the rehabilitation of Weima Bridge, 40Km of feeder roads in Constituencies 12 and 13 in the Kenema District, and the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder roads and township roads in all 19 Local Councils. We are also continuing the rehabilitation of the 86 km Kenema–Pendembu Road, the Tokeh –Lumley (Phase III) highway Project, the 120km Makeni – Kabala road Project (Phase 1), the 120km

Matotoka – Sefadu road Projects, and Phase 11 of the Hillside Bye-Pass road. We will continue with on-going Government of Sierra Leone Funded Projects including the rehabilitation of roads in Moyamba, Bonthe/Mattru Jong and Pujehun District Headquarter Towns totaling 23km, and the rehabilitation of Kissy Road and Fourah Bay Road.

51. We have awarded contracts for the Bo-Mattru-Jong road, Moyamba-Shenge road, the Pujehun-Gbondapi road, Moyamba Junction–Moyamba town road, the Magbang Bridge and a two lane Magbele Bridge. We have commenced the bidding process for the Pendembu-Kailahun road and contracts will be awarded shortly. We have also given approval for the widening of the Wellington-Masiaka Highway to four-lane on a Public Private Partnership basis.

52. My government will also rehabilitate the Bandajuma –Mano River bridge road and the Bo – Bandajuma road. We will construct the Sewa Bridge, Bandajuma Bridge and Moa (Bandajuma) bridge. Projects and studies that we will fund mainly from our resources also include the Construction of the 42 km Tagrin-Lungi-Konakridee Project, rehabilitation of Western Rural District roads (Waterloo Township) Project, rehabilitation of Mile 88 – Yonibana – Mile 91 (Yoni Loop) road Project, the 70 km of the Freetown Phase II Road Project, and rehabilitation of Makeni-Kabala Road Project – Phase II. We have also received favourable responses from the Islamic Development Bank on funding for the Kambia – Madina – Tomparie - Kamakwie Road and we are putting up proposals to our partners for funding of Kamakwie –Bafordia-Kabala Road.

Information

53. Through the combined efforts of Government and our development partners, most of the major towns and cities now have Fiber Optic Cable terminating or passing through them. The ECOWAN project has been completed including the setting up of a 4G speed wireless MDA Government data network.

54. We enacted the Telecommunications Amendment Act of 2015 that lifted the monopoly rights over the Telecommunications Gateway in this Sector. And we are committed to switching to Multiple International Gateways to fully achieve an efficient, effective and liberalized telecommunication System. With support from the Islamic Development Bank, the EXIM Bank of China and India, my government

is finalizing the construction of an in-country terrestrial distribution network, E-Government Infrastructure and last mile solutions to support open access and affordability of telecommunication facilities and services all-round the Country. Government is determined to divest more than 51% of its interest in the SALCAB within the shortest possible time- reflective of our commitment under the World Bank supported West African Regional Communication Infrastructure Project.

Transport

55. Mr. Speaker, public transport had become a big challenge, our school children were finding it difficult to move to and from school, business women and workers were stranded at rush hours, my Government responded by providing 100 buses. We have reintroduced the school bus system; we have allocated buses to every district headquarter and other popular routes. With revenues generated from these buses and from other sources we are committed to bringing in more.

56. In relation to our ports, the Container Terminal Concession Agreement is under review and the Break Bulk License Agreements issued to both Bollore and Nectar Group UK have now been ratified by this Honourable House and implementation commenced 1st October 2015. The National Commission for Privatization has completed the bidding and negotiation process for the concessioning of the SLPA Marine Slipway and Ship repair facility. We have improved safety nationwide and reduced maritime accidents through distribution of life jackets and safety sensitization. The Maritime Administration also acquired four additional vessels for surveillance, search & rescue operations and one multi-purpose vessel for oil spill response and firefighting.

57. At the same time, my government will continue to engage the contractors for the new Airport at Mamamah and development partners to agree on a viable way forward for this flagship project of our administration.

Lands, the Environment and Disaster Management

58. We validated the Sixth Edition of the National Land Policy and Financial Plan which addresses land reform, land tenure, equitable access to land, land rights of women and children, access to land for investment, land use, planning and regulation for land development. We have also completed the Second draft of the Revised Town & Country Planning Act, drafted a Sand Mining Policy and

revised the Survey Ordinance to accommodate GPS survey of parcels of land. Ministry of Lands offices have been set up in Kono, Magburaka and Waterloo. Following a needs assessment survey on the capacity of the Ministry of Lands, to improve the human resource base of the ministry, the Surveys and Lands Training School has been reopened and affiliated with the Njala University to enhance its effective functioning.

59. Consistent with our mandate, we are relocating our people from disaster-prone areas to designated and well-planned locations. Already, action is being taken to relocate victims of the flood disaster of 16th September this year.

60. We have established the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) to serve as a regulatory body against the encroachment on State land and set up the National Conservation Trust FUND (NCTF). Two hundred and fifty nine thousand, three hundred (259,300) forest tree seedlings across the country have been raised and distributed.

Tourism

61. To protect and promote our touristic resources, we designed a Master Plan for the development of Lumley Beach, provided small grants to communities in five Eco-tourism sites and engaged on geographical information system mapping of natural and cultural sites in Bo, Makeni and Western area. The restoration/preservation and conservation of cultural sites has begun with the rehabilitation of the Old Slave Yard at Kent. Going forward, My Government will also review the Development of Tourism Act 1990, and the Monuments and Relics Ordinance of 1947.

Youth

62. From education to health, community development, and employment, most of my government's programmes are youth oriented. Without the resilience of youths, we would not have conquered Ebola. I applaud their dedication as Ebola Response workers, police and military officers. I salute the cooperation we received from community youths, bike riders, musicians and market women. To further

enhance youth involvement in our country's development, a draft legislation for establishment of a National Youth Service Scheme has been gazetted. With the support and approval of this Honourable House government is set to begin the biggest intervention in the area of youth employment. Plans are also underway for the establishment of regional youth centres. In order to ensure practical learning of new farming techniques and entrepreneurial skills, the Ministry of Youth has established a National Youth Farm and Youth Village. The Youth Ministry has also established a fishing project for youths with the aim of providing employment for youths in seven coastal districts in the country.

Enhancing National Integrity, Transparency and Accountability

63. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have empowered the Audit Service to carry out its mandate more efficiently than ever in our country's history. In addition to its annual reports, the Audit Service also conducts specialized and 'Real Time' audits and; we have insisted that the Auditor General's reports should not be the property of a few kept away in some inaccessible shelves. The Public Accounts Committee of this Honourable House has conducted public hearings on issues raised in the Audit Reports. Together, we have set a precedent as for the first time, civil servants were penalized for failing to exercise due diligence in the execution of their functions.

64. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, before we came into governance, this was not happening. We have subjected ourselves to this level of assessment and public scrutiny because of our commitment to transparency and accountability and we will not relent. A follow up audit on the use of additional funds to fight the Ebola outbreak is in its final stage. This collaboration with the Audit Service should continue not just with Parliament but with all other relevant institutions. Mr. Speaker Honourable Members, by the end of this year (2015), 90% of Government's expenditure will be audited. Already, the audits of all nineteen Local Councils Accounts for the financial year ended 31st December 2014 have been completed.

65. Four Performance Audits have been completed and the ASSL continues to undertake the audit of all class "A" mining Chiefdoms, verifying and attesting reports submitted by Government agencies on the EITI process. My Government will continue to support the ASSL to continue on its noble path, to increase its audit coverage and to broaden its specialization to include Revenue, Environmental, Procurement, IT and Forensic Audits.

66. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the process of accountability and transparency is not and should not be one sided; it's a mutual process as espoused in the "Mutual Accountability Framework" under the Paris Declaration. This is why our Audit Service has extended its scope to 'donor funded projects'. But we have to ensure that it also has access to audit all monies coming in to the country as public funds irrespective of the organizations through which such funds are channeled. This includes funds channeled through Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, CBOs and any other agencies accessing public funds for and on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone.

67. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Anti-Corruption Commission has undertaken a number of systems review for some sectors of government. This is a proactive step to avert corruption in government institutions that may arise due to their structural or managerial set up. To take the fight against corruption forward we have instituted monitoring and compliance measures to key programmes undertaken by MDAs. We ensured monitoring of Ebola response in the Health Sector through the Ebola Response Transparency Initiative (ERTI), and transport and fuel management in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security. I am also heartened to note that the ACC is investigating examination fraud in our public examinations and universities with a view to prosecuting and breaking up the criminal partnership of examination officers, teachers and students engaged in this criminal activity. The ACC will also partner with the Ministry of Education to establish a network of volunteers to bring back integrity to the nation's exams.

Law and Justice

68. We have continued to strengthen the mechanisms and processes for an inclusive and more accessible justice delivery system. In this regard, my Government will shortly bring before this Honourable House the Criminal Procedure Bill for enactment. The new Act will abolish the preliminary investigations; introduce alternative forms of sentencing, and reform the jury system of trial.

69. The vast majority of our compatriots affected by the justice system cannot afford the cost of legal services. Informed by this, we have established the Legal Aid Board. The Board is now fully staffed and operational in Freetown and plans are afoot to establish branch offices in Bo, Kenema and Makeni. The Legal Aid Board represented 78 of the 88 persons recently released from Correctional facilities during the September Session of the High Court. Matters pertaining to another 546 inmates are under consideration of the Board.

70. To coordinate all of our efforts in the Justice Sector, we have strengthened Government ownership by the Justice Sector Coordination Office, an autonomous public unit that is now fully funded by Government. In this connection my Government will shortly table in Parliament the Justice Sector Coordination Office Bill for your consideration and enactment.

71. My Government is also committed to expanding access to justice through capacity building in the Ministry of Justice that will entail the deployment of State Counsels in all districts. Aligned to this, will be the establishment of Magistrate Courts in all Districts.

72. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Sierra Leone being a fully-fledged member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, remains alive to its reporting obligations under various international Human Rights Conventions and other treaties.

73. Most recently, my Government submitted to review on its initial-to-date report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights. This report was 32 years overdue but we were highly commended and declared one of the eighteen countries that are fully compliant with our obligations under the Charter.

74. The Law Reform Commission has completed the review of the Police Act, 1964 and made recommendations for the enactment of a new Police Act. The Commission has reviewed and made recommendations for the establishment of the regulatory framework for Alternative Resolution processes; it has also completed the review of the Public Elections Act, 2012 and made recommendations for the amendment. The amended Act would ensure smoother and simpler election processes.

The Public Service

75. The Public Service Commission has introduced a more objective, rigorous and fairer system of assessment and promotional examinations to enhance performance standards of civil servants in the administrative and professional cadres. The Commission also filled 255 critical vacancies in the technical, managerial and professional cadres of the Civil Service through open, competitive and merit-based recruitment and selection procedures across MDAs. Government is also reviewing Public Service Legislations to amend contradictions and inconsistencies with a view to clarifying institutional roles and responsibilities in personnel management issues, leading to the enactment of a Public Service Act.

Local Government and Decentralization

76. Coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, chiefs and local councils played critical roles in mobilizing communities to fight the Ebola outbreak.

77. To improve the welfare of our traditional authorities, my Government since 2014 is paying salaries to Paramount Chiefs and some key functionaries of the Chiefdom Councils including the Court Clerks and Chiefdom Police, which has not happened for a considerable length of time.

78. Following extensive consultations in favour of de-amalgamation, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Government is at an advanced stage of concluding proposals relating to de-amalgamating chiefdoms. We are also giving serious consideration to administrative boundary delimitation across the board.

My Government within the existing legal and regulatory framework will commence work on identifying localities that require boundary reviews. My Government, where feasible, will create new localities, districts and provinces. The reinstatement of the Karina District will be given due consideration.

Defence

79. In the war against Ebola the RSLAF provided security for medical facilities, quarantined homes and locations, checkpoint and escort duties. Our gallant soldiers constructed treatment centres across the country, and were deployed at the NERC and all DERCs in the provinces, effectively managing burial teams, running treatment centres that have turned out the highest discharged cases, working in the 117 call centre and involved in specimen and swab collection. RSLAF Engineers are currently rehabilitating The Moa Barracks referral hospital in Daru to provide medical support to troops, their dependents and the surrounding communities. The Gondama Barracks in Bo has been completed and connected to the **BKPS** main power grid. Contract for the construction of a battalion – size barracks in Kambia will be signed in the New Year.

80. The RSLAF continues to maintain troops in five UN Missions around the world. To enhance training and preparation for deployment on Peace Support Operations (PSO), the MoD/RSLAF in collaboration with development partners has established The Peace Mission Training Centre (PMTTC) at Hastings. We have a standby force ready for deployment now that we have defeated Ebola.

81. For the first time in the history of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces Military Ranks were upgraded to make room for growth and promotion for hardworking military officers. Against that background, the Chief of Defence Staff formally a Major General was promoted to the Rank of Lieutenant General while the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff and the Joint Force Commander also former Brigadier Generals were promoted to the Rank of Major Generals and the Chief of Staff was introduced in the Rank of Brigadier General. Let me use this opportunity to once again congratulate our gallant officers and other ranks of the RSLAF.

82. I salute you for bravery in the fight against Ebola; and salute your deep sense of loyalty; your professionalism and your patriotism. As your President, I once again commit myself to sustaining the improvement of your welfare, to complete the projects that Ebola disrupted, including infrastructural development in your barracks, more training, and the resumption and growth of your sterling peace keeping records. You are indeed the Pride of Sierra Leone.

Internal Affairs

83. We have commenced the transformation of the nation's multiple civil registration systems into a single consolidated system to enhance accurate and predictable data on the population. The draft Bill for the National Civil Registration Authority will soon be submitted to Parliament for enactment. Cabinet has also endorsed the adoption of the ECOWAS recommended Multiple Identification Features. The new cards will be used for travelling purposes, voting, personal identifications, financial transactions, access to services, whilst the data that will be collected will provide an updated statistics of the population which will be made available for national defence purposes, internal security, service delivery, employment and social protection. To enhance the integrity of the New Registration System, Government will draft a comprehensive National Data Protection Law which will be taken to Parliament for enactment in the First Quarter of 2016.

The Sierra Leone Police

84. I commend the Sierra Leone Police for its invaluable contribution to the fight against Ebola and for ensuring that the country remains one of the safest in the sub region. The Police supported the fight against the Ebola virus disease by deploying personnel at Ebola Command Response Centres Country-wide, the 117 Call Centre, quarantine homes and checkpoints. The Police also availed its facilities at Hastings, which served as a Treatment Centre at the height of the epidemic.

85. Furthermore, we have commenced the construction of an Ultra-Modern Headquarters for its Transnational Organized Crime Unit. A new Regional Command Headquarter at Lumley has been constructed and we are constructing new Regional, Divisional Headquarters and Police posts nation-wide at Hill Station, Bo, Makeni, and Kono.

86. To maximize training for the security sector in the country, we have commenced construction of the Sierra Leone International Law Enforcement Academy on a two hundred acre land along Magburaka –Makeni Highway. The Sierra Leone Police is globally lauded for its contribution to international peace and security. We are ready to resume our peace keeping duties and the Sierra Leone Police stands ready to contribute 800 personnel to UN and AU peace keeping missions around the world.

87. Mr. Speaker, during the last one year, the Sierra Leone Correctional Service rolled out the Correctional Service Act of 2014 by constituting the Correctional Service Council and appointed senior management under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We have also improved facilities at correctional centres and inmates undergoing vocational training in Freetown, Moyamba, Bo, Pujehun, Sefadu, Kabala and Port Loko.

International Cooperation

88. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, without international cooperation, and the huge contribution from our international friends, we would not have been able to defeat Ebola and commence our Post Ebola Recovery Programme. On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, I thank the people and Government of the United Kingdom for their invaluable contributions and international leadership in the fight against Ebola in Sierra Leone. We thank the Chinese Government for their quick response to our request. We thank the government and people of the United States, Nigeria, Cuba, South Africa, Ireland, Japan and the entire membership of the European Union and the African Union. We applaud the contributions of the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the IMF, ECOWAS and the MRU. We salute the support of the UN and its agencies, particularly UNMEER, WHO, UNICEF, and WFP. We remain grateful for the extra-ordinary frontline heroism of MSF and Red Cross. We applaud SN Brussels and Air Maroc for staying with us throughout

the outbreak, we are grateful to the Governments of Belgium and Morocco for opening their airports to direct flight from Sierra Leone. International support came from far and wide, from every continent and region of the world, and to all of you we say thanks.

89. The support we got in the fight reinforced our belief in the great value of international cooperation, and my Government shall remain committed to ensuring that Sierra Leone remains a reliable partner and represented in various sub-regional, regional and international organizations including the UN.

90. In compliance with international obligations, Mr. Speaker, we have put before this Honourable House a number of outstanding international treaties and conventions for ratification. These include the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963, the 1954 Convention on the status of stateless persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

91. As part of my Government's outreach efforts, I visited many friendly nations to deepen our ties, to promote trade, investment and resource mobilization.

92. To this end, we are upgrading the General Consulate in Nairobi, Kenya to a full resident diplomatic status at Ambassadorial level; re-establish our Embassies in Cuba, Egypt and France and then open High Commissions in South Africa and India and an Embassy in Indonesia.

93. As Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on the Reform of the UN Security Council, I have continued to raise the continental banner, promote Africa's common position on UN reform. As earlier announced to this Honourable House, we succeeded in getting one of our Human Rights Commissioners to the AU Commission on Human and People's Rights and Parliamentary Leader of the opposition to the Pan African Parliament; and a former Minister of Health is now an Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations. All of these standard bearers of our Green White and Blue in the international scene are women. We are immensely proud of the achievements of the women of this country, and with the women of this country, we shall move on to higher heights.

Conclusion

94. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we have laid before you our major actions, both in the fight against Ebola and the fight to prevent Ebola from totally paralyzing our society and making our state collapse. Sierra Leone did not know about this disease. The ferocity and strangeness of the virus initially led us to defer unto others for action and advise. But we soon found out that everybody was learning new facts about Ebola in the sub-region. So we took matters to our hands, re-organized the fight to ensure that it was Sierra Leonean led. We established the NERC, and with our leadership and heroism of our response workers, over 90% of who are Sierra Leoneans, supportive partnerships emerged, the response was strengthened, and we started reversing the onslaught of the virus. This reinforced the belief I had always held that our development must be led by us. Our progress must be borne on our shoulders, and with that, our international friends will follow the flow of our determination. Therefore, let us move forward with greater confidence in ourselves; with respect for others, but with greater conviction in our own capacities for success and achievements.

95. The fight against Ebola reinvigorated communities. After the initial panic, we made greater progress when we placed communities at the heart of our response. We listened to them, took account of their concerns and let them guide us in communicating to our people and coming up with innovative solutions to combat the spread of the deadly virus. With this approach we got community support for implementing movement restrictions, ban on mass gatherings, school closures, and stay at home campaigns etc. Many of these decisions imposed hardships on our people, but they supported us and they endured. They did this because they had faith in their leaders. This is a strong lesson. Any policy that is designed in isolation from the people it is aimed at helping is unlikely to enjoy their support or endure. Development is a process of interaction, and we must place our communities at the heart of our efforts to improve their lives through the various programmes my government will implement in the coming months.

Ebola does not accept lies – it will expose you. This is why, even when there were serious questions and challenges, the NERC, DERCs and the Ministry of Health soon put up structures in place to report to the nation exactly what was happening.

96. We must not run away from problems – instead let us find and fix them. It is only with the constant drive to improve that we can create a culture of convergence to excellence. If it worked for Ebola, it will work for infant and maternal healthcare. If it worked for Ebola it will work in our drive to improve the quality of the education our young people receive. If it worked for Ebola it will work in our efforts to drive forward improvements in our agricultural output - to improve the food security of our people and firmly establish our agricultural sector as a leading contributor to export growth.

97. Defeating Ebola was also about paying attention to details. As I moved around the country visiting treatment centres, I saw first hand how attention to details and procedures was the difference between life and death, success and failure. We need to move forward with greater precision in our planning and implementation. With this knowledge, we as a country were able to apply considered judgment in our actions and interventions. We saw this with the meticulousness and military precision that the districts, the NERC and the Health Ministry planned and executed their operations – Western Area Surge, Operation Northern Push, Tonkolili Action Plan and Operation Safeguard were all guided by rigour, discipline and collective effort by ourselves with our partners in full support. This approach cannot be limited to Ebola. It is an approach we need to embed into all areas of our policy making going forward.

98. But it doesn't end there. We must follow through by auditing our decisions to see if they have worked and where else the same approach can be applied. If they haven't worked, we must seek to understand the points of failure and come up with alternatives to solve the problem. If it worked for Ebola it can work for the many, far lesser problems we will have to contend with now. As we

look forward to recovery and getting back to our pre-Ebola development path, these principles cannot be left behind.

99. Let us not abandon the good practices and ways of working we have developed to return to the old ways. Ebola has showed us the risks some of our cultural practices can pose. Ebola has showed us that a single person in a little corner could, with as small an action as touching a corpse, bring death and pain to hundreds more. Ebola showed us that every little action counts. A teacher who allows a student to cheat would cause untold harm should that student graduate to become an incompetent public servant in a key agency of the state. A vehicle examiner who gives a pass to a car that is not roadworthy would bring death on our highways; a land and housing officer who gives clearance for a building on a disaster prone area put the lives of many at risk; citizens who connive with electricians and plumbers to cheat on paying their bills deprives the country of resources to sustain its supply of energy and water. A country's development is as much dependent on the little actions of ordinary citizens as it is dependent of the big programmes that leaders put forward.

100. So the battle to build a better country is upon all of us to fight. And we must fight it together. I cannot fight it alone, this Honourable House cannot fight it alone, the APC cannot fight it alone, the SLPP cannot fight it alone. We all need the people to fight it along with us. We need the chiefs, communities, motor drivers, bike riders, youths, petty traders, market women, professionals, civil servants, teachers and health workers to be as dedicated to getting pregnant women to hospital and ensuring their treatment as they were dedicated to fighting Ebola. And we must fight it with the dedication to truth and verification that allowed us to defeat Ebola.

101. We will definitely make great progress if we stay true to the better principles we adhered to during the fight against Ebola. We have it in us to do that. We have it in us to turn the tide of death away from our pregnant women,

children and mothers, we have it in us to prevent any future case of Ebola from overwhelming even the smallest of communities; we have it in us to achieve the goals we have set forth in the two phases of our Post Ebola Recovery Programme. And I strongly believe that our resilience will get us through to a better Sierra Leone. We must stand firm, we must not relent, we have defeated the Ebola virus, we have it in us to defeat the Ebola of backwardness, the Ebola of corruption, the Ebola of 'how for do' and all the other Ebolas holding down this country from realizing the fullness of its yearnings for development, and the ideals embedded in our motto: Unity, Freedom and Justice.



SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
DR. ERNEST BAI KOROMA *G.C.R.S.L.***

*President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the
Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces*

**On the Occasion of the State Opening of the Fourth
Session of the Fourth Parliament of the Second Republic
of Sierra Leone**

**In the Chamber of Parliament Building
Tower Hill, Freetown**

On Friday, 11th December, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.